



Building an effective volunteer team

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My Journey



Volunteer Centre
Croydon

How can you build an effective volunteer team



TRUST

- **T**ask Description & **T**raining program
- **R**ecruitment
- **U**nderstanding constraints (volunteer & organisation)
- **S**upport
- **T**eam

Task Description



- Use it to form your advert
 - Be consistent with your requirements
- Exciting or boring?
 - Roles that sound too exciting can lead to volunteers thinking that they are going to get more out of it than they are. Or are you advertising for a role which no one is looking at or is the same as everyone else's. Make it unique but realistic.
- Does it say what you need volunteers to do?
 - Be clear misinformation or information that is unclear can lead to the wrong volunteer applying for your role.
- What are the benefits of volunteering with your organisation?
 - Think about it from the volunteer's perspective and what can they get out of it. – please do not say potential to get paid work. A volunteering role should always be voluntary if you talk about the potential to be a paid role could lead to volunteers feeling rejected, hurt and they will probably want to move on which means that you could potentially lose volunteers that would stay with you longer.
- Skills required?
 - Are you asking too much or are you not asking enough, do not waste time here set it at the right pitch to get the right volunteer interested.
- Hours and location?
 - Where does the role take place? Is it in one place or is there a chance that they will be required to move around in different location (this might be seen as a great opportunity for some however, some may feel more comfortable in 1 location)
- Support provided?
 - What will you provide 1-2-1, identified key support worker, lunch travel expenses etc.

Training program (including Induction)

Induction

- What does it look like?
 - Do you carry out a group induction or 1-2-1? How long does it last, do you offer it at different times of the day and on different days in order to accommodate the volunteer.
- Covering the basics
 - H&S, Confidentiality, Fire drill, Safeguarding? Org expectations, expenses and how to get them reimbursed, what to do when they come back to volunteer for the 1st time, give volunteers the opportunity to ask questions
- Is it role specific or a blanket induction?
 - There is usually a need to have both. A blanket induction covering the minimum volunteers need to know may be easy in groups, however project inductions allow you to focus on specific outcomes and expectations

• Training

- How relevant is training?
 - Is there training people can opt in and out of, do you offer opportunities for volunteers to attend training courses open to staff (if relevant)
- Training programs?
 - Who delivers your training program is it you (providing you with the opportunity to see how volunteers cope with processes etc.) or do you have volunteers that support other volunteers to learn the ropes? They may be able to provide added tips. Do you offer on-line training and if so how do you ensure that volunteers understand what they have been asked to do?
- Resources and support material?
 - What support material do you provide, do you have an office manual, guidance notes, are there processes that once you have trained a volunteer they can go back to refer to if you are not around?

Recruitment



- **How long does it take you to respond?**
 - No more than 2 week, how are you responding is it all email, do you provide paper versions of application form, do you have the capacity to provide large print?
- **What information do you provide?**
 - Application form, a copy of the TD, FAQ doc could provide answers to some of the questions and help individuals make an informed choice without wasting time. Don't send too much as this can be off-putting
- **Do volunteers need a DBS? (www.gov.uk/find-out-dbs-check)**
 - Have you checked to ensure you are entitled to apply for a DBS for the role?
- **What type of references do you accept?**
 - Character or work, some volunteers may not have current work references. With all reference they should know the individuals for at least 2yrs and not be a family member
- **Interview process**
 - There are 3 questions you should ask. Why someone wants to volunteer? What they are wanting to get out of the role? What skills they have in relation to the role? These questions should pretty much provide you with some indication of suitability, I know that you may ask these questions on an application form however, I have seen time and time again 2 different people from the same application. What do I mean? What is written on paper isn't always what you see when you interview them. I have seen applications which have been clearly written by a work coach or someone who is not the person I am interviewing
 - You may also notice that an individual may not be as confident writing however they have particularly good verbal communication skills.
 - Do you include a task to see if the individual would be competent in the role.

Understanding constraints

Volunteers

- **Their ability**
 - The application form and recruitment process should give you some idea of the volunteer's ability and just how much they can contribute, however as the volunteer grows and develops take this into account and adapt what they can do within the role accordingly
- **The amount of time they can volunteer**
 - Have they told you how much time they can give to the project? Can you accommodate this? If you need volunteers to commit to a certain number of hours how flexible can you be for the right volunteer?
- **The reason they are volunteering**
 - reducing isolation – up skilling/gain experience (part of course) – enhancing their CV or getting something current on it. Reasons why someone wants to volunteer can provide you with an indication on how long they will stay with you. You need access whether you can take someone on for that period of time



Organisation & Role

- **Volunteer involvement**
 - Fair and equal process, Do all volunteers go through the same process? Are friends and family treated the same way if they want to volunteer or are you tempted to say it's ok I know them they do not need that second reference? Or are you biased based on something you have heard about a person and not giving them a fair chance
- **Restrictions of the role**
 - Is there a conflict of interest? For example Volunteers on our AAV project are based at the custody suite, if we have an application from someone who is a solicitor for a local law firm that deals with CJ we would probably have to turn the volunteer down. It is important to look at restrictions in place not only in terms of the volunteer role but also that of the organisation that they work for or even volunteer with

Support (incl. Retention)



An effective volunteering team happens when you ensure that you have the right support. If you do not have the right support in place volunteers can feel lost in a role or within an organisation.

- **Group meetings**

- Are a great way for volunteers within the same projects to meet one another (esp. on projects where volunteers are on different site). It gives them the chance to ask questions, share experience and also assist you in discovering common issues in a shorter period of time, however the downside of this is sometimes less confident volunteers may not have an opportunity to speak up

- **1-2-1 support**

- It is vital to ensure that everyone has a chance to have 1-2-1 providing you & the volunteer with opportunity to discuss specific issues and individual needs. Having a mixture of both groups and 1-2-1 meeting are ideal and supports the growth of the role and the individual volunteer.

- **Communication methods**

- How do you relay information esp. to those volunteers that you do not see on a regular basis using tools like Whatsapp (remember issues in relation to GDPR), send out newsletter (mailchimp) or using resources like Better impact to manage your volunteers (which also has news pages on the system where you can share information across your volunteers) are a great resource

- **Downtime while volunteering**

- How often do you stop and speak to your volunteers about everyday stuff (not work related), VCC we do this twice a day (at about 11 and 3pm) for coffee break. Think about why some volunteers come to you? Some volunteers want to get out of the house, reduce isolation, meet other people. Create an environment where they will want to be there should always be a balance in what you ask of your volunteers.

Support (incl. Retention) cont'd.

- Recognition

- How do you give recognition to your volunteers, how often do you say thank you, (I try and say it every time they are ready to leave for the day) do you share what your volunteers do with the wider organisation, (we send newsletters out to our staff with a photo of new volunteers – enabling all staff to recognise who our volunteers are), when volunteers move on we have the opportunity to share their story which inspires others to volunteer

- Social events

- We have picnics in the summer and a Christmas party (2 formal events). Think about introducing events on an annual basis it could be as simple as afternoon teas in the office as a way of saying thank you.

- Rewards

- We use Better impact, where we ask our volunteers to record their volunteering hours and give out certificates when volunteers have completed 50 hrs, 100hrs, 250hrs, 500hrs and at present up to 1500hr going on to 2000 hours. We have the Value You card which we encourage volunteers to sign up to which provides discounts. Remember rewards should not be monetary, it is a way of showing appreciation for their contribution to the work of your organisation

- Awards

- We have the Team London award, Croydon civic award check out what is in your area to see how you can put your volunteers forward

Team

Ownership –

By encouraging ownership – volunteers feel that they are part of something bigger they are contributing to the organisations aims and objects, their community, something that they are passionate about.

At the Volunteer Centre, volunteers support us to enable hundreds of organisation in Croydon to promote their opportunities. Sometimes we have to remind them that its not just about the email or phone call they have processed, but by carrying out their role it not only supports local organisation find the right volunteer but it helps the wider community in Croydon and can have a positive impact on the life of and individual or family.

Share the bigger picture with them its all about the domino effect.

