

# Voluntary and Community Action

## Recruiting Volunteers

Volunteering Information Sheet No.6

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If you are an established organisation finding it hard to recruit new volunteers, you may need to review your existing volunteer programme. Perhaps you need to look again at how you involve volunteers in your work, your methods of recruitment or the type of support you offer. Our Volunteering Officer can give you help and advice in this area.

### Volunteering Information Sheets

The Volunteer Centre has produced a series of Information Sheets on:

- setting up and managing a volunteer programme
- recruitment and development of volunteers and trustees.



They are available to download from our website or by contacting the Volunteer Centre (details on back page).

### Developing your Recruitment Process

The recruitment of volunteers differs from that for employees and should be treated as a separate process. The aim of a volunteer recruitment process is to match the interests and skills of individuals with the requirements of a role. It involves sharing some information with a prospective volunteer so that a judgement can be made as to their suitability for a role.

When recruiting volunteers it is important to make sure:

- your Equal Opportunities Policy applies to the recruitment and treatment of volunteers as well as staff. The recruitment process should be specific to volunteers and be fair and non-discriminatory. Standard role descriptions, volunteer information forms and interview questions are a way of doing this. Volunteer support needs should be discussed and accommodated where reasonable. Separate Equal Opportunities Monitoring Forms should be completed by each volunteer during the recruitment process

- Role Descriptions are flexible and aspects of the role should be negotiated according to the needs and interests of the volunteer
- certain procedures may be necessary to check the person is safe to work with vulnerable clients (children and adults). You will need to carry out a risk assessment for the role to establish what type of checks you are going to make for this role
- the process should be informal, friendly and not take too long – volunteers can lose interest if kept waiting, they can be put off if the process is too detailed and intimidating.

### Matching Volunteers to Roles in the Organisation

Some organisations accept the help of anyone who offers it without a thought as to their suitability. Other organisations are very cautious and only accept the help of those they know. Either extreme means that the organisation may get unsuitable volunteers; one has limited their choice too much while the other has too open an approach.

VOLUNTARY  
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 **Volunteer Centre**  
Central Bedfordshire



**BEFORE YOU START TO RECRUIT FOR A NEW PROJECT/ ORGANISATION YOU NEED TO DO A LITTLE HOMEWORK TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU ARE READY TO TAKE ON NEW VOLUNTEERS.**

**SPEND SOME TIME THINKING ABOUT:**

- 1. WHAT YOU WANT YOUR VOLUNTEERS TO DO**
- 2. WHAT RESOURCES YOU HAVE TO MANAGE THEM AND MEET THEIR EXPENSES**
- 3. HOW YOU WILL MAKE THEM FEEL WELCOME AND ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE FULLY.**

Matching is a way of balancing risk with the chance to recruit openly to find suitably skilled volunteers. A successful match between a volunteer and a role is a win-win situation. The volunteer feels valued and the organisation benefits from having a skilled, motivated individual performing their role to a high standard.

In order to make a match between a role and a volunteer:

- you need to find out about the interests, experience and motivations of a prospective volunteer
- the volunteer needs to find out about the role and the organisation to make an informed choice as to whether this is the right opportunity for them
- you need to establish that they are suitable to work in the role and are safe with your particular clients/users
- you should establish the volunteer's support needs.

Typically this information is collected by filling in an information form, holding an interview, taking up references and sometimes carrying out Criminal Records Bureau checks.

### **First Contact With Prospective Volunteer**

Whether the person sends you an email, writes or telephones you, or whether they have been referred to you by the Volunteer Centre, they are looking for a swift response. They are offering valuable time and skills and expect the organisation to value and recognise these by making contact. If they wait more than a

few days for a response they will lose interest and move on.

The type of response you make may be to send them some further information about the organisation/role and to arrange a time for them to come and meet you for a face-to-face chat. Don't forget to check about their transport needs, other mobility issues, disability needs to enable them to attend and offer if possible to pay travel costs on receipt.

### **Matching a Volunteer With a Role**

This is best done at a face-to-face meeting with the volunteer. The person responsible for managing volunteer should be involved in this process. This may be Volunteer Coordinator or a committee member. Aim to be friendly and informal but well-organised and prepared. Avoid coming across as if you will guarantee the person the role as you may start to have doubts as to their suitability as the interview proceeds.

### **Interview**

You should meet the prospective volunteer and need not be formal about this. Questions to be asked of the volunteer should cover the following:

- why the volunteer wants the role
- what they would like to get out of their volunteering
- what experience, skills, hobbies they have that are relevant to the role
- what information the volunteer would like to know about the role
- any support needs

- whether the role can be altered to meet the needs/interests of the volunteer
- practical issues around their volunteering – hours, expenses, insurance etc
- reasons and procedures around checks that need to be made.

### Completing a Volunteer Information Form

It is also a good idea to fill in the volunteer information form with the volunteer during this meeting for the following reasons:

- it is more friendly and less official than giving a person a form to complete on their own
- you can explain the reasons for requesting the information you need
- you can overcome issues around not being able to complete the form themselves due to disability or language barriers.

### Preparing a Volunteer Information Form

- style and appearance of form should be friendly and written in straightforward language – not longer than two sides
- collect only relevant personal information so that you have contact details, whom to contact in an emergency and special health needs. Date of Birth and marital status may not be relevant
- experience, skills, interests, hobbies – should only be asked for if relevant to the role and build a picture of the person's level of experience in a particular area of work
- you should only ask for

information on criminal convictions where this is relevant and in line with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act

- you should only ask if the person is prepared to undergo a Criminal Records Bureau check if relevant to the role
- the volunteer should be asked to sign a declaration to say that the information they have given is true and if anything is found to be false they may be asked to leave the organisation.

Throughout the process use the interview experience to assess the level of their enthusiasm and commitment, general attitudes, maturity and stability, any hidden agendas and general suitability for the role. At the end of the interview make it clear what the next step in the process is and when you will make a decision about accepting the volunteer. Again avoid delays in getting back to the volunteer, keep them informed of where you are at in receiving references and Criminal Record Bureau disclosures. You may wish to allow the volunteer to start work with the organisation but closely monitor or have a different role until all necessary checks are complete.

### Taking up References

It is important to take up references provided by the volunteer. These may be from another volunteer-involving organisation with which they have volunteered or other community organisation they have belonged to. If these are not available then references can be provided by a work place, family or school/ college.



**YOU SHOULD PRODUCE DESCRIPTIONS FOR EACH VOLUNTEER ROLE TO MAKE SURE THAT THERE IS MEANINGFUL WORK FOR VOLUNTEERS TO DO. (SEE OUR CREATING VOLUNTEER ROLES, DESCRIPTIONS AND PERSON SPECIFICATIONS INFORMATION SHEET)**

**DEVELOPING A VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME IS AN EXCELLENT WAY TO PREPARE FOR VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT. IT INVOLVES DEVELOPING A VOLUNTEER POLICY AND BUILDING IN ADEQUATE RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE PROGRAMME. (SEE OUR WRITING A VOLUNTEER POLICY INFORMATION SHEET)**

If you are to undertake a Criminal Records Bureau check ask them to complete a Disclosure Form. For more information see our Information Sheet on the Criminal Records Bureau and the Screening of Paid Staff and Volunteers.

### Deciding if a Volunteer is Suitable

What to do if you have doubts about suitability?

- discuss your concerns with someone else in the organisation to gain their views and to check you are being fair in your concerns
- listen to any unease you feel and think of a way to follow up on it by asking the person to come back in and meet other volunteers/committee members/staff or clients. Carry out further checks
- ask the volunteer to undertake some initial training, followed by a closely supervised trial period.

If the volunteer is clearly unsuitable for the role then gently let them know by a face-to-face meeting, telephone call, email or letter. Explain that you have not been able to make a suitable match at this time and thank them

for their interest. Suggest that they contact the Volunteer Centre to explore further opportunities.

### Further Information and Resources

For more information or assistance in developing Volunteer Recruitment Procedures contact the Development Officer at Voluntary and Community Action or review the following resources:

- The Good Practice Guide for Everyone who Works with Volunteers, K Bowgett, K Dickie and M Restall, Volunteering England, 2nd Edition, 2002.
- Volunteer England website, [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)

Other Information Sheets in this series include:

- Recruiting Trustees
- Creating Volunteer Roles, Descriptions and Person Specifications
- Marketing your Volunteering Opportunities
- Criminal Records Bureau and Screening of Paid Staff and Volunteers
- Induction of Volunteers
- Writing a Volunteer Policy
- Dealing with Volunteer Problems.



### Voluntary and Community Action

**Bossard House**  
**West Street**  
**Leighton Buzzard**  
**Bedfordshire LU7 1DA**

**Tel: 01525 850559**  
**Fax: 01525 376281**  
**[mail@action-centralbeds.org.uk](mailto:mail@action-centralbeds.org.uk)**  
**[www.action-centralbeds.org.uk](http://www.action-centralbeds.org.uk)**

### How can the Volunteer Centre help?

If you are a voluntary organisation or community group operating in southern Bedfordshire, we can help by:

- promoting your volunteering opportunities and signposting volunteers to your organisation
- providing information, guidance and training in all aspects of good practice and volunteer management.

Please give us a call on 01525 850559 or email [volunteer@action-centralbeds.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@action-centralbeds.org.uk) to arrange a meeting.