

How to recruit volunteers

Volunteers are a vital resource for community organisations and without them, many community based services would simply fail to deliver vital health, well-being and emotional support to local people.

However, attracting and keeping volunteers is an extremely competitive business. Across the UK, there are 180,000 registered charities, most of whom require some level of volunteering support to maintain their services.

This how-to gives you and your community organisation some practical ideas about finding, recruiting and retaining volunteers.

It helps to set your volunteering ask into three stages. We call this Think, Plan, Act.

Think about the type of volunteers you need

- Where and how often do you need them?
- Will they be based at an office location or outreach within the community?
- Is the volunteering commitment short or long term?
- What skills and experience can they bring?
- Do you need any specific skills?
- Are there any age restrictions?
- What support will they need to develop?
- How will you train them?
- Will they need DBS checking?
- What kind of expenses do you want to pay them?

Role descriptions

A role description is vital. Take time to think about what you want from the volunteer, and ensure that the descriptor is accurate, logical and practical. Take the time to examine other organisations role descriptions, as these can be a great source of information and knowledge. Support Cambridgeshire can assist in the process of compiling role descriptions based upon your individual needs.

Simply contact us with your requirements at info@supportcambridgeshire.org.uk.

Plan to recruit the right people

Once your role description is ready, you need to advertise the volunteering opportunity.

There are many easy and free ways to do this.

- Through your local Volunteer Centre. Volunteer Centres can be great source of support and will give you free access to the UK's largest online volunteering website, www.do-it.org.uk.
- Through your own website, or through various local or national websites.
- Through business or community partners that you work with.
- Through the free press such as local papers or community magazines – most are happy to help.
- Through local shops or community facilities.

You can also talk to existing staff or volunteers about potential new volunteers. You can also talk to existing service users to see if they can help. Do not under – estimate the power of the spoken word. People know people. Whatever method you chose for advertising your volunteering role, keep in mind the principle objectives and mission of your organization, and never lose sight of this as it's your USP (Unique selling proposition). This is what sets you apart from any other organisation within your community.

Act to recruit the right people

It is important that you interview appropriate candidates for any role.

Interviews can be informal or formal, based upon the type and nature of the volunteering role required.

Be sure to cover all aspects of the role, from expectations through to volunteering hours, from location through to expenses.

Remember - volunteers need exactly the same type of consideration as any paid member of staff.

Always take out references in some cases DBS checks may be required.

Act to support your volunteers

It is important that the full potential of your volunteers should be used. They must be informed and motivated constantly in order for them to give their very best.

Regardless of the role, each volunteer should have some type of induction, from a telephone call or a training course, all depending on the type of role being offered. Always take the time to reinforce the message of their work, and have some sort of written agreement which makes the volunteer duties, roles and responsibilities clear.

- Involve your volunteers in team meetings or away days.
- Support them regularly if they need it.
- Offer advice on personal development.
- Make them feel comfortable.
- Provide them with an opportunity to talk about current or future roles.