

Rural Action Yorkshire

A Guide to Managing Volunteers

Many community buildings rely on the generous help and support of volunteers.

It is important to get the management of your workforce right from the start, even at the recruitment stage. Recruit the right people in the right roles and manage them effectively long term to ensure a happy, motivated and retained volunteer workforce.

This guide aims to outline a few simple steps that you can take to ensure volunteering is a positive experience for all involved.

Here are our 10 top tips to managing your volunteers:

1. Understand your volunteer roles
2. Create diverse and interesting role descriptions, ensuring equality and fairness with employees
3. Offer induction sessions for new volunteers
4. Offer training and development opportunities
5. All volunteers need support and guidance
6. Use experienced volunteers as mentors
7. Maintain regular communications
8. Include your volunteers in decision making
9. Recognise and reward volunteer contribution
10. Treat your volunteers as you would paid members of staff

Recruiting the right volunteers

Before you start the recruitment process ensure that you understand fully the roles that you want volunteers to perform and how you will support them.

Remember that the creation of diverse and interesting volunteer roles will support you longer term in employing and managing volunteers

Get these early stages right and it gives volunteers an opportunity to make a real difference in your organisation often bringing in new skills, enthusiasm and a desire to make an impact.

On-going management and motivation

All volunteers, whatever their role and experience will need support to perform their role. Volunteering England recognises the following as key elements of support you can provide to ensure your volunteer workforce remains motivated and focused:

- **Develop a Volunteering Policy**, (if relevant to the needs and size of your organisation)
- **Draft Volunteer Role Descriptions**, for each different role you recruit for, these should provide clarity on the relationship between employees and volunteers
- **Provide appropriate induction sessions and training opportunities**, as with paid employees it is essential that volunteers are provided with the training they need to do their job well
- **Effective and reliable supervision**, a focus on scheduled time to talk, review and plan
- **Inclusion and consultation**, of your volunteer workforce in organisation wide decision making processes, including meetings, working groups and also social events
- **Recognition**, identifying meaningful and public ways to recognise the contribution volunteers make

A positive start.....

It is good practice to have an **induction** session where volunteers are introduced to colleagues they will be working with and given a general introduction to the community setting they will be working in. An **induction pack** is a useful way of providing volunteers with key information including role descriptions, key policies including expenses remuneration, health and safety and your volunteering policy if available.

The importance of training

Role descriptions and regular communications will help to identify specific **training requirements** and a **training plan** can be written to ensure your volunteers are able to perform all aspects of the role effectively. This can be used to monitor on going skills requirements as the volunteers progress and potentially move into other roles.

Effective and reliable supervision

The nature of on-going support and supervision required will differ from volunteer to volunteer. More experienced volunteers could act as mentors to new recruits or the more traditional method of one-to-one supervision is another option. However this needs to be established and understood quickly in order to ensure volunteers are treated as a paid employee would be within any community setting

Retaining your volunteer workforce

Volunteers will be extremely motivated about the reasons they are doing a role and also what they would like to get back in return. If these motivations are not met then the volunteer may move to another role where they can be fulfilled. So your focus should be on providing the following:

- Regular opportunities to learn new skills and gain new volunteering experiences
- A sense of personal achievement and contribution
- Making a difference to the community setting they are working for
- Social needs and making new friends
- Recognition and thanks to volunteer

Finally remember the importance of regular communications with your volunteers, this should help to identify any potential issues early on and ensure your volunteer workforce remain happy and motivated.



Further help

If you require further detail on any of the information provided in this guide there is a wealth of additional support available to ensure you make the most of your volunteer resource

ACAS - www.acas.org.uk

Offer free advice through the website or by telephone with a specific focus on the legal status of volunteers and their legal rights

National Council for Voluntary Organisations -

www.ncvo-vol.org.uk and www.knowhownonprofit.org

Provide a wide variety of advice and support to voluntary sector employers, including access to HRBank, a collection of HR policies and Job Descriptions donated by voluntary and community sector organisations

Volunteering England - www.volunteering.org.uk

The national volunteering development agency for England, offers a range of services, information to support anybody working with, or who has an interest in volunteering. This includes the free guide 'Get it right from the start,' which covers developing a volunteering policy

Rural Action Yorkshire (RAY) is an independent charity which works with local communities to improve the quality of life for all people living and working in rural Yorkshire.

We have further guidance documents available on our website, which are available free of charge to our members.

For more information, please call 0870 313 0270.

