

Promoting Positive Volunteer and Staff Relations

Why are positive volunteer and staff relations important?

Often, volunteers will be involved alongside paid staff. Most of the time this works well and staff value the extra support volunteers bring. Ensuring staff support volunteers and make them feel welcome is important to ensuring volunteers have a positive experience. Here are some suggestions how you can help create positive relationships with staff and volunteers.

What do I need to think about?

To help you develop positive volunteer staff relations we have developed some things to consider.

Planning for new roles

It is really helpful to involve staff in developing new volunteer roles. This means they can discuss what would go well with the work of staff and existing volunteer roles. They'll also know why the role was created and what it's achieving. Staff and current volunteers can take part in trying out a new role and have a chance to feed in their thoughts. They could also help with taster sessions for new volunteers. Involve trade unions. Sometimes it is valuable to involve your trade union when developing new roles.

An underpinning principle should be that volunteers do not do the work of paid staff. A useful reference point is the **Charter for strengthening relations between paid staff and volunteers** established by Volunteer Scotland and STUC. (Available on the Volunteer Scotland site.)

Developing confidence in each other

Paid staff need to feel confident that all volunteers are able to do their role well and that they are not a threat to employment or conditions of service. They might also want to know how you'll deal with any problems if they come up. Volunteers should feel confident that staff value their involvement and they are welcomed and recognised for their role in achieving the organisation's aims. Providing regular opportunities for volunteers and staff to discuss any successes or challenges will help develop confidence.

Code of conduct between staff and volunteers

It is in everyone's interest to ensure that all volunteers have a positive experience. It is important to think about dignity and respect for all those involved in your organisation and thanking volunteers. Some organisations have a **Respect Policy** that outlines the behaviour expected of both staff and volunteers when working together.

Communicating

You can use a range of ways to communicate effectively with staff and volunteers that can help to identify or avoid difficulties. This could include a monthly volunteer report to the board, volunteer representatives at staff meetings and vice versa, an agenda item about volunteering at staff meetings and vice versa, joint meetings between staff and volunteers, a staff/volunteer newsletter, social media, annual award for the best staff/volunteer team achievement, part of the website dedicated to volunteering updates, a volunteer staff forum or a suggestion/idea box.

Adding Value

A good way of thinking about volunteer roles is that it should be complementary to the activities of staff. It's useful to provide an example of how volunteers complement the work of paid staff, and show how the combined efforts of paid staff and volunteers provide an enhanced service with added value.

Named contact

It is important that volunteers have a named person who can be contacted with any questions or concerns.



Staff & Volunteer Inductions.

Along with the communication mentioned above, some organisations or groups include volunteering in the staff induction processes. Others have literature for new staff that describes their organisation's commitment to volunteering and the volunteer roles. All volunteers should understand how what they do fits into the overall activity of the organisation and how it sits with staff roles.

Offering an Induction makes sure there's time to cover all of this. Volunteer coordinators or managers will often have to be flexible in the approaches used to create good relations between staff and volunteers. Constantly check if what you are doing is working and do not be afraid to ask staff and volunteers what else is needed.

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
- Website: www.volunteeringwesternisles.co.uk

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