

CREATING A FRIENDLY VOLUNTEER ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

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What makes a quality volunteer experience?

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According to the [National Council for Voluntary Organisations \(NCVO\) Time Well Spent](#) report, having the following aspects present will most likely ensure a quality experience for your volunteer:

Inclusive: make an effort to make a new volunteer feel welcome. Provide them with all the information that they need, introduce them to the team, answer and anticipate any questions they might have.

Flexible: volunteers want to be able to volunteer on their own terms. This can be hard for organisations to understand and accommodate, but it is an important principle in creating opportunities that are valuable to new and existing volunteers. Think about how different work areas can be broken down into smaller roles and be flexible to the needs of the volunteer. This will give greater flexibility to both the volunteer and your organisation. It will open the doors to more diverse volunteers, who will stay for longer and tell others about volunteering with your organisation.

Impactful: volunteers want to know that what they are doing is making a difference. The NVCO report highlighted that society is not aware of the contribution that is made by volunteering. Let's start with our own volunteers. Record the hours that are given by the volunteers and equate them to targets met, people helped etc. This is a great way of showing volunteers the impact they are making.

Connected: volunteering allows people to connect with others and feel part of a community. Make sure your volunteers get together; this could be by inducting volunteers in pairs or groups. Perhaps you will provide volunteer meetings and social events where volunteers are given opportunities to network with their peers. Don't undervalue this in the overall experience of your volunteers.



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Balanced: volunteers report that too many processes put them off volunteering. Have a look at your current application process – can you make it easier? Can you provide support around essential training e.g. safeguarding to help make it easier for your volunteers?

Enjoyable: volunteers want to enjoy what they are doing and feel good about the impact they are making. Take time to find out what your volunteers needs and preferences are. You may need to adapt the role slightly to the volunteer to suit their likes, interests and passions. Create time for socialising and make volunteering fun. Ongoing challenges, competition and games can all help to make the volunteering experience more enjoyable.

Voluntary: volunteers give their time, energy and skills freely, but it can be easy to forget this when there is a job to be done. Remember that volunteers are not paid members of staff, they should not have to carry the pressure or expectation of a paid staff member.

Meaningful: ensure the message of the work that you do is understood by your volunteers. Volunteers want to give their time to organisations that resonate with their lives, interests and priorities, so making sure that your volunteers know the difference they are making is important in retaining volunteers.

Additional support

Community First Yorkshire can help you with many aspects of Volunteer Management, from recruiting and training volunteers to looking after and retaining them. Simply fill in an [enquiry form](#) and we'll get back to you.

Search for volunteering roles on the NCVO (the National Council for Volunteering Organisation) [website](#). There are links to multiple volunteering websites from organisations such as [Vinspired](#), [Do It](#) and [Volunteering Matters](#).



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