



T3SC Factsheet

Volunteers

Introduction

Getting the right people (and enough of them!) is one of the basic challenges of working with volunteers. Here are some of the issues you need to consider when taking on volunteers.

Before you recruit

You should first ensure that you are well prepared. It is no good recruiting volunteers if you don't know what they will do, how you will support them, or what procedures you will have for selection. The starting point is to decide why you want volunteers and what is appropriate work for them to do. If you have paid staff you should consult with them to ensure a good understanding of volunteering throughout your organisation. Make sure you involve people at board and senior management level in these discussions too; their understanding of and strategic support for volunteering is vital. Once you have consulted about volunteer involvement it can be useful to draw up a Volunteering Policy for the organisation, including the basic principles behind your volunteer-involvement and your practice guidelines for working with volunteers (for example, the payment of expenses).

For more information on what to consider when producing a volunteer policy read Volunteering England's free guide, *Get it right from the start* (available as a PDF document) on their website: www.volunteering.org.uk/

Support

All volunteers need support. What kind of support you provide will depend on the nature of their work and their needs. Key elements of support can include:

- ◆ Supervision - regular time to talk and plan.
- ◆ Voluntary work outlines like a job description for volunteers.
- ◆ Problem solving procedures.
- ◆ Training - everyone must be given sufficient training to do their work well.
- ◆ Recognition - identifying meaningful ways to recognise the contribution volunteers make.

Selection

For some voluntary work selection can be very informal, and focus on an introductory chat about the work and the potential volunteer's interests. If the role has some degree of responsibility, however (for example, working with people, money or dangerous equipment), selection procedures should be more formal.

Recruitment

Recruiting volunteers can be seen as a similar process to advertising (you are trying to sell the benefits of volunteering with your organisation), and as with any advertising it is critical that you have a clear message. The nature of this message will depend on your organisation and the work you are wanting volunteers to do. However, in general it will include:

- ◆ What the voluntary work is.
- ◆ What the organisation as a whole does.
- ◆ How a new volunteer can make a difference.
- ◆ How to find out more.

Most methods of recruitment elaborate on these four elements of the basic message.

Ensure recruits are informed, motivated and know how to get involved! There are a number of ways you can advertise your volunteer roles.

A couple of things to bear in mind are:

- ♦ Use the Volunteer Centre in Ashton. They act as an agency for placing volunteers and may have people looking to volunteer in your field already!
- ♦ Word of mouth – often very effective, and the way most volunteers are recruited. However, it could bring in people similar to the ones already working for you, so if you want to broaden the range of volunteers consider other methods as well.

Motivation

It is useful to think about the possible motivations that people might have for becoming volunteers. Why should someone volunteer for your organisation? This can help you to design volunteering opportunities and influence your recruitment message. Different volunteers will have different reasons for volunteering. Motivations might include:

- ♦ Commitment to the organisation/cause - emphasise how they will make a difference.
- ♦ Meeting people - volunteering can be a very sociable activity!
- ♦ Gaining skills - stress the skills and experience that volunteers can gain.
- ♦ Utilising existing skills - some people want to put their skills to a good cause.
- ♦ Keeping active - more and more older people are volunteering.

Making it easy

Volunteering can be quite daunting. People might not be sure what they are getting into and could be worried that the commitment will end up being greater than they want. It is important, therefore, to be flexible when taking on new recruits. It can be useful to offer tasters of volunteering so that the volunteer and organisation can get to know one another better. You will also need to spend some time finding out what people are looking for and what they have to offer.

Volunteer's Expenses

It is reasonable to reimburse volunteers for any out of pocket expenses incurred. These could either be whilst undertaking the volunteering opportunity, or getting there.

Remember that for job seekers looking to upskill themselves in preparation for getting into paid work, having to pay to get to a volunteer placement may be a barrier to their participation. Your organisation should include within its volunteer policy a statement regarding what can and cannot be reimbursed, the rates at which money will be paid and the method of claiming/payment. Volunteers should not be paid a flat rate, as this could be construed as a wage and therefore be liable to tax or offset against any benefits they are entitled to receive. Payments should be made against receipts only, so you are clearly reimbursing out of pocket expenses. If you are offering reimbursement of mileage, HM Revenue and Customs have an approved rate of 40p per mile for car journeys.

CRB checks

It is not always necessary to have your volunteers CRB checked. Only if the role will involve regular contact with vulnerable clients is it essential. The Cabinet Office has produced a comprehensive guide to CRB checks for volunteering.

Other sources of information

Volunteering England, www.volunteering.org.uk

Volunteer Centre, Tameside, www.tamesidevb.org.uk

Criminal Records Bureau checks for Volunteering

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/~media/assets/

Office of the Third Sector, www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/CRB%20final%20pdf.ashx

***For more information please contact T3SC
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