

the Leeds Initiative

Local partnerships making things happen

**Leeds Compact
Promoting Volunteering**

BASIC TOOLKIT

**A beginners guide to developing a
volunteering programme**



Introduction

This toolkit is designed as a first step to help design and develop a volunteering programme for your organisation. It follows the volunteering principles as set out in the Compact for Leeds. We suggest that you refer to the Compact when using this toolkit.

It is a basic toolkit aimed at organisations who wish to establish a volunteering programme or who wish to review their existing programme. It outlines the main core elements of a programme and gives advice on where to go to develop the programme.

What is volunteering?

The relationship between a volunteer and the organisation they choose to volunteer with is a gift relationship, ie the volunteer is gifting their time to the organisation. It is not a legally binding relationship and volunteers cannot be compelled to commit their time to the organisation or carry out tasks.

There are many reasons why individuals choose to become volunteers and all these reasons are valid.

Starting to develop your programme

Before you start recruiting volunteers, you must look at why you feel you need to use volunteers. There has to be consultation with staff and the staff should understand the expectations of the volunteer programme and the value volunteers will add to the organisation. There must be a clear understanding as to why the organisation has made the decision to include volunteers within their service delivery.

1. **Volunteering is open to everyone**

All constituted groups will have an Equal Opportunities policy. When you have decided to develop a volunteer programme, this policy should be changed to include volunteers as well.

As well as having the Equal Opportunities policy, you should also consider the accessibility of your volunteering programme. Things to consider are:

- Remember to recruit widely to ensure that you receive applications from all sectors of the community.
- How accessible is the place where the volunteer will be carrying out their duties? Please note that reasonable adjustments should be made to maximise accessibility. For more information on this please contact the Leeds City Council Equality Team by email: equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk, tel: 0113 247 4190 or text: 07891 270162.
- Some disabilities are not obvious, such as dyslexia or mental health problems. By having a recruitment process that allows the volunteer to confidentially disclose their disability, the organisation will be able to make an informed decision on the volunteer's suitability for the role.

If you develop a role that has specific exclusions, you need to state this clearly on your application form and ensure that it follows legal requirements.

If your organisation does not have an Equal Opportunities policy, then please refer to the Voluntary Action Leeds website where there are examples for you to download (www.val.org.uk).

2. Organisations aim to deliver a good volunteering experience

The volunteering experience must be worthwhile and enjoyable. When volunteering roles are identified you need to ensure that they fit in with the needs of the organisation but also offer the volunteer a rewarding and, at times, challenging experience.

In order to ensure that the volunteer experience meets these requirements, it is important to monitor and evaluate the volunteer programme. This needs to be carried out from both the volunteer's and the organisation's perspective. A useful resource for this can be found on the Institute For Volunteering Research in their publication entitled "Monitoring Volunteers: A Guide to collecting and using data" at

www.ivr.org.uk

Volunteer Managers often work in isolation. There are a number of supporting networks that can be accessed for information, advice and support. Examples of these are:

- Volunteer Centre at Voluntary Action Leeds. Please either visit the website at www.val.org.uk or phone (0113) 297 7920.
- Volunteering England www.volunteering.org.uk
- Institute for Volunteering Research www.ivr.org.uk

Within Leeds there is also a **Volunteer Managers' Network** that is co-ordinated by VA-L. This is a space for those managing volunteers to meet, share ideas and information and sometimes receive training. In the past they have had talks on how to make volunteer programmes more accessible and on how national policy can affect local programmes. If you are interested in joining please contact the Volunteer Development Manager at volunteering@val.org.uk.

A volunteer programme costs money and therefore needs a budget. All volunteers are entitled to claim expenses for travel and it may well be that an organisation has provision to pay for additional expenses.

Points to consider when costing the volunteer programme are:

- Equipment (eg will additional computers and desks be required for the volunteer to carry out their role).
- Hidden costs such as staff time in managing, supporting and supervising volunteers.
- Volunteer expenses. Most organisations will either pay mileage or bus fares.
- Refreshments such as tea and coffee.

3. **Recruitment of volunteers is fair and accessible**

Before considering recruiting your volunteers, it is essential to draw up a role description and role specification. The role description should outline the tasks that the volunteer will be expected to carry out. The role specification outlines the skills and experiences need to carry out the role. These do not need to be two separate documents.

It is important to advertise as widely as possible to ensure your volunteer programme is accessible to **all** potential volunteers.

You should consider advertising for volunteers in the following places:

- Volunteer Centre who upload opportunities to www.do-it.org.uk.
- Local community centres
- Local newspapers and magazines
- Libraries
- Places of worship
- Local newsagents and Post Offices
- National newspapers such as the Guardian

Consider your target audience and make that your advertising reaches these communities. It may be necessary to have recruitment material translated into world languages.

It is important to ensure that your recruitment advertising fully explains the volunteer role so that there is no misunderstanding when potential volunteers apply.

All volunteers must be recruited and selected using a standard procedure. The application and reference forms should be the same for every role although the role description may be different. Sample application and reference forms can be found on the VA-L website under the volunteering tab. If you do not have access to a computer, please contact the Volunteer Centre directly on (0113) 297 7920 who can send you samples.

When considering questions to be asked at interview, it is important to know exactly what information you need from the volunteer, eg the reasons why they want to volunteer, any skills or qualifications that they may need to fulfil the role and their time commitments. The interview should be a two way process with an opportunity for the applicant to ask questions about the role and the organisation. You might want to make notes during the interview. This should be explained to the applicant at the start of the interview and the reasons for notes being taken.

An induction should be conducted before a volunteer commences their role. This should include:

- A tour of the building where the volunteer is going to be based
- Security
- Health and safety.
- Support and supervision
- Communication and IT (including web usage guidelines)
- Vehicle use, if applicable

4. **Organisations have appropriate policies for managing volunteers**

When implementing a volunteering programme, the organisation's policies need to be updated to include volunteers, where appropriate.

These could include:

- Health and Safety
- Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults
- Equal Opportunities
- Data Protection
- Lone Working
- Confidentiality
- IT usage

It is important to note that the consequences of a volunteer contravening the terms of these policies will be different to those of a paid employee. This is why training is important. Volunteers must understand the importance of complying with the organisation's policies and the consequences to service users and the organisation as a whole if policies are not followed.

There should be a specific Volunteer Policy, Volunteer Expenses Policy, Volunteer Agreement and Complaints Procedure. Examples of these policies can be found on the Volunteering England website: www.volunteeringengland.org.uk.

When creating a new policy, it is essential to use plain English to ensure it is accessible to the widest audience possible. When a policy is written sometimes it is useful to ask others to comment on it. Look at the language used and simplify wherever possible.

Language that creates an implied term of contract with the volunteer must be avoided. A booklet entitled *Volunteers and the Law* can be downloaded free of charge from the Volunteering England website. The booklet gives advice such as organisations should use the term "role description" and not use the term "job description".

5. **Volunteers are supported and supervised within their role**

All organisations should have a designated person who has responsibility for supporting and supervising volunteers, either within a department or within the organisation as a whole. It is understood that this designated person understands the difference between support and supervision. Support sessions address issues around the individual volunteer while supervision sessions deal with the needs of the organisation.

This person will be responsible for:

- Ensuring that volunteers fully understand and feel equipped to carry out their role
- Conducting regular support and supervision sessions with volunteers

Information on supporting and supervising volunteers can be found on the Volunteering England website (www.volunteeringengland.org.uk) and also from the Voluntary Action Leeds website (www.val.org.uk). Voluntary Action Leeds provide training in this area – contact the Volunteer Development Manager to find out more.

6. **Volunteer programmes provide the training and information volunteers need to carry out their role**

It is important that all volunteers are fully trained to carry out and feel confident in performing their duties. Some organisations train volunteers on a one-to-one basis whilst other organisations do group training sessions. This will depend on the size of the organisation and the complexity of the volunteering roles.

Whilst initial training is important, ongoing training is necessary for the volunteer to develop new skills and helps keep the volunteer motivated. Training also shows the commitment of the organisation to its volunteer programme and helps make the volunteer feel valued.

Further information on training can be found on the VA-L website (www.val.org.uk).

7. Insurance, health and safety, safeguarding and other legal requirements are met

All organisations, dependent on size, will have some or all of the following insurance policies:

- Employer's liability
- Public liability
- Professional indemnity
- Personal Accident

It is important that insurers are aware that organisations are using volunteers who need to be covered by these policies.

If using volunteer drivers, the organisation must ensure that the volunteer has informed their motor insurers that they are using their cars for volunteering purposes. More information on this can be found in the booklet *Volunteers and the Law*, as mentioned in section 4 above.

This toolkit is a *starting point* for organisations looking to begin or develop a volunteer programme. For more in-depth advice and support contact your local Volunteer Centre or Volunteering England.

The internet is a valuable resource for researching and downloading information. Your local library can offer you free internet access if this is not available at your home or place of work