

## Matching the Right Volunteer the Right Role

### Why is the matching process so important?

Volunteering is a two way process. The volunteer needs to decide if your organisation and the role is right for them and you need to decide if they're right for the role. It would be disappointing to go through all the hard work to get the volunteer ready to then to find out that's not for them. Taking the time to make sure that what you offer really suits the volunteer should help ensure that they're motivated to give their time to your organisation.

### How do I make sure the process is inclusive?

It is helpful to consider the following points when thinking about whether your approach to recruitment follows good equality and diversity principles: Wide marketing of volunteering opportunities Information about your organisation or group and ways in which volunteers can be involved should be made as widely available as possible. Providing information in a variety of formats can be more inclusive. Enlarging, simplifying and using symbols and visual aids in the text and making it available in other formats such as tape, Braille or via the Internet will make it more accessible. Some organisations display the 'positive about disabled ticks' or sign up to the Plain English campaign.

**Open to all volunteers:** Make statements in all recruitment campaigns to state that your organisation or group is open to involving volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities, and commits the necessary resources. Give examples, perhaps include photographs and quotes from your existing volunteers.

**Monitoring diversity:** It is good practice for your organisation or group to monitor the diversity of the volunteer team. There is more on this in the Equality and Diversity Guide.

**Making adjustments:** It is important to ask volunteers what help they may need to undertake their role. Some volunteers may need adjustments, for example a particular style of seat for their desk, a screen on their computer to make it easier to read or might like an advance copy of training notes.

**Be realistic:** if you feel you can't offer the level of support that a volunteer needs then suggest an alternative role.

**Make reasonable adjustments to the interview:** it may be important to offer reasonable adjustments to an interview process for some volunteers, even for an informal interview. This may be offering a verbal interview rather than the need to complete an application form or adjusting interview times to suit employment or caring commitments.

**Consistent approach to references or official checks:** You should have a considered approach to taking up references or official checks which is consistent and equitable for all volunteers, bearing in mind the nature of the organisation's work and the volunteering role.

**Consistent approach to type of convictions:** Your organisation or group should have considered which types of convictions or disclosures may or may not be relevant to the volunteering being undertaken.

For more information on this you can access our guides on ***Creating an Inclusive Volunteer Environment*** and ***Volunteer Equality and Diversity***.

## What should I do when a potential volunteers makes contact?

- Most potential volunteers will probably get in touch by phone or email. Have a think about how your organisation will respond to these enquiries. Whoever is answering the phone needs to know what to say and who to pass people on to.
- A message might be left in the evening as people are at work during the day. If your hours don't match and you'll not be able to phone then back, maybe you could update your voicemail and ask people to leave their address so you can send an information pack. Or plan to stay late to return calls.
- It's useful to chat with potential volunteers over the phone. Pick up on their manner, as some people are chattier than others. They might just want basic information and you can leave the detail to a later meeting. It's a chance for you to find out a bit about what they're interested in. And you might also need to let them know about anything essential such as if they need a driving licence.
- Have a pack ready to send out that has more information in it. You could put in information about your organisation, the role descriptions and the application form. Including a flow chart that shows the steps in the process is a great way to let a volunteer know what's ahead.

## What should I do next?

The process should be as simple as possible and will be different for different roles. Potential volunteers will be put off by too many steps, especially if they feel they're not needed.

- You might just ask volunteers to complete a short form to tell you why they're interested and then get more details when you meet.
- Too long an application form can be a barrier for potential volunteers. Maybe English is not their first language, they have a visual impairment or they're not confident filling in forms.
- You don't need to ask for any more than just what you need.
- Volunteers might like to be offered a taster day before completing any forms. This way they can meet some other volunteers, get an idea of what it's about and decide if it's for them.
- You don't have to meet a volunteer before they get started. This might sound controversial, and it's probably only for roles that don't need training or a PVG check. But often it's the getting started when a volunteer will know if it's for them. Also, if it's a short term role or you can offer an induction, then you can meet them at this stage.

## Meeting a potential volunteer

When you meet with a potential volunteer you want to keep it as relaxed and informal as possible. Use the time to get to know them, find out what they think they are good and what they are interested in doing. You should be listening more and talking less. The checklist below can help make sure you put the potential volunteer at ease.

## Checklist

- If you arrange to meet a potential volunteer, make sure they have details of where to meet and how to get there. A way of contacting you on the day can also be useful – just in case.
- Check if the individual has any support or accessibility needs so you can make arrangements.

- If there's reception staff at your building, make sure that they know the person's coming and welcomes them – first impressions count.
- Have all the paperwork you might need printed out. This could include the role description, application form if not already completed, information pack or a current newsletter.
- Make sure there's a quiet area for your meeting and that the furniture is set out informally.
- Have a list of the things you'd like to cover (see below) and some 'open' questions that will help get the conversation going.
- If possible, maybe you can introduce them to relevant staff and volunteers. There might be a volunteer 'in action' in the building that they could observe, join or chat to for a short time.
- Make sure you are not disturbed and have given yourself enough time.
- Give time to the volunteer. This is a two way process so they need time to ask the questions they have to help them decide if it's for them. Whilst you want to keep it informal you also want to make sure you get all the information you need to make sure you can match them to the right role for them. Using the suggestions below can help you but remember to keep it relaxed!

As well as outlining the volunteer role, you should provide some information about your organisation or group.

You may want to cover:

- The aims of the organisation and the role of volunteers.
- The service users or clients, as appropriate.
- The role description and what the volunteer will do.
- Training and support offered to volunteers, including any compulsory training.
- How the volunteer will be supported in their role.
- Your expectations of volunteers.
- The days and times available. If there is a time limit on the role (for example, a project with a fixed timescale), then you should explain this too.
- Resources available to volunteers whilst they are volunteering for you. You may want to talk to the potential volunteer about:
  - What attracts them to volunteering with your organisation or to take part in this kind of activity.
  - What they hope to gain from volunteering.
  - Relevant skills, interests and experience.
  - Time availability.
  - Any additional support needs.

- Names of potential referees.
- When they would be able to begin volunteering, or start any required training.
- Give them time to ask any questions they have!

Don't forget to keep it informal and conversational. For example, if the role is at a fixed time/date then ask the volunteer about their availability. You can then talk about the availability needed for different roles and which one might suit them. This could then lead to talking about other aspects of the roles and what might suit their interests. If the roles are more flexible then you could start with this first.

## **Closing the meeting**

- Offer to cover any travel expenses (if your organisation can do so), and explain how they can claim this.
- Explain what happens next and when the volunteer can expect to hear from you. Also remind them that's it's a two way process and you want to give them time to think about the meeting and decide if they want to go for it.

## **What's next?**

You've got the forms from the volunteer and you've met with them to find out more. Now you have two options:

- Saying yes:** send a letter and welcome pack to the volunteer to let them know you'd like them to start as a volunteer with you. This should let them know what happens next.
- Saying no:** not every volunteer opportunity is right for every potential volunteer and sometimes you will have to say no. Be ready to explain, in the nicest way possible, why the individual is not right for the role. It's always useful to be able to offer an alternative volunteering opportunity, or suggest something more suitable elsewhere.

## **Need some more help?**

If you would like more help or advice in relation to this guide please get in touch with us:

- Telephone: 01851 700366
- Email: [stornoway@volunteeringwesternisles.co.uk](mailto:stornoway@volunteeringwesternisles.co.uk)
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**Based on matching the right volunteer to the right role by Volunteer Scotland.**