

MANAGING VOLUNTEERS

Finding Volunteers

It can be hard to know where to start, but there are a few reliable ways of finding people to help with your work.

Before you start recruiting, it helps to think about what you need volunteers to do and when. Create a simple role description that makes the opportunity sound attractive and enjoyable. The role description should include the kind of skills that the volunteer might need, the tasks they will carry out, who will be responsible for them and what sort of time commitment you need. You can use this to attract the right kind of people to the role.

- Word of mouth is a really good way of finding more volunteers. Ask your existing volunteers to ask around and ask people you know. It's hard to resist a personal invite!
- Ask around local community groups - maybe ones who use the same venue as you. Contact leaders of community groups and ask them to promote the opportunity to their members.
- Print off some posters or flyers.
- Use social media. If you can create a social media profile that makes your group look like a fun place to volunteer, people are more likely to want to get involved.
- Local press and radio can also be a great way of reaching people in your local community. You could also consider village newsletters and magazines.
- Spark Somerset are also very happy to advertise volunteering opportunities for you on our website and social media.

When creating your advertising, it is helpful to include the following:

- What you do and what cause or group of people your group benefits.
- The different kind of tasks that a volunteer might do.
- The difference a volunteer can make to your service users.
- What the volunteer can gain from working with the organisation.
- How prospective volunteers can find out more.

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Try to avoid using the word “volunteer” in the headline of your advert, as some people are put off by this. It is more helpful to frame it in terms of “giving back” or “helping others”. There is an example at the end of the document.

Volunteer Applications

Have a plan for the volunteer recruitment process and make sure that you can respond to enquiries about volunteering quickly. An application form will help you obtain basic information about volunteering but keep it simple. Most potential volunteers just want to get on with the “helping part” and can be put off by bureaucracy.

If you choose to do an interview, keep it simple and informal. As well as an opportunity for you to find out about the applicant, it can also be an opportunity for you make sure that they understand what is involved in the role.

Induction and training for volunteers.

Volunteers are much more likely to stay if they feel confident and supported in what they’re doing. Plan their induction and take time to explain your organisation and who key people are and make sure that they feel comfortable in their setting. Organise for new volunteers to shadow someone so that they can learn how to complete day to day tasks.

Offer training for more complex issues such a safeguarding. Spark Somerset offers subsidised training on a range of subjects relating to volunteers and volunteering.

References

References can be helpful to double check that a volunteer is right for the role. If someone hasn’t got much work experience, they can find it hard to suggest referees. However, a teacher or local community leader who knows them well should be able to provide the information you need. Initially a letter or email is enough, but if you need more information, a phone call can be beneficial.

DBS Checks on Volunteers

As your volunteers don’t offer personal care, it is unlikely that they would need DBS checks. If you’re unsure please contact Spark Somerset’s DBS Officer, Denise Timmins on 07792 237774, or email: denise.timmins@sparksomerset.org.uk)

Handling difficult situations

There are bound to be times when difficult situations arise with volunteers, though these are rare. There may be a personality clash, or a disagreement about how things should be done.

If problems arise it is best to deal with them swiftly. After discussing a problem with the volunteer, make sure that they understand what is expected of them and agree a measurable goal or target. Set a date to meet to check on progress.

If problems continue, you may want to consider the following:

- Reassign to a new area of work.
- Retrain to refresh or develop skills.
- Revitalise by offering some 'time out'/break from their voluntary work.
- Refer to another organisation or a source of help.
- Retirement, making sure to recognise their contribution and encourage ongoing (social) links to the organisation.

Try to ensure that, when a volunteer leaves, they do so on a positive note. Someone who leaves feeling disgruntled will not do a good job of attracting more volunteers to your organisation.

Insurance

You will need to ensure that Employers Liability Insurance is in place to cover your volunteers. Speak to your insurance provider to ensure that you have the right cover in place.

Succession planning

People's lives are always changing and shifting. There is always a chance that they may have to move on. Try to think ahead and have a plan for recruiting more volunteers. Take opportunities for buddying new volunteers with existing.

Sample Advert:

Are you looking for a way to give something back to your community? Do you enjoy spending time with people, or do you have admin or catering skills?

Active Living Group volunteers make life better for people in their community every day. They bring people together and help them to engage with their area. The groups allow people to take part in activities, spend time with other people and access information on how to stay fit and well.

If you help out, you will have the chance to improve the quality of life of people in your community who might otherwise not speak to someone for days at a time.

You could be behind the scenes helping with finance or catering or get involved in the activities for older people.

If you feel you have the skills and some enthusiasm to spare, we would love to hear from you.

[Insert contact details]