

# Recognising and valuing volunteers

## Volunteers are often vital in running and managing the workloads of community organisations and charities.

Without them, some front line services would simply not exist. Retaining the very best volunteers is crucial and rewarding and recognising volunteers is an important part of this cycle.

The guide provides information and advice on the best way to recognise and value the contribution of any volunteers you appoint.

## What do we mean by recognising and valuing volunteers?

Volunteers do not start because they're expecting a reward but it is important that your organisation or group celebrates and values what the volunteers have done.

Acknowledging the contribution made by volunteers shows that your organisation or group appreciates their input and commitment. Doing this can help volunteers feel valued and supported. If volunteers feel appreciated they are more likely to stay with your organisation. It does not have to cost a lot but it needs to be regular, personal and not favour a small number of volunteers.

## How do I recognise my volunteers and make them feel valued?

If it's possible, how you recognise volunteers should be specific to the individual rather than the same for everyone across your organisation. Some volunteers don't want public thanks and

just like to know that what they're doing has helped others. Volunteers might be based at home and cannot get to an event or location. They might also find the thought of an event a bit overwhelming.

Some volunteers appreciate an award for long service, but you also need to value the input that someone gives even if it's only a short-term role.

You do not have to include all the suggestions below, but it is a good idea to think about some of the following areas to make sure that the contribution of volunteers is recognised.

- Be prepared for volunteers arriving as first impressions count.
- When you advertise for new volunteers make sure you return their calls promptly and keep to the recruitment timescales that you have set. It makes a difference to a volunteer if you listen to what they want from the volunteering experience, and match them to a role that is suited.
- Letting volunteers know that their work makes a difference can be motivating. Think about how you could measure the impact of your volunteers as this type of feedback enables volunteers to understand the importance of their role.
- Trusting volunteers is vital: Giving volunteers a new task with a different role, often shows a volunteer that their contribution is important. As a result, the volunteer will grow in confidence and assist the organisation more readily.

## Things to remember

Always be prepared to say thank you. This is all the recognition that some volunteers need or want. Be prepared to listen to volunteers and involve them in your team meetings if you have them.

Some organisations use simple volunteer thank you certificates based upon longevity or the completion of a particular task or project. These can be given informally or formally.

Lastly, why not think of nominating a particular volunteer for a local, regional or national award, BUT remember, some volunteers will not enjoy the publicity so always check first.