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Supporting and retaining volunteers





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Volunteers can make a tremendous contribution towards supporting your project, activities, services, beneficiaries which all make a real difference within their communities. It's important to ensure that this wealth of activity is recognised and strengthened by valuing and supporting volunteers.

Volunteer centred approach

-  **Be welcoming** Be friendly, thoughtful and considerate so volunteers are encouraged to return.
-  **Be person-centred** How does your organisation focus on volunteer's needs? Does your organisation treat every volunteer as an individual?
-  **Be supportive** Consider appointing a Volunteer Lead from your employee pool who will become the main point of contact for volunteers, so they have the appropriate support tailored to their needs.
-  **Be attentive** Think about what makes a good volunteer experience. Ask all volunteers for their feedback to evaluate and review what the volunteering experience is like for them. Does your organisation ask its disabled volunteers if there's more that can be done to support and retain them, such as communicating in a way they understand and can access?



4. Supporting and retaining volunteers

Volunteer management

- Be aware that managing volunteers requires a different set of skills from those used in managing paid staff.
- Remember, volunteers are not employees therefore there are no contractual obligations for them to meet. They require a more flexible, informal approach.
- Continuous support and training should be provided for volunteers.
- Encourage volunteers to make contributions to their role and to consider trying tasks or responsibilities they're interested in and have the skills to / there is training to do.
- Get to know volunteers so you can find ways to unlock their potential and harness their enthusiasms and talents.
- Supervision sessions with volunteers should ideally be recorded and linked to aims and aspirations of each volunteer so that they can track their progression and have a record which may be useful for a CV or job application.

Volunteer induction

An induction is important for welcoming volunteers into your organisation. It will help them feel part of the team and become

familiar with the role as well as understanding where their contribution fits into the bigger organisational picture and allow you to realise people's individual needs.

Things to include in your induction

- Welcome letter from the team or organisation head.
- Information about the organisation, such as the organisational structure, vision, mission, and values and how volunteers will contribute to helping to achieve this.
- Information about GOGA.
- Volunteer role description.
- List of key contacts including name, role, phone number and email address.
- Health and safety information.
- Code of Conduct.
- Volunteer agreement (if applicable).
- Expense claim form with an explanation on how to claim expenses and what expenses can be claimed (if applicable).
- Information about other policies and procedures and how to access them.
- Feedback/complaints form and information about complaints procedure.

In conversation with Joe Jackson and why he volunteers



Resources

[Volunteer induction template](#) ▶

[Volunteer handbook template](#) ▶

[Expenses template](#) ▶

[Volunteer supervision template](#) ▶

[Top tips to retain and support volunteers](#) ▶

[NVCO volunteer report](#) ▶



4. Supporting and retaining volunteers

Volunteer retention and effective communication

Retaining volunteers requires ongoing communication to ensure that the volunteer feels happy, welcome, supported and fulfilled in their role.

Be mindful that both disabled and non-disabled volunteers may have changing circumstances and commitments, which could mean that they will no longer be able to volunteer or their role may need to be adjusted. Follow the tips above to develop a trusting and open relationship with volunteers in order to develop a true understanding of their needs.



Top tips!

- Regular and consistent communication through suitable channels.
- Reviewing roles to ensure it's the best fit for the volunteer and to allow for change.
- Ensure that the support offered is adequate for the volunteer's unique needs.
- Training/development opportunities.
- Involve volunteers in wider organisation development/activities.
- Be volunteer centred - have your volunteer's needs changed?

Blog: "The value of good volunteers is immeasurable."

[Read our blog on the value of volunteers](#) ▶



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