

RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

Create an application form

Designing a simple form for applicants will ensure that volunteer recruitment takes account of equal opportunities and diversity. Where appropriate, make sure different languages or inclusive images are used and be conscious about accessibility for people with disabilities. For example, your volunteer might have a visual impairment and may require adjustments in order to be able to complete the application; this may include having documents printed in an accessible font or working through the application with a member of your organisation.

Be ready to have an informal chat on the phone. Some people will want to find out more about the role and organisation informally before applying. Asylum seekers, volunteers from overseas and ex offenders are allowed to volunteer. Community First Yorkshire can provide further guidance on this. Simply fill in an [enquiry form](#) and we'll get back to you.

Volunteer interviews

Interviews should not be overly formal. It is a two-way process, the volunteer needs to find out if the organisation is right for them, as much as you need to find out if the volunteer is right for the organisation. It's really helpful to use the interview to find out what the volunteer wants from volunteering, why they are interested in this role and your particular organisation and what skills, attributes or experience they bring.

The volunteer will probably want to find out more information about the role and your organisation, what support they will receive and what is expected of them.

Exploring these points in an interview and keeping a record of the answers is good interview practice.

Make sure the volunteer role or roles are understood and give time for the potential volunteer to raise any questions or concerns. Doing this will also help to bring the interview to an end. It's important that you're ready to explain any requirements that need to be met, e.g. reference check, before appointment and the support that will be available.



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Declining volunteers

Having completed all the stages of recruitment, your organisation may decide that the prospective volunteer is not suitable for the volunteer role available. In this case, it is important to tell the individual the reasons that you are not accepting them as a volunteer. Suggesting other organisations and information on how to contact or search for other opportunities may be helpful.

The potential volunteer may decide that they do not want to volunteer for your organisation after all. In this case, you might want to ask them for their reasons. This insight may prove helpful for future recruitment.

Volunteer appointment

Once you have decided that someone is right for the volunteer role, the next step is to contact them and fix a provisional start date and induction time. Before induction you may need to do the following:

References for volunteers

References can be sought. In the first instance, a simple letter from referees (two is usually the right number) will be enough. Talking to the referees by phone may also be useful to probe a little deeper and ask about the potential volunteer's capacity to work in a team, their flexibility and their ability to best represent your organisation's cause as a new volunteer. Not all volunteer roles will require references, especially if it is short term/micro volunteering, will not involve any risk to the organisation or others, or will be closely supervised.

DBS checks for volunteers

A DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check is a process for gathering information about an potential volunteer's criminal history and is an important part of safeguarding. It's one of the ways in which an organisation can make safer recruitment decisions and prevents unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups. Not all volunteer roles require a DBS check. We offer advice, support and training on best practice through our [DBS service](#) (this service is chargeable).

Volunteer agreement

When all checks have been completed you may want to share and sign a [volunteer agreement](#).

This is a document which clearly states what the organisation will do and what it is hoped the volunteer will do.

This is not a legally binding document.

See our fact sheet on developing a volunteer agreement for further details.



Welcoming volunteers

Settling into a new role, regardless of how much a volunteer wants to do it, can take a little time. They will not know where anything is, what people's names are and are often unsure about what they should be doing. A volunteer handbook that includes everything a volunteer needs to know about volunteering with your organisation can also be useful.

Induction

You may decide to have a formal induction with new volunteers. This is an opportunity to spend time with a volunteer, take them on a tour of your office, show them where they will be volunteering, introduce them to key people and resources and go through key tasks and documents. If a face to face meeting isn't appropriate or possible, you may like to consider some more creative approaches such as hosting individual or group zoom meetings. Why not create and share a video introducing people to volunteering with your organisation, your premises and staff and other volunteers.

Training

Consider whether any additional training is needed to be able to complete the role. Are they using any equipment, do they need access to computers or work online?

Shadowing or buddying

You may want to buddy up your volunteer with a more experienced volunteer or member of staff to learn about the role in a supported way by watching someone else.

Listening

This is an opportunity to find out what someone else thinks about the work you do, why, and how. Each new volunteer brings a fresh perspective, they may see and understand things about your organisation differently, and pick up on something you may have missed. During the induction, be open to new ideas and observations, make time to talk to your volunteers, ask them for their thoughts and whether they think anything could be improved or changed for the better and how. If it isn't possible to meet with your new volunteer face to face consider meeting virtually.



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Additional Support




If you need any advice or support regarding the information outlined in this resource, Community First Yorkshire can help. Find out more about the volunteering support we offer on our [website](#), or simply fill in an [enquiry form](#) and we'll get back to you.



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