



Volunteer Centre
Dudley



Guidelines for Involving & Managing Volunteers

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Introduction

Volunteers can bring enormous benefits to an organisation as they not only provide practical support to assist yourself or your service users, but they also bring new ideas, initiatives and skills which can benefit your organisation greatly. It is good practice with volunteer management to follow current legislation on for example health & safety, equal opportunities, etc and before enlisting the support of volunteers, it is important to spend time thinking carefully about how and why you are going to involve volunteers in your organisation, and what support you will be able to give them. It is difficult enough to recruit volunteers without losing them after a few weeks; therefore the purpose behind these guidelines is to offer you general guidelines around the involvement and management of volunteers!

Questions to ask before you involve volunteers

- Why are you recruiting volunteers?
- Is the organisation at all levels in favour of volunteers – are there any worries over redundancies, job substitutions, falls in standard, role conflict etc.?
- Have you a budget for volunteers? Is it based on realistic costings?
- Do similar organisations you know involve volunteers? What is their experience?
- Have you looked at legal implications, confidentiality and safety?
- Are there specific problems that volunteers may face, e.g. safety or health risk, liability for giving wrong advice?
- Volunteers bring new dimensions, new skills and enthusiasm. Can your organisation cope with change?
- Have you allocated staff or existing volunteers, such as your Trustees,
- time to manage volunteers long-term and in the start-up phase? (Ideally the role of volunteer co-ordinator should be undertaken by a single member of staff for continuity).
- Will your staff (volunteer co-ordinator) require further training for the role?
- Have you estimated the staff time required and cost to train and manage volunteers?
- Have you sufficient space available and sufficient equipment etc. to accommodate volunteers?
- How will the client group react to volunteer involvement – ask them?
- Have you thought about your volunteer policy and what will be included within it?
- Have you taken specialist advice (contacted your own national headquarters etc and your local Volunteer Centre?)

For further guidance, please see Appendix 1 - Key Principles and Good Practice Guidelines to Volunteering and Appendix 2 – When not to use Volunteers

Volunteer Policy – Key Points

This section will cover the following areas, to help you understand the need for a Volunteer Policy and what you should include within it:

- What is a Volunteer Policy?
- Why do we need one?
- Where do we start?
- What should be included in it?

What is a Volunteer Policy

A Volunteer Policy is the foundation on which your organisation's involvement with volunteers should be based. It forms the basis of your entire volunteer programme, giving cohesion and consistency to all elements in your organisation that affect volunteers (i.e. recruitment, expenses, health & safety etc.) Volunteer Policies are the key to involving a diverse group of volunteers, because they help to define the role of volunteers within the organisation, and how they can expect to be treated.

Why do we need one?

A Volunteer Policy demonstrates an organisation's commitment both to its volunteer programme and to its individual volunteers. By having a policy in place, you are showing that care and thought has gone into the volunteer programme.

Volunteer Policies help to ensure fairness and consistency. Dealing with volunteers, means dealing with a diverse range of people, being able to refer to a written policy ensures that decisions are not made on an ad-hoc basis, and that all volunteers are treated equally and fairly.

A policy enables volunteers to know where they stand. It offers them some security, in that they know how they can expect to be treated, and where they can turn if they feel that things are going wrong.

Volunteer Policies also help to ensure that paid staff, senior management and trustees fully understand why volunteers are involved and what role they have within the organisation.

Drawing up a Volunteer Policy is the ideal starting point when considering how to involve volunteers. Once the Policy is written it should be reviewed annually in consultation with volunteers, staff and trustees, perhaps a representative steering committee.

Where to start and what should be included within it

The first step in devising your Volunteer Policy is to give an explanation of what your organisation does and exactly why you are involving volunteers. How do they fit into the day-to-day life and work of the organisation? Consult as widely as possible with different staff members (including volunteers) when drawing up the policy, as different people may have different ideas around where volunteers can provide support or even about the concept of volunteering generally. With a greater number

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of people involved in devising the policy, a greater knowledge and feeling of ownership is likely to be achieved by all.

There is no blueprint for the perfect Volunteer Policy as each organisation has its own unique needs however; it is recommended that the following issues be addressed:

- **Equal Opportunities/Diversity**

Volunteering should be open to all, whatever their background, age, race, gender sexual orientation or faith. Implementing equalities policies and schemes and a welcoming approach are key to supporting diversity.

Volunteers are generally not covered by equal opportunities legislation, it is however, generally good practice to include them in your equal opportunities and diversity policies. All volunteers should therefore operate within the context of the policies, for which they will receive appropriate support and training.

- **Recruitment & Selection of Volunteers**

Involving volunteers is an excellent way to involve members of the local community in your organisation. They can enrich the service you provide, bringing fresh ideas, skills and most importantly their support, so it is vitally important to engage people from different types of backgrounds and all sections of the community into voluntary work. The recruitment and selection of volunteers or employees for that matter however, is not always as simple as one often imagines. To ensure the well being of service users etc., some of the following points are worth considering for inclusion in your volunteer policy.

- **How and where will you advertise for volunteers?**

- ▶ Will you use application forms? If so, they should be very simple to avoid putting potential volunteers off, and to avoid excluding volunteers with poor written English.
- ▶ How will you interview volunteers?
- ▶ What will you do about references?
- ▶ How will you deal with people unsuitable for tasks they are interested in?
- ▶ If your organisation works with vulnerable clients, what procedures do you have in place to protect both them and your volunteers?

- **Role or Task Descriptions**

It is advisable that all volunteers have a written task outline that clearly defines their role and the range of duties they would be expected to undertake. This should include the following information:

- ◆ **Role title** - Say what it is - don't just put 'volunteer'. After-school group leader, sports coach, befriender, treasurer, driver, carer... Do you need to use the word 'volunteer' at all?
- ◆ **Purpose** - Why this role/work is important – what difference does it make?
- ◆ **What the volunteer will be doing** - Describe the main tasks/activities of the role.
 - Will it involve working on their own, or as part of a team, or assisting someone else?

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- What does it involve - eg travel, caring, manual work, organising, assisting, leading, teaching, customer service, computers, fundraising, arts, sports...? Indoors or outdoors?
- What are the specific tasks?
- If the role involves direct work with service-users/customers, give relevant information about their needs.

- ◆ **Skills, experience and qualities needed** - Be clear and realistic about the minimum level of skill/experience required to start this role, (eg a community transport driver might need a clean driving licence and good people skills). Although it might be tempting to compile a long list of the qualities of your 'ideal' volunteer, try to focus on what's really important to get them started in the role. For example, asking that people have a commitment to your aims and objectives at this stage (when they barely know what you do) could be quite off-putting to someone who's only just heard of your organisation. Commitment will develop if volunteers are valued and treated with respect. If the role is suitable for absolutely anyone, say so. Consider what support you could offer to help people develop once in the role.

- ◆ **When and where** –
 - Times/days needed – what days, what time of day, how often, how much flexibility is there?
 - Where will the volunteer be based? Is this different from the main organisational address? Will they work from home?

- ◆ **Support offered** - Give information about expenses, induction and training, supervision/line management, insurance cover etc

- ◆ **What the volunteer will get from it** - What are the benefits of volunteering with your organisation? e.g. personal satisfaction, a supportive environment, training, learning new skills, using existing skills, chance to get out in the fresh air, meet new people, be part of something worthwhile...

- ◆ **Other information** - Do volunteers need to be able to commit to a certain level of training? Will they need to register with the Vetting and Barring Scheme because this role is 'regulated activity' (from July 2010)? What is involved in your application/selection process?

- ◆ **What to do if you're interested** – contact details for the person responsible for volunteer recruitment within your organisation.

- **Management, Support & Supervision**

To demonstrate their commitment to volunteers, organisations should ensure a designated person is appointed to guide and support volunteers. In many organisations members of staff take this role on, in addition to their normal duties.

A clear process for assessing the performance of volunteers and offering them support in training, job seeking and personal development should be considered and introduced when and where appropriate.

- **Insurance**

Insurance is a very important issue, but is often overlooked in relation to volunteers. Organisations should therefore ensure that volunteers are insured under either public or employer's liability cover. You are legally liable, therefore you must maintain high standards no matter how small you are, even if all you run is a small club, which meets once a week. You have what is termed 'a duty of care' for negligent acts regarding your volunteers; you need to protect both your volunteers and clients. To find out the level of insurance you require consult an insurance broker – information regarding insurance brokers who support/assist voluntary organisations can be obtained from Dudley Council for Voluntary Service.
- **Health & Safety**

Organisations have a duty of care to avoid exposing volunteers to risk to their health and safety. All volunteers should therefore be trained and updated on the Health & Safety Policy. Risk assessments should be carried out for voluntary roles and volunteers given training that is specific to their role.
- **Expenses**

Reimbursement of expenses is extremely important for both volunteers and organisations, as regardless of income, volunteering should be accessible to all. Volunteers should not be out-of-pocket if they choose to give their time freely for the benefit of their community. Furthermore, mentioning reimbursement of expenses in your volunteer policy, will indicate that the organisation values its volunteers and is actively making sure that barriers to volunteer involvement do not exist.

It is important that volunteers are paid 'out of pocket' expenses only, or an organisation may fall foul of national minimum wage legislation or benefits conditions. Reimbursement of expenses could include areas around travel, meals, childcare, or any other 'out of pocket' expenses associated to your organisation/project.

Rates for expenses should be determined by the organisation and reviewed annually. (Guidance of rates regarding reimbursement of travel costs should be available via your local Volunteer Centre).
- **Participation in decision-making**

Volunteers are vital to the delivery of the service however, they not only offer practical support to an organisation, but they can often bring new ideas and skills. It is therefore important to ensure within your policy, that provision is made to allow for volunteers to become involved in the decision-making process of the organisation.
- **Training & Development**

All volunteers should receive adequate training to fulfil their role and be encouraged to take further training appropriate to their roles. They should also be offered opportunities for personal development if they wish, for example, to develop new skills or try a different role.
- **Confidentiality**

All partners (staff, volunteers & trustees) are bound by an organisation's Confidentiality Agreement if it has one. Include information around

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confidentiality within your volunteer policy to inform/advise volunteers of confidentiality issues. This should address and allay any fears around volunteers being unprofessional. (Further information regarding confidentiality can be found at a later stage in this document).

- **Grievance & Disciplinary Procedures**

What will you do if a volunteer has a grievance with your organisation? Or if a volunteer has acted in an inappropriate manner? Include within your Volunteer Policy, information about your organisation's Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures, demonstrating that you have a well-planned strategy around involving volunteers and what you can do, should you need to deal with any future problems.

Equally make sure you have clear procedures in place to deal with any complaints by or about volunteers. It is advisable that procedures are separate from those of paid staff, to ensure the distinction between staff and volunteers, but ensure they are understandable and user friendly.

If a volunteer wishes to leave the organisation but continue with their voluntary work, they can be referred back to the Volunteer Centre, who will try to find an alternative voluntary placement to meet their needs/requirements.

- **Adequate written information**

It is advised that all information relevant to volunteer be contained within a handbook. This should be revised and updated in consultation with volunteers.

Recruiting Volunteers

The Volunteer Centre at Dudley CVS can only refer potential volunteers to organisations who have registered with them. It does not have a pool of volunteers, so it is difficult if your organisation requires people for one-off events, however we do try to accommodate requirements.

The Volunteer Centre can assist with long-term and short-term projects e.g. summer play-schemes; however, we do need details to promote your project to potential volunteers, well in advance.

Often, people who want to undertake voluntary work wish to do so almost immediately. Please endeavour to respond to our referrals within a few days, otherwise the potential volunteer may lose interest. A quick phone call to make the initial contact is a good idea, so you can explain what happens next e.g. you are sending out an application form, which they need to complete and return with the names and addresses of two referees. Keeping up regular contact until a potential volunteer can start their role, helps to keep them interested.

Ideas for Recruitment Materials

An important step in getting volunteers from a diverse range of backgrounds can be through creating the right recruitment materials. Here are some pointers to consider, whether you are designing posters or flyers or briefing a designer.

- Use images that present a positive image of volunteering and reflect how you would like to see the ethos of your organisation reflected.
- Ensure that pictures 'speak to' the section or sections of the population you want to recruit from, but be careful not to fall into stereotypes.
- Do you need to translate your material into other language? Get professional help regarding translation, as sometimes words cannot be translated, as some cultures for example, do not have a word for volunteering. The Race Equality & Communication Services Unit at Dudley Council, can provide translation services and may be contacted on 01384 813400.
- Make materials (including website information) accessible to all members of the community for example, people with a visual impairment can read easier if black text is on a yellow background rather than white text on a red background. The Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) or a local organisation working with people with a visual impairment should be able to provide full information.
- Remember printed material may not always have the most impact. Videos, talks on local radio, or presentations to community groups can often be effective in the recruitment of volunteers.

Remember often the most effective method of recruitment is through 'word of mouth'. If your organisation values and demonstrates its appreciation of volunteers and the work they do, often volunteers themselves will recruit more support.

Methods of Recruitment

- **Social Media**

The growth of social media such as Twitter, Facebook and blogs, means that these are potential tools to reach out to new volunteers. If you don't know much about social media or want to learn how to use the tools, Dudley CVS runs a number of free social media surgeries, which you can attend to develop your skills in this area.

- **Local Advertising**

Many supermarkets have community notice boards as do Churches, Mosques, Temples, Community Centres, Schools and Leisure Centres, Libraries, Newsagents, corner shops and garages. Ensure that it is a clean poster (change regularly if dog-eared or covered in graffiti) with up to date information on it.

Notice boards are very useful if you want local volunteers. They may be a rich source for one-off events like fun-runs or fetes. Remember to have interesting posters etc., and remove them when they are outdated. If possible put a sign outside your own organisation or in your shop window, saying what kind of role(s) you are currently seeking volunteers for.

- **Local Newspapers**

Local newspapers are approachable, sometimes free and helpful, particularly if your volunteer needs could link to something that is photogenic and of local interest. The numbers for the local newspapers are given below:

The News Group [Halesowen, Stourbridge and Dudley]	01384 358220
Dudley Chronicle	01384 353211
Halesowen Chronicle	01384 353211
Stourbridge Chronicle	01384 399912
Express & Star	01384 355355

- **Press Releases**

Producing press releases and building links with the media has spin-offs for your work. Often press releases are free of charge however, some organisations e.g. the Guardian (cheap volunteer ads on Wednesdays) may charge.

With a press release, keep the message simple. Get someone who is not too involved to check your promotional literature, to check it is clear and free of jargon.

Remember: The most effective way to attract more volunteers is through word of mouth. Volunteers tell other volunteers about their roles and this often encourages family, friends and colleagues to come forward to volunteer. Through supporting and valuing your current volunteers you could ultimately attract more volunteers.

Places to Advertise for Volunteers

As mentioned research indicates that most volunteers will come by word of mouth however, below is listed a range of outlets/organisations, which may also complement the services you provide:

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- Local Schools, Student Community Action Groups at Colleges
- Community Centres, Youth Clubs/Centres and Tenants Halls
- Pre-retirement courses and links with local businesses
- Clinics, Doctors Surgeries, Dentists and Opticians
- Job Centres, Job Clubs, Rehabilitation Centres etc
- Lions Rotary Club etc
- Churches, Gurdwaras, Mosques, Temples etc
- Libraries, Borough Council Offices, Hospitals, Police & Fires Stations
- Specialist Organisations, self-help groups and professional agencies in your area of work
- Post Offices, Garages, Supermarkets and Corner Shops
- Sporting and Leisure Clubs
- Advice and information organisations like the CAB.
- Local Radio & TV e.g. the Community Channel
- Talks to specialist/relevant audiences, religious groups, schools and colleges, youth clubs/organisations
- Exhibitions either static in a library or shop, or mobile for a school or club
- Leaflets, which can be for wide circulation or customised for different audiences
- Open days at your centre or project
- Devise a fancy dress or other promotional stunt
- Distribution of leaflets to promote your organisations and for the recruitment of volunteers

Selection and Screening of Volunteers

Pre-Selection

Depending on the nature of your organisation, information, application forms etc can either be sent beforehand, or the interviewer can complete application/registration forms during the interview. Some organisations may require that informal and formal interviews take place. Other pre-selection ideas may include regular open days, videos, slide shows, presentations or tours of your premises. Why not consider involving existing volunteers when new volunteers come along to your organisation? Perhaps they could take part in any events and chat to prospective volunteers about their voluntary experience.

It is recommended as good practice, from a health & safety and lone working point of view, that there should always be two interviewers, rather than interviewing a potential volunteer alone.

Who will deal with enquiries?

It is always best to ensure that any members of staff or volunteers who may be taking enquiries from potential volunteers, have adequate information about the voluntary roles available and note any relevant information down, to enable information to be sent on to the applicants.

Application Forms

Application forms should be simple, easy to read and understand. Keep them as brief as possible, as lengthy forms can deter potential volunteers who do not feel comfortable with writing and may not have English as their first language. If you are unsure about what to include in application forms, it may be helpful to contact another organisation or ask your local Volunteer Centre to source sample forms for you.

Before the Interview

- Respond quickly to a volunteer's request for an interview.
- Send out information about the organisation.
- Give the volunteer a reasonable amount of notice of the appointment, in case they have to arrange a lift or arrange time off work.
- Be as flexible as possible about time, date, venue e.g. does the volunteer have a disability which may make it difficult for them to climb stairs, or needs wheelchair access.
- Give clear directions to the interview venue; it may be helpful to include a map.

On the day of the Interview

The following checklist may be helpful:

- Make sure that staff/other volunteers know that a volunteer is expected and let them have the name of the volunteer.

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- Have a suitable space to interview, as quiet and private as possible.
- Set out the venue so you can face the volunteer and make sure they will be comfortable.
- Make sure that you will not be interrupted.
- Allow plenty of time for the interview.
- Have all the necessary information to hand.

Interviews

Discover how they heard about you. This can be a relaxing question to put people at ease gives you the opportunity to consider your publicity/recruitment methods.

Particularly if you require specialist skills, develop a person specification for the task required. If the potential volunteer does not meet any of the specifications for the task, you may have to explore their strengths and weaknesses, not as a method of exclusion but to see what support, training or other roles you can offer them. Also, be aware of other agencies you can refer them to.

What is a person's availability – hours, days, short-term, long-term, regular days and times, flexible and how does this compare with what you are looking for?

Why do they want to volunteer?

- Want to help others
- Have expertise they would like to use
- Lonely, unemployed or bored
- Suggested by friend or colleague
- Gain experience in a new area
- Experience of similar work elsewhere
- Suggested by a professional advisor

What is their knowledge of the client group – how realistic is it?

Give them an opportunity to ask questions and to opt out. Often this can be facilitated by a further interview, induction-training etc. See if they have concerns, questions or observations.

Tour the premises to meet staff and other volunteers. Make sure they see a real picture of your organisation.

Ask yourself and/or the interviewee:

- Would they fit in with the organisation?
- Would they understand/appreciate the work we do?
- Could they be a team player when required?
- Could they deal appropriately with clients if required?
- Do they have an appropriate level of interest in the work we do?
- Would they need training that we currently do not offer?

Stress your moral obligation to support, train and help volunteers. Explain about induction, volunteer information pack etc.

Screening/Checking

This information is intended to give some background over what legitimate precautions can be taken to check the suitability of potential volunteers:

- **References**

References are regarded as one of the most useful ways in determining suitability of volunteers or staff particularly when they are supplied by ex-employers/trainers. It is advised that two references are always taken up and particularly if the volunteer will be working with vulnerable people e.g. children.

There will be some instances whereby a professional reference cannot be supplied by a volunteer e.g. they have been out of employment or education for some period. In these instances and depending on the nature of the task involved, character references supplied by none family members should suffice.

- **DBS Checks**

Organisations, particularly those dealing with vulnerable persons, may request that all staff and volunteers undergo disclosure checks. Full information regarding the necessity of checks or information around checks, can be obtained from the Disclosure and Barring Service, or Local Authority.

The DBS eligibility guidance lists most roles that are eligible for a check, however, the guidance isn't comprehensive, and you should contact the DBS if you're unsure. **DBS customer services:** customerservices@dbs.gsi.gov.uk: Telephone: 0870 909 0811

The Protection of Children Act is the principal legislation associated with police checks. It talks of substantial and unsupervised contact with children, plus it is open to changes, thus we are not going to talk about it in detail. If you work with children then please discuss all welfare-related matters associated to the Act with Social Services, or the Health Authority.

- **Equal Opportunities**

Potential volunteers should not be rejected as a result of non-relevant criminal convictions, mental health problems or other disability. Your policy should be clear to all involved and explained when recruiting.

An argument such as 'the other volunteers might not like it', is unacceptable and such attitudes must be challenged, and perhaps equal opportunities training should be introduced.

People who have committed an offence or have a disability are normally open about it, particularly where you need to know. Often they have experienced rejection and are nervous. Be sensitive and supportive.

Ex-offenders often wish to help prevent others from committing crime and make excellent volunteers. The same applies to ex drug addicts and people who have mental health problems.

If you cannot offer a volunteer a placement within your organisation, please refer them on to either the Volunteer Centre, or another voluntary organisation suitable to their needs. The Volunteer Centre holds a good selection of voluntary opportunities in lots of different interest areas, so they are happy to help volunteers find alternative placements.

- **Permissible Restrictions on Recruitment**

Think carefully before you have restrictions on volunteers. Are they reasonable?

Instances where restrictions on volunteers are reasonable:

- ▶ **Gender**
Women's Refuges are entitled only to recruit female volunteers and single sex sports or youth groups may share the same need.
- ▶ **Genuine Experience**
Self-help groups, gay or lesbian organisations, racial or linguistic groups, support organisations or specialist agencies, may require that volunteers have genuine experience of disability, parenting etc.
- ▶ **Literacy**
Determine when the ability to write is necessary (is it essential for volunteers decorating, gardening etc?)
- ▶ **Qualifications**
Wherever possible organisations should train volunteers however, you may be seeking volunteers with particular skills.
- ▶ **Religious Commitment**
Organisations are allowed to recruit members exclusively from their own faith community. They need to ask why this should be the case. It is reasonable to expect people to show sympathy and respect, but should you require them to be active members? If so then recruit solely from within!
- ▶ **Geographical**
Some community-based organisations may be seeking volunteers, committee members, or support from a defined geographical area.

Induction and Training

All volunteers need induction into an organisation – it gives you the opportunity to explain how, why and where you operate. Not everyone however requires training, but they do require knowledge regarding how your organisation ticks. Thorough induction coupled with targeted and appropriate training, is an essential part of good staff and volunteer management.

Every organisation operates differently; even moving from one CAB to another will require some induction. Introducing/inducting all new volunteers ensures that everyone understands systems and operates at the same level. Include a written induction sheet in the Volunteers Information Pack, this will enable them to systematically learn your procedures and be introduced to a variety of staff and other volunteers.

Things to include in your induction programme:

- **What is your organisation's role/purpose?** Provide written information regarding what your organisation does, your aims and objectives and if necessary how you differ from similar organisations in your field or area of activity.
- **Background** e.g. when was it founded, where does it operate, what services does it offer, how many staff and volunteers does it have?
- **The role of Volunteers within the organisation** – this can be a useful opportunity to go through the task outline for the specific role and give the volunteer an opportunity to ask questions. It can also be helpful to tell the volunteer about other voluntary roles within the organisation, so they may think about future development opportunities if they wish.
- **Support for Volunteers** – who will be responsible for supporting the volunteer and dealing with any queries or problems? If the volunteer is to be allocated to a particular department and managed by someone other than the Volunteer Co-ordinator, it is helpful for them to meet the Volunteer Co-ordinator too.
- **Procedures relevant to their role** e.g. how you log phone calls, what resource books you use etc – these are all important. Write down and explain everything – always explain that you may have to explain the obvious.
- **Housekeeping** - toilet facilities, refreshment facilities, where to leave personal belongings etc.
- **Health & Safety** - is vital, particularly if you have fire drills at certain times, which means that some volunteers are never present when you need to go through it with them! Tell the volunteer where the fire exits are situated, how to sound the fire alarm and the procedure to follow for evacuation. It would also be useful to tell the volunteer about First Aid arrangements. This sort of information is often displayed on notice boards around a building, so it is useful to show the volunteer where the information boards can be found.
- **Relevant Policies** e.g. No Smoking Policy. Tell the volunteer about allocated areas if they wish to smoke.
- **Expenses** - how to claim expenses and complete expense forms, show examples.
- **Introductions** – to members of staff, other volunteers and service users. If you recruit volunteers from outside your neighbourhood, give them information

that is relevant to your organisation/project i.e. number of elderly people visiting the day centre.

Updating Volunteers

Update volunteers on all changes, i.e. new legislation, contacts etc. This can be done in a variety of ways:

- a newsletter or regular letter to your volunteers
- if you have a small team of volunteers, then tell them individually
- update them at Volunteers Meetings, which if held regularly, are useful
- include relevant changes in written updates for the Volunteers Information Pack

In Service or Core Training

Look at your organisation to see whether there are core elements which apply to all new volunteers, and which you do not think are currently included in your induction programme. Volunteers may require training in respect of their tasks, together with additional training in relation to:

- equal opportunities – everyone is entitled to expect equal treatment
- rights and responsibilities of volunteers
- basic listening skills (if in times of emergencies/busy periods, you require all volunteers to answer telephone enquiries)
- health & safety, first aid etc.

Training Volunteers

There are a number of voluntary organisations that offer (some with NVQ) their own training. If you are starting a new project then we can suggest groups to contact for good practice models.

Support and Supervision of Volunteers

Supporting Volunteers

Organisations should take a personal interest in their volunteers. If they phone in to apologise for absence due to illness, bereavement etc, ask them how they are. Building links can help prevent crises from developing. Volunteer Co-ordinators need to have clear systems stating when they are available to offer support, however, there are other practical methods Volunteer Co-ordinators can take to support their volunteers:

- new volunteers can be buddied with established volunteers
- regular volunteer meetings can be held, with or without staff being present, they could perhaps start their own support group
- regular social events, allowing volunteers to get together either on their own or with staff, trustees etc
- newsletters can be produced as a support method to highlight good practice and inform volunteers what's new

Remember!

If the Volunteer Co-ordinator/Manager is to be absent for a period of time, always ensure another person is designated to support volunteers as required.

Supervision

The Volunteer Co-ordinator or Staff Person responsible will, normally carry out supervision of volunteers.

Levels of supervision required may vary and will depend upon:

- how often you see the volunteer personally
- how often you are in contact with them personally
- how long they have been with you (you may see new volunteers frequently or have a probationary period when you see them at defined stages)
- what type of work they do and where their voluntary work is carried out
- whether the volunteer already has extra support needs

Personal Contact

A designated member of staff should supervise volunteers but all members of staff/volunteers should offer support when the need arises. It is vital to make all staff aware of the role volunteers play – volunteers are not a threat, their support is vital to an organisation and they should be treated and supported accordingly.

Issues to Consider

Always put the volunteer at their ease and select the venue carefully:

- Ensure that you will have privacy and not be interrupted
- Does the volunteer have issues they wish to raise?
- How are relations with staff, other volunteers, service users, Management Committees?

Guidelines for Involving and Managing Volunteers

- Are the communications systems within the organisation adequate?
- Are there practical problems emerging in relation to expenses, health & safety, basic equipment needs etc?
- Are there any policy issues over which the volunteer or supervisor has concerns e.g. equal opportunities, introduction of new legislation?
- Would the volunteer benefit from training to develop, refresh or enrich their contribution?
- Are there comments on the way the agency operates?
- Does the volunteer have any personal matters they wish to raise?

Remember!

Organisations with specialist roles may employ external supervisors for staff and volunteers for example, if volunteers are dealing with extremely sensitive issues, it may be good to obtain the assistance of trained counsellors to further support them.

The diversity of people wishing to volunteer is extremely beneficial to organisations, as they will ultimately always bring a multitude of skills together with new and refreshing ideas. However, when in support of volunteers do not forget their diversity – support each volunteer (practically/emotionally) according to their needs and/or requirements.

Confidentiality

Guidelines on confidentiality need to be addressed by individual organisations, as they are all different and may have different requirements around confidentiality. If you already have a Confidentiality Policy for your organisation and you expect volunteers to abide by it, this should be explained at their induction and included in the Volunteers Handbook, along with the other policies and procedures. For examples of confidentiality policies for organisations, please contact the Core Services team at Dudley Council for Voluntary Service.

If a confidentiality agreement signed by all relevant parties is implemented, copies should be kept on the volunteer's file and copies retained in the Volunteers Information Pack – to remind ALL of confidentiality issues.

Retaining Volunteers

Another important aspect of managing volunteers which is often overlooked, is how to retain your volunteers. The reasons for losing volunteers may be the result of external or internal factors:

External - factors over which you have no control:

- Your funding has changed, or come to an end
- Your project/organisation has to close
- They have been offered paid work
- Childcare responsibilities
- Long-term sickness
- Moving out of the area

Internal – factors which you may have control over:

- Lack of support
- Being taken for granted
- No training
- No opportunities for development
- Not feeling welcome and part of the team
- No opportunities to be involved in decision-making
- Lack of stimulation
- Under-utilised skills
- Feeling their efforts are wasted
- Stressful
- Tiring
- Lack of variety
- Not being given opportunity to express their views and make suggestions

What can I do to retain volunteers?

Ask them! There may be simple things you can do to stop the volunteer leaving.

The following are basic elements of volunteer management, which are all important for volunteer retention:

- Induction – make it informative and interesting – get off on the right foot
- Initial Development & Training Plan for the volunteer – if they wish to progress. (Not all volunteers will wish to do so, but it must be offered to those who do)
- Development & Training Plan review and regular supervision sessions at 3 months, 6 months and every 6 months thereafter
- Team/volunteer meetings on a regular basis (these may be social or work-focussed)
- Consultation and communication
- Ongoing support from the volunteer's mentor/supervisor

Guidelines for Involving and Managing Volunteers

Regular supervision and support are essential for ALL volunteers. Even if they only have supervision sessions every 3 or 6 months, they should be encouraged to contact their supervisor/manager if they have any problems or queries, rather than leaving them until the next supervision session. This can prevent minor issues developing into larger ones and the volunteer deciding to leave.

Volunteer Centre Services to Volunteer-Involving Organisations

Volunteer Centre Dudley recruits volunteers for a wide range of local and national organisations. It aims to provide the following resources and support:

- Assistance with the recruitment of volunteers
- Promoting volunteering opportunities to potential volunteers
- Information on good practice in involving volunteers e.g. task outlines, insurance, expenses etc
- Free volunteer management training sessions in the following areas:
 - Volunteers and the Law
 - Volunteer induction, handbooks and agreements
 - Recruiting and retaining volunteers
 - Supporting your volunteers
 - Exits and endings: when volunteers need to move on
- Resources on current volunteering issues e.g. Investing in Volunteers
- Volunteer Organisers' Forum – regular opportunities to network with other volunteer organisers, with guest speakers on topics relevant to volunteering

The Volunteer Centre is a project of Dudley Council for Voluntary Service, whose Core Services Team provides a wide range of services to the local voluntary and community sector, including:

- Information and Support e.g. funding, employment law, constitutions, insurance
- Resource Centre
- Training
- Liaison and consultation
- Community Development

For further information, please contact DCVS Core Services on 01384 573381.

Conclusion & Acknowledgements

Throughout this Volunteer Management Information Pack we have only very briefly touched on the subject of managing volunteers, we trust however that the information was found to be both informative and useful.

Volunteer Centres through the support of Volunteer Development England (formerly National Association of Volunteer Bureaux) have for many years worked on and developed good practices in relation to volunteers and if you require additional support and information, please remember you can contact your local Volunteer Centre for guidance at any time.

In developing this information pack, I would like to acknowledge and thank colleagues and associates at Sandwell Volunteer Centre, Bath Volunteer Centre and my colleagues at Dudley Council for Voluntary Services for their advice and support.

Dudley CVS Volunteer Centre would particularly like to thank Kathryn Dickie, Information Officer for Volunteer England, for her help and guidance, which was invaluable.

Key Principles and Good Practice Guidelines to Volunteering

- Volunteers should be recruited to enhance a service not to replace paid staff
- Before recruiting, be clear why a volunteer is wanted or needed
- Organisations should provide clear written task outlines for their volunteers which are skills based – meaningful tasks with opportunities for personal development
- Provide the volunteer with an induction and preparation/training programme, and where appropriate, additional support for volunteers with disabilities
- Be clear about what volunteers are seeking from the placement
- Make sure the volunteer has appropriate line management and knows whom to contact about problems or difficulties
- Establish a simple and easily accessible process for volunteers to claim out-of-pocket expenses and ensure funding incorporates volunteer expenses
- Ensure that health and safety standards for volunteers are in place, including risk assessment of the work volunteers will be doing
- Ensure that volunteers are covered by appropriate insurance
- Ensure that a range of policies are in place and applied equally to volunteers e.g. Diversity and/or Equal Opportunities, Policies on harassment including race, sexuality, disability, age and faith, Complaints and Grievance policies for volunteers, Disciplinary policies, Confidentiality policies
- Organisations should meet the costs of necessary training for volunteers
- Encourage volunteers to participate in the organisation's wider decision-making processes
- Where appropriate, provide opportunities for volunteers to acquire or develop new or existing skills, and support volunteers who want to gain accreditation towards recognised qualifications
- Monitor and acknowledge the contribution volunteers make to the organisation to funders, other volunteers and the wider public
- Ensure that the work and contribution of the volunteers adds value and quality to the organisation's aims and objectives
- Ensure that the organisation's working practices do not create obstacles for volunteers, or for potential volunteers from a wide and diverse range of backgrounds
- Ensuring that staff are involved and informed so that volunteers are integrated within the staff team
- Organisations should ensure that their working practices offer appropriate protection to volunteers, as well as paid staff e.g. Health & Safety.

When not to involve Volunteers

Do not involve a volunteer if any of the following apply:

- The work is intended to make a profit
- There is no adequate provision of support, supervision, training or space for volunteers
- The work is widely considered in that locality to be the responsibility of a statutory service
- The volunteer would be performing a task formerly (or even currently) done by a paid worker and his/her involvement would reduce the likelihood of staff being replaced
- The involvement of volunteers would jeopardise the wages or employment conditions of paid staff, particularly those in low-paid jobs
- There is a disagreement within the organisation about the nature and purpose of volunteer involvement
- The volunteer does not perceive any value in the work, or any opportunity to develop his/her skills and talents
- The task is such that the volunteer is expected to do tasks for individuals having the means to pay someone to do the work
- There is no commitment to make sure that all sections of the community can volunteer i.e. no Equal Opportunities Policy
- Unacceptable risks are involved e.g. physical danger or violence
- Volunteers can play no part in decision making

Volunteer's Charter – Rights and Responsibilities

Volunteers' Rights

- To be given a clear idea of their tasks and responsibilities within the organisation.
- To be given the name of someone in the organisation who will look after their interests and who will offer them appropriate support, and supervision on a regular basis.
- To be assured that any information shared with the organisation is kept confidential.
- To be given the same protection under health & safety regulations and public liability as paid employees.
- To be offered opportunities for training and skills development, appropriate for the voluntary tasks involved.
- To have a complementary relationship with paid staff, who should be fully aware of the role and responsibilities of a volunteer.
- To have access i.e. through volunteer meetings etc., and to play a part in the decision-making process of the organisation/project.
- To be informed about the agency's policies relevant to the volunteer i.e. health & safety, grievance and disciplinary procedures.
- To be provided with appropriate equipment, tools and materials associated to their tasks.
- Volunteers may join a trade union relevant to the work in which they are involved. NUPE, MSF and UNISON currently welcome volunteers into their membership.
- To be supported when things go wrong and to be encouraged to learn from their mistakes or difficulties.
- Volunteers **should not**: -
 - Be used to replace paid workers
 - Have unfair demands made on their time
 - Be asked to do something which is against their principles or beliefs
 - Be subject to any discrimination e.g. on the basis of race, sexuality, age, gender
 - Be out of pocket through undertaking voluntary work – travel and other expenses should be reimbursed

Volunteers' Responsibilities

- To support and embrace the organisation's aims and objectives.
- To do what is reasonably requested of them, to the best of their ability.
- To treat information obtained whilst volunteering in a confidential manner - this can be information about clients or other workers, paid and unpaid.
- To recognise the right of the organisation to expect quality of service from all its volunteers.

Guidelines for Involving and Managing Volunteers

- To recognise that they represent the organisation and therefore need to act in an appropriate manner at all times.
- To honour any commitment made to the best of their abilities, notifying the organisation in good time should they be unable to keep that commitment e.g. for holidays.
- To be willing to undertake appropriate training with respect to health & safety issues, insurance liability and general good practice as necessary for the voluntary work undertaken.
- To abide by any relevant policies and procedures.
- To offer suggestions for changes/improvements in working practices to the Volunteer Co-ordinator/Project Officer.