



Handbook on Working with Volunteers

This handbook was developed by iVolunteer Team

Introduction

Welcome to the 1st edition of “ Handbook¹ on working with Volunteers” by iVolunteer

If you're involved in managing volunteers, you will know that it can often be hard to find the information and advice you need. This handbook will help you address issues like how to source volunteers, how to select volunteers, how to manage volunteers and how to ensure that both organization and volunteers objective are met at the end of the day.

We have tried to make handbook as easy to use as possible. We hope you will find this useful. If you have issues that aren't dealt in this handbook then you can write to us at handbook@ivolunteer.org.in

iVolunteer Team

¹ This Handbook is Adapted from “Good Practice Guide” from the National Center for Volunteering, U.K and other resources on the internet

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Chapter 1

Why work with Volunteers at all?

Whether to take a volunteer is not a decision that should be taken lightly. It needs commitment from all levels of the organization: from employees, to senior management, right up to the trustees or the Board of Directors. A discussion therefore needs to be taken a) about the reasons for taking on volunteers b) what their role will be in the organization c) what they will bring to it and d) how they will be treated.

Bringing in a volunteer will inevitably have an impact on your organization and how it works. Dealing with volunteers means the organization will have to be flexible, be aware of diversity, and respond to different outlooks and experiences.

Many issues come up when an organization starts taking on volunteers. There may be doubt from staff if they feel that the volunteers will be encroaching on what they are doing. The question of who will be managing the volunteers may well arise. Managing volunteers is different from managing paid staff, but still requires time and skills. The organization as a whole has to be both aware of and happy with the reason for taking on volunteers.

Sometimes the best place to start is with the basics. Take some time to discuss why you are taking on volunteers. If the only reasons you can come up with are that they will be cheap labor, or that it's simply because you feel you should, then it is likely that you do not have a valid reason for taking on volunteers at all. But if you have reasons to work with and through volunteers articulating the reasons for involving them forms the foundation on which your organization will build its volunteer programme.

Volunteers bring many benefits to the organization and the benefits are so special to volunteers that paying a salary would negate or change them completely.

- Volunteers have perceived credibility with clients, donors, government officials, and others for the very reason that they do not receive a salary from the organization and are therefore seen as having no financial vested interest in what they are advocating.
- It often makes a difference to the recipient of a service that the provider is there purely because he or she wants to be.
- Volunteers are insider/outside, bringing a community perspective and a wide range of backgrounds consciously different from the employees. Because they give a few hours at a time, volunteers have a broader point of view than the paid staff, who may be too close to the work to 'miss the obvious'.

- Volunteers extend your sphere of influence and access to additional people, businesses and organizations in the community. Even the volunteer who helps you once a year becomes another person with knowledge about your work.
- Volunteers can be asked to work odd hours, in varying locations, and to fill special needs for which staff time cannot be justified yet which are important to individual clients.
- Volunteers often feel freer to criticize and speak their minds than employees do.
- Volunteers can experiment with new ideas and service approaches that are not yet ready to be funded - or that no one wants to fund for a wide variety of reasons. Historically, in fact, volunteers have always been the pioneers in creating new services, often against the tide of opposition from more traditional institutions.

Other benefits of volunteers

Since we live in the real, limited-resources world, what are the other, more tangible, benefits that volunteer involvement brings to an organization? Volunteers offer:

- Extra hands and minds, and so the potential to do more than could be done simply with limited salaried staff.
- Diversity. Volunteers may be different from the salaried staff in terms of age, race, social background, income, educational level, etc.
- Skills that complement the ones employees already possess. Ideally, volunteers are recruited exactly because the salaried staff cannot have every skill or talent necessary to do all aspects of the job.
- Community ownership of solutions to mutual problems. Especially if your organization addresses issues affecting the quality of life, when people participate as volunteers they empower themselves to improve their own communities (which is your mission, after all).
- Research suggests that satisfied volunteers frequently become donors of money and goods as well. They also support special events and fundraisers by attending themselves and bringing along family and friends.

Do You Have The Resources To Work With Volunteers?

There are many things to consider before bringing volunteers into an organization. A key issue is the impact on your resources, financial and otherwise.

It is common for people to think that, because volunteers are by definition unpaid, there are few financial implications from their involvement. Being unsalaried does not make them free, however. For instance, you will need to budget for reimbursing volunteers' out-of-pocket expenses.

Volunteers require space and equipment. There is no point arranging for a volunteer to come into your office every Tuesday if there is no desk space or computer available for them.

There are implications for your paid staff too. Managing volunteers is a skill: staff who are to be managing volunteers may need training, and managing volunteers will take up some of their time. If you are taking on a significant number of volunteers, you may wish to consider taking on a separate volunteer coordinator.

These extra costs – expenses, equipment, training and so on – should all be factored into your bids for funding.

Chapter-2

Volunteer policies – the key to diverse volunteer involvement

When considering whether or not to volunteer, there are a number of questions that potential volunteers may ask themselves. Your organisation needs to consider how to answer them. A volunteer policy may come handy at that time.

This chapter can help you to consider why and how you might extend your reach to potential volunteers, and how you can overcome the barriers that are stopping them from volunteering. It also suggests how you can support volunteers once they are in place and ways of recognising and rewarding their contribution to your organisation.

What is a volunteer policy and why do you need one?

Quite simply, a volunteer policy is the foundation on which your organisation's involvement of volunteers should be based.

It forms the basis of your entire volunteer programme, giving cohesion and consistency to all the elements in your organisation that affect volunteers (recruitment, expenses, management). It is the key to involving a range of volunteers, because it helps to define the role of volunteers within the organisation, and how they can expect to be treated.

A volunteer policy demonstrates an organisation's commitment both to its volunteer programme and to its individual volunteers. By having a policy in place, you are showing, that care and thought has gone into the volunteer programme. It helps to ensure fairness and consistency. Dealing with volunteers means dealing with a diverse range of people. Being able to refer to a written policy ensures that decisions are not made on an ad hoc basis, and that all volunteers are treated equally and fairly.

A policy enables volunteers to know where they stand. It offers them some security, in that they know how they can expect to be treated, and where they can turn to if they feel that things are going wrong. It also helps ensure that paid staff, senior management and trustees fully understand why volunteers are involved, and what role they have within the organisation.

If your organisation is not yet working with volunteers, drawing up a volunteer policy is the ideal starting point to consider exactly how you will involve them in your activities.

Where to start

The first step in drawing up a volunteer policy is to think about exactly why you are involving volunteers. How do they fit into the day-to-day life and work of the organisation? If you are considering introducing volunteers for the first time, this could be very enlightening. You may discover that different staff has different ideas about why you are bringing volunteers in. It is a good idea to consult as widely as possible when drawing up the policy. The more input you receive, the more relevant the policy is likely to be – and the more people are likely to feel ownership of it.

Make sure colleagues from all levels of the organisation are involved in the consultation. It's very important that you include volunteers, so that they feel the policy is something they have contributed to rather than something that has been imposed upon them.

Involving your employees is equally important. If your organisation is planning to involve volunteers for the first time, employees may be concerned by the implications of this, so involving them from the beginning will help clarify the role of volunteers in the organisation. Involvement from senior management is also key, as it helps to ensure that the document is taken seriously within the organisation.

It's also a good idea to set up a representative steering group to review the policy regularly. The whole point of a volunteer policy is that it should reflect the needs of the organisation. If it does not, it will just be filed away and ignored. Reviewing the policy on a regular basis helps ensure that it stays up to date and 'live'.

What should be in it

There is no set format for volunteer policies. Each organisation has its own unique needs that should be reflected in its policy. For example an organisation that works with volunteers on environment issues is going to have a different policy to that of one carrying out legal work.

There may be no blueprint for the perfect policy, but there are some specific issues that should always be addressed. The following section looks at these issues, and also sets out some of the questions you should be asking yourself as you draw up your policy.

First things first

Start your policy with an explanation of what the organisation does, and why it involves volunteers in its work. This helps to put both the policy and the volunteer programme in context. Understandably, volunteers like to know why they are being asked to donate their time, and in what way their efforts are helping the aims of the organisation.

This is also the place to include a statement of intent, setting out the principles that will inform your involvement of volunteers – for example, this is a section where you need to state that you will not use volunteers to replace paid staff.

Recruitment

It's a good idea to include a couple of sentences about your recruitment process in the policy. Remember, you don't have to include everything – you can always refer people on to other documents. But some points are worth including:

- How will you advertise for volunteers?
Will you use application forms? If so, they should be very simple – both to avoid putting potential volunteers off, and to avoid excluding volunteers with poor written English.
- How will you interview volunteers?
How will you deal with people you feel are not right for the particular volunteer role they are interested in?
- If your organisation works with vulnerable clients, what procedures do you have in place to protect both them and your volunteers?

If you need help with any of these issues, then iVolunteer will be able to advise you. Please send a mail to info@ivolunteer.org.in

Induction and training

Try to include some information about how volunteers are inducted and trained in your organisation. How are you going to make sure that volunteers are welcomed into the organisation? And that they are equipped with all the information and skills they need? You may wish to have a trial period, which also allows volunteers to discover whether or not they feel comfortable in their role.

Expenses

Reimbursing out of pocket expenses of volunteers is entirely an organisation's prerogative but it is important to know that expenses are extremely important to volunteers, and are also important to your organisation in helping to attract a diverse volunteer 'workforce'. Reimbursing volunteers' expenses means that volunteering is accessible to all, regardless of income. Including information about the reimbursement of expenses in your policy makes it clear that your organisation values its volunteers and is actively making sure that barriers do not exist to volunteer involvement. However, it is important that volunteers are paid out-of-pocket expenses only. Let volunteers know that reasonable expenses will be reimbursed.

Supervision and support

This section could be particularly important in reassuring volunteers about who is going to support volunteers in the organisation. The kind of support that you provide for volunteers will depend on the type of work they are involved in. However, in most cases volunteers should have a named supervisor and regular supervision meetings to discuss any problems or issues that may arise.

Grievance and disciplinary procedures

What will you do if a volunteer has a grievance with your organisation? Or if a volunteer has acted in an inappropriate manner? Including information about grievance and disciplinary procedures shows that you have a well-planned strategy around involving volunteers and have thought ahead about how you would deal with any problems.

Make sure that you have clear procedures in place to deal with complaints by or about volunteers. It's a good idea to have separate procedures from those for paid staff, both to ensure that they are as understandable and user friendly as possible, and to keep some distinctiveness between staff and volunteers.

Confidentiality

Volunteers should be bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as employee. Including information about this in your policy may well be helpful in calming some of the fears that staff or people working with your organisation may have about volunteers being 'unprofessional'.

Introducing the policy

Once the policy is written, your main task is to ensure that it doesn't sit unread in a filing cabinet. If it is to be implemented properly, people need to know that a policy exists and to understand its purpose. Having a commitment to diversity and good practice means ensuring that the policy becomes part of the everyday life of your organisation. It's often useful to introduce the policy with a meeting, which gives a chance to talk people through the policy and explain its importance.

All staff and volunteers should receive a copy, including those staff who will not be supervising or working alongside volunteers. Making it part of your induction pack will guarantee that new staff and volunteers will all receive a copy, and discussing the policy should be a part of each volunteer's induction.

You may also want to use the policy as the basis of the information that you give to the people you work with about why you involve volunteers. Sometimes people can be worried about accessing services involving volunteers and can feel that volunteers are amateur or untrained. A good volunteer policy can help to show why and how your organisation chooses to involve volunteers in its service delivery.

Revising the policy

The flexible nature of volunteering means that circumstances can change much more quickly than with paid staff, so it makes sense to review the policy every year to adapt or improve it. As when writing the policy, input from volunteers and staff will help in evaluating its relevance and usefulness. Having such a process in place helps keep the policy a living document –even if very little is revised, the act of looking through it underlines its importance within the organisation.

Chapter 3

Developing a volunteer agreement

Volunteer agreements set out what the volunteer can expect from the organization in terms of treatment and support, and the level of behavior expected of the volunteer. It helps clarify exactly where both volunteer and organization stand, and acts as a declaration of intent.

Take care to avoid language that implies obligation/compulsion on the part of the volunteer. For example, volunteers should not sign something that says they will volunteer for you for the next six months. But what they can sign on is that they intend to come in on Saturday afternoons for the next 6 months unless notice is given.

As with a volunteer policy, it makes sense to consult and raise awareness about the ethos behind your volunteer programme before drawing up a volunteer agreement. If you are making commitments to your volunteers, they have to be ones you can deliver on.

Among the commitments the organization might make are:

- To provide a full induction and any training necessary for the volunteer role
- To provide a named supervisor for the volunteer, with regular supervision meetings
- To reimburse out-of-pocket expenses

Volunteers might agree to:

- Follow the letter and spirit of the organization's policies and procedures, including equal opportunities, health and safety and confidentiality
- To meet mutually agreed time commitments, or give notice if this is not possible.

There is no need for the agreement to be signed – remember, it is not intended to be a legal document. Again, it is important that volunteer agreements do not become dead pieces of paper. Volunteers should receive agreements as part of their induction.

Chapter 4

Recruiting Volunteers

Developing Volunteer Placement Descriptions

Placement descriptions may seem more suited to paid posts than to volunteer roles, but they are an important part of how you work with volunteers in your organisation.

Many organisations don't have placement descriptions, preferring to define roles around an individual's skills and aptitudes. You might think that working in this way would enable you to be more inclusive and flexible, but in fact the opposite is often true. If you do not work out what your needs and boundaries are, then it is difficult to judge whether you can offer them the support that they need. Taking this flexible approach usually leads to one of two problems: either organisations are very conservative about who they will take on, because of roles that they can offer; or, at the other end of the spectrum, volunteers can be left struggling because they are unsupported and you are unsupported and have no clear role.

Writing placement description allows you to sit down and work out exactly what role volunteers will play in your organisation and what work you need them to do. By looking at this you can make a clear and logical assessment of the skills that you would need a volunteer to have. Be realistic: in an ideal world you may want a volunteer with a fast typing speed and office experience, but to get the task done, maybe all you need is someone with basic computer literacy. However, if someone could not possibly do the role without a certain skill, then you will be setting up both the volunteer and yourself to fail if you take on someone without this skill.

Creating Volunteering Opportunities

Sometimes, there is a core task that you that you need volunteers to do, but there is still some room for flexible role development outside the core task. One organisation was looking for volunteers to help out at a youth club: the core role was supporting and supervising young people taking part in arts classes, so primarily the organisation was looking for people with the appropriate skills to do that. However, the organisation also decided to offer volunteering opportunities outside this core role, in areas such as marketing, fundraising and DTP. Thus the organisation was able to develop volunteer roles to suit volunteers with skills other than the core requirements.

A clear placement description will also help you to recruit volunteers. If you advertise a specific volunteer role, then people will easily be able to imagine themselves doing it and consequently are much more likely to contact you. If you

are vague about what you need volunteers for, then people interested in your organisation will only approach you. A placement description also lets potential volunteers decide whether the role is appropriate for them. You are more likely to keep someone on if they are fully aware of the types of work that they will be doing before they start.

When developing a task description, you might want to consider the following issues:

- What tasks do you have that you need volunteers to do?
- How might these tasks be combined to create a role?
- How much support and supervision can you give?
- What skills would the volunteer need to have already?

Writing a Volunteering Opportunity Advert

Once you have a clear task description, you can start to think about advertising for volunteers. When writing an advert, you will need to provide enough information to interest people but keep it short enough to retain their attention. As an initial step, think about why someone would want to volunteer for you, who is most likely to volunteer for you- this will give you a good, solid basis for whom it is meant to attract and where it will be appearing, but there are some basic steps you should always include:

A statement of need is a useful starting-point because it makes potential volunteers stop and think, “somebody should do something about that”- a first step in their coming to the conclusion that ‘somebody’ could be them. The statement of needs should say why the community, or the world at large, needs people to do the type of voluntary work that you are advertising. For a telephone help line volunteer, for example, you might start with, “sometimes people have worries and fears that they are too scared or embarrassed to discuss with someone they know”, or for a volunteer working for a NGO working on livelihoods could say, “your marketing skills can help market our products”.

Once you have got people’s attention and made them see the need for the type of work that you are advertising, you can tell them how they can help meet this need. You can now go on to describe the activities that volunteers carry out in your organisation. Bear in mind that potential volunteers may not necessarily understand some of the language commonly used in the sector. Terms like ‘advocate’, ‘support worker’, and even ‘admin support’ can be confusing if they are not explained. People are more likely to take the next step towards volunteering for you if they can picture themselves in the role, and to do that they need enough information to understand exactly what the role entails.

The next step is to dispel any fears that potential volunteers may have about volunteering for you. This could mean including information about who can

volunteer (“no previous experience is needed, just an interest/ enthusiasm for...”); a reassurance that they will be supported in the role (“full training is given and volunteers will attend monthly supervision sessions”); or a commitment to inclusive working (“we welcome applications from all sections of the community and are keen to diversify our volunteer workforce”).

By now the potential volunteer should have a definite idea of whether or not they are interested in the role? You need to make sure that they do take the next step towards volunteering for you by describing how they will benefit. Remember that everyone volunteers for a reason. Your first step when devising a recruitment strategy for the role should have been to identify why somebody might want to do it (to meet people, to get training, to build up experience leading to a particular career, etc). Sell the role by including these points in your advert.

If you follow this model, you should end up with an advert that:

- Hooks people by presenting the need for volunteers describes how they can help
- Negates some of the reasons that may come up with not to help
- Sells the position to them by describing how they will benefit from volunteering for you.

You can use this as the basis for all your adverts. For instance, you could use a short version for posters and newspaper adverts, and expand on it for articles or even radio interviews.

You will now need to look at different methods of recruitment and decide which are most appropriate for you. Keep in mind the motivations you identified that would draw people to volunteering for you and think about the sorts of groups who may be particularly influenced by these motivating factors.

Where to Advertise!

You should have already identified the kind of person that your volunteer role is likely to appeal to and what they would get out of it. Would it allow someone to develop skills appropriate for particular skills; would it be a good way of meeting new people; would it interest someone with a particular hobby? Once you have a list, you can use it to decide which groups it would be best to target with your advertising. For instance, if your voluntary role would give good experience in a social care setting, might be of particular interest to students on social work courses; or if it is sociable and gives volunteers the chance to meet lots of people, it may be of particular interest to people who are lonely or have had a change of circumstances that has cut them off from their social circle.

Most volunteers are recruited by existing staff, clients, supporters or volunteers via word of mouth or by volunteer promotion organisation like **iVolunteer**. Make sure everyone you know is aware that you are trying to recruit volunteers, and

which roles you are recruiting to. Of course, if your existing staff and volunteers are happy and motivated, they will be more effective in recruiting their friends! However, do remember that this method of recruitment means you are likely to attract 'more of the same' – i.e., existing volunteers will tend to recruit people similar to themselves, so if you rely on word of mouth your volunteers might not be very diverse.

Chapter 5

The Application Process

The application process that you use for volunteers will depend very much on your organisation on the work that volunteers undertake within it. Some organisations have more people wanting to volunteer than they can take on, so they need to select. Some organisations need to screen potential volunteers carefully because of the work that they are doing. Some organisations take on anybody who is interested. However, all organisations need to develop a system that suits their needs yet does not put off potential volunteers or place unnecessary barriers in people's way.

Many groups simply adapt application forms and interview techniques from the ones they use to recruit paid staff. However, this is rarely appropriate. Remember that the application process is as much about the volunteer deciding whether they like the organisation as about the organisation deciding whether they want to take on the volunteer. An ideal application process will reflect both.

Organisations put a lot of time and effort into recruiting volunteers, but an overly formal application process may well mean that a lot of people who would make excellent volunteers are put off before they start. By asking someone to fill out a complex application form, you may unintentionally be putting barriers in the way for people who have problems with their sight, for whom English is not their first language, or whose level of literacy is not high (all of whom may have lots of other skills and experience that you would not want to lose). Forms can also be off – putting for many people. They look very formal, take a long time to fill out, and have definite associations with applying for paid work. Remember that the overall aim of any fair selection process is to allow all potential volunteers to give the best of themselves. Applications forms do not allow everybody to do this.

Most organisations find that it is possible to get all the information they need about a potential volunteer when they meet them in person, rather than getting them to fill out a form. You may find that people are much more forthcoming about why they want to volunteer, and about their skills and experience, when chatting to you in person.

If you are going to use a form to take details, be clear about what information you need and why. Many organisations ask for a volunteer's date of birth, for instance, when all they actually need to know is if someone is above or below a minimum or maximum age.

Interviews

Any interview with a volunteer is a two way process; an opportunity for both parties to find out more. In most instances it will differ from interviews for paid

posts in that you will not be selecting from a number of people to fill one vacancy. This needs to be clear to potential volunteers. If it is a selection process where not all volunteers will be taken on by the organisation, prospective volunteers should be made aware of this at the outset.

The words 'interview' can be very off-putting. You will sound friendlier if you just ask potential volunteers to come in to talk to you, or for a chat- though it's best to make it clear what will be involved so that they don't begin to panic about what 'a chat' might mean! It is helpful to remind them that this is also their chance to interview you and find out if the organisation is right for them.

Make sure that you have set aside enough time and are not going to be interrupted. Volunteer managers often have very chaotic working lives. A potential volunteer may not understand this and may view interruptions and distractions as a sign that you are not interested in them.

Also make sure that you have everything that you will need for the interview, including any forms, reports or policies that you may need to give the potential volunteer.

The interview can be structured and organized without being unnecessarily formal. The beginning of the interview can be used to remind people of the purpose of the meeting, and to check that you have people's personal details correctly recorded. You will need to tell the potential volunteer about your organisation and answer any of their questions so that they can decide if they are interested in you. You will also need to ask the volunteer about themselves and what they have to offer, so you can decide if you would like to take them on.

You may want to tell them about:

- The organisation and the role of volunteers
- The user group
- Training and support offered
- Your expectations of volunteers (including a brief outline of policies that impact on volunteers)
- Time commitment (frequency and duration)
- Resources available to volunteers.

You may want them to tell you:

- What they like about the idea of volunteering with this particular agency or doing this type of work.
- What they hope to gain from volunteering.

- Relevant skills, interests and experience.
- Understanding of relevant issues or user groups
- Time availability
- Resources they will need (induction loop, reimbursement of care costs, support from outside the organisation)
- Names of potential referees.

If you are taking notes or recording information in any way from the interview, it is important that you record only factual information, not opinion, and that you assure the interviewee that what they say will remain confidential.

At the end of the discussion, you and the volunteer together should be in a position to agree whether you want to proceed further. If you are not certain that the volunteer has the skills or experience to carry out the role, you will need to explain this, making it clear that your assessment is based on the requirements of the role description and person specification. (But do think carefully about whether the role description can be adapted if the volunteer has some of the necessary attributes.) Occasionally you may feel that you want to talk to a colleague or trustee, or that it would be useful for the volunteer to meet an established volunteer before proceeding. A 'trial period' may also be useful for both parties. This is perfectly reasonable, but it is important to be open with potential volunteers about what you are suggesting and why.

At the end of the interview you should be in a position to:

- Check that they have the necessary information to take away
- Agree what will happen next and when you expect to be in touch again.

References

Most volunteer- involving organisation asks for references from their volunteers. Unfortunately, this can sometimes act as yet another barrier to groups who already find themselves excluded. Organisations need to think carefully about why they take up references, who they should be from and how they ask the volunteer for them.

References can serve many purposes, from a basic check that the person is who they say they are, through to a detailed recommendation of their suitability for the role. Whether or not you ask for references will depend very much on the type of work that the volunteer will be doing and the risks involved. There is no legal requirement to routinely ask for references, but organisations do have a legal duty of care towards their client, and it could be argued that they had failed in this

duty if they did not take them up and a client was harmed. Therefore, most organisations where volunteers will be working directly with client are likely to decide that it is appropriate for them to ask for references. Some organisations also feel that asking for references demonstration that they take the role of volunteers and their intended commitment seriously.

Chapter 6

Motivating your volunteers

Why don't more people volunteer? What is it that stops them making that first approach, or causes them to back out after making an initial enquiry? If they do volunteer, what makes them stop?

Often, it's because people have come up against something that puts them off or actively prevents them getting involved. If your organisation wants to recruit more volunteers, and keep them for longer, you need to know what these barriers are.

Prospective volunteers may worry about how they will be treated in your organisation. Your organisation needs to make an effort to be welcoming, and prepare properly for volunteers.

It is very useful to have firm volunteer policies² in place (though this may not be appropriate for all organisations). Policies enable both volunteers and others in the organisation to feel secure in their work as well as providing a framework for the relationship between volunteers and the organisation. The policy reassures volunteers that your organisation has standard by which they can expect to be treated, and a mechanism for addressing problems and taking up complaints

Induction

All volunteers should be given an induction into the organisation and the area of work they will be undertaking. You could consider using 'volunteer agreements' and 'voluntary work outlines'. Although they introduce an element of formality they can help to ensure that both parties are clear about what the volunteering will involve.

'Volunteer agreements' set out the commitment that your organisation makes to the volunteer (e.g.: the expenses they will receive).

'Voluntary work outlines' detail the specific work they will be doing, rather like a job description. You should also take time to talk to new volunteers about your health and safety, equal opportunities and other policies and procedures, as you would do with employees.

² Refer to Chapter 2 of the Handbook

Support and supervision

Volunteers should receive support and supervision from line managers. As with paid staff, this gives volunteers the opportunity to discuss needs and concerns, and receive feedback on their work.

Some volunteers may need extra support because of inexperience of your specific working environment, so you may want to consider introducing some form of mentoring system. Some volunteers find it very helpful to have a more experienced volunteer, or a paid member of staff to talk to informally.

Invitation to participate

Volunteers should be encouraged to become integrated into the daily life of your organisation. It can be alienating to be seen as someone who comes in, performs their task and leaves, without having any say in the organisation, or being invited to any social events. This could be perceived as a lowering of their status, and can become a barrier to their further involvement.

Recognition

Volunteers will stay and contribute to your organisation if they're treated well. You can personally and privately recognize the value of your volunteers by:

Saying thank you, perhaps by hosting a social event where your volunteers can be awarded certificates or volunteer of the year awards.

Providing learning opportunities such as in-house or other training opportunities.

Including a discussion of voluntary activity in your annual review and other reports of your work. Specify the time, commitment and skills of volunteers who have contributed to your organisation.

Recognizing that the retention of volunteers is only one measure of success, for many their moving on will be the outcome of your achievements in supporting them.