

RESOURCE GUIDE 4

QUALITY AREA 4: RECRUITING AND WELCOMING VOLUNTEERS

It is easy for people to find out about opportunities, explore whether they are right for them, and get involved.

This Resource Guide will explore good practice in relation to getting volunteers connected with your organisation and helping them get involved. It will explore the following standards:

4.1 People are clear about the opportunities available and the process to become involved

4.2 Recruitment processes and checks are timely, fair, consistent, straightforward and appropriate

4.2.1 Procedures for selection

4.3 Recruitment is a two-way process for volunteers to find out more and that considers how individual and organisational needs can be met

4.4 Volunteers are provided with any necessary information, introductions and training for their role

4.1 People are clear about the opportunities available and the process to become involved

It is important to make it easy for people to hear about the volunteer opportunities on offer and how to get involved. Your organisation should provide as much information as possible- see [Developing Volunteer Roles](#), so as it is clear what is being asked. This should be promoted as widely as possible- see [Resource Guide 3](#) (section 3.3.1 and 3.3.2); and [Reaching a Diverse Range of Potential Volunteers](#). This can be done in a range of ways - written, online or in person – it is up to you what is appropriate for the ethos of your organisation and the nature of the roles.

The same will be true of your recruitment process. However, developing and then promoting a well thought through process for how potential volunteers can get involved is paramount, regardless of the nature of the role. This involves thinking through a process that is proportionate to the role, that takes account of the risks inherent in the role both to the volunteer and the organisation's client group, while enabling a diverse range of people to access the opportunity- see [section 4.2](#).

4.2 Recruitment processes and checks are timely, fair, consistent, straightforward, and appropriate

We have emphasised throughout these Guides the importance of the Recruitment Plan- see [Recruitment Plan for Volunteers](#). We are now going to think about Question 5 'How will the organisation select which volunteers it wants?'- Not every organisation will need a selection procedure and even for those that do need one, it can look different for each role in the organisation. The following are some key things to think about to help decide if you need a selection procedure, and what that selection procedure might look like:

- **The role** – do you need a certain level of skills, qualities, knowledge in order to carry out the role, or even an aptitude that can be developed through training? Or can anyone carry out the role?
- **Risks to clients/service users-** It is in the nature of many volunteering opportunities that volunteers will be working with people who are in some way 'vulnerable'- children, adults with illness/disabilities, or individuals who are emotionally vulnerable as a result of a particular experience. Your organisation has both a moral and legal responsibility to avoid placing them at unnecessary risk through the incompetence or malice of those who work with them. Selection procedures are only one of the ways in which you can prevent such harm to your service users, but they are potentially one of the most important, as they can prevent unsuitable people from getting involved in the first place.
- **Risks to volunteers** – placing a volunteer in a role to which they are not suited is unfair to the volunteer and to those who are working alongside them. This can affect morale in the team, but it can also damage the organisation's reputation and image. Remember what we said about the importance of image and reputation - one unhappy volunteer will tell a lot of people!

4.2.1 Procedures for selection

Bearing all this in mind, it is vital to have a flexible process for selecting volunteers, which not only protects all those concerned, but is also open, fair and effective. As with most volunteer involvement issues, while it is possible to identify underlying principles, it is usually impossible to lay down a set procedure that fits all situations. So, don't be overwhelmed by the range of possible procedures that are available to you. Relatively few volunteer roles will require you to use all of them to achieve a fair and effective selection process. Consider whether each action will help you make the right choice of volunteer and then tailor-make a thorough selection process, appropriate to the nature of your volunteer roles, your volunteers and your organisation.

A useful starting point is to check that these **six key principles** underpin the process you develop:

- ✓ The selection process is **straightforward**, i.e. easy to access by diverse groups of people, and **flexible** enough to facilitate those who cannot read or write, do not speak your language, or have a sight or hearing impairment.
- ✓ The selection process is **proportionate** and **appropriate** to the role- rigorous enough to help you make the right choice, but not unnecessarily bureaucratic. For example, roles that are one-off or micro-volunteering may have minimal processes and checks. Organisations need to decide what is appropriate for each role.
- ✓ There is **consistency of approach** with all volunteers going through the same selection procedures for the same roles.
- ✓ The process is **fair**, based on equality of opportunity, with no place for prejudice.
- ✓ The process is carried out in a **timely** manner, so as volunteers are not kept waiting too long between stages.
- ✓ There is **honesty** and good **communication** from the start, so as people understand that there is a selection process and not everyone will be selected.
- ✓ All **reasonable steps** are taken to prevent unsuitable people from volunteering- having the **wrong** volunteers is worse than having none at all.

For more information on procedures that you may want to choose from as part of your selection process- [see Selection Procedures for Volunteers](#)

For more information on recruitment and selection processes when working with children/young people- [Keeping Children Safe- Our Duty to Care](#) (Section 2).

For more information on recruitment and selection processes when working with adults at risk- [Keeping Adults Safe- A shared responsibility](#) (Section 2).

4.3 Recruitment is a two-way process for volunteers to find out more and that considers how individual and organisational needs can be met

Volunteering is a two-way process where the needs of the volunteers and the needs of the organisation must be met. This Resource Guide has also emphasised that volunteer recruitment, whether formal or informal, needs to be a two-way process. This means that potential volunteers need to be given the opportunity to explore their reasons for volunteering, while you need to see if what they can offer is in line with what the organisation needs.

No matter how much information you make available, most organisations will have some form of a conversation with potential volunteers (informal chat or formal interview) to provide this two-way opportunity. This might be one-to-one and face-to-face, or via telephone or online chat, or as a group session- See [Selection Procedures for Volunteers](#) (Section 2 Interview/Matching)

Where feasible, it can also be helpful if organisations can provide opportunities for volunteers to find out more about volunteering roles before committing, e.g. trial periods/settling in periods, or taster sessions- See [section 4.4](#).

4.4 Volunteers are provided with any necessary information, introductions and training for their role

In reality, the selection process is only truly finished once the volunteer has actually started the work and completed a 'settling in' period. The purpose of having an agreed 'settling in' period is to allow both the organisation and the volunteer a way of ensuring that their expectations are in fact being met. The length of the 'settling in' period depends on the nature of the work, the number of hours the volunteer commits, etc., but should be long enough for all parties to get used to each other and form realistic opinions on how the arrangement is working out.

During the 'settling in' period, you should be prepared to offer the volunteer additional support while they get used to the work and the organisation. They should also be supervised more closely to ensure that the work is being done in the right way and to the necessary standard. This also provides an opportunity to make an initial assessment of the new volunteer's training needs- [Volunteer Training](#).

During this time, it is also vital to provide the new volunteer with all the information they will need in the form of a full induction. The purpose of induction is simply to enable the volunteer to get off to the best possible start in his/her role and within the organisation.

There are five main types of information that volunteers will need:

1. **Organisational information**, e.g. mission statement, background, size, structure, people.
2. **Procedural information**, e.g. health and safety, code of practice, procedures for problem-solving or raising grievances, safeguarding and communication methods.

3. **Role-related**, e.g. tasks, responsibilities, training, equipment and materials, supervision.
4. **Personal**, e.g. cloakrooms, toilets, kitchen, parking, expenses.
5. **Team-related**, e.g. who they will work with, line management, availability, meetings.

For more information on Induction- [Volunteer Induction Checklist](#).

It is important that the 'settling in' period is clearly brought to a close, usually with some sort of a review meeting between the volunteer and their direct supervisor. This meeting should allow all parties to discuss what is going well, what is not going well, raise any anxieties and address any potential problems at an early stage. You may decide to:

- Continue with the current arrangements
- Add to or amend arrangements, e.g. by reducing the number of hours or providing additional training.
- Change the arrangements by agreeing with the volunteer on a different role
- Terminate the arrangement and end the relationship.

Whatever the outcome, it is vital that any decisions taken at this meeting are made clear to all involved and followed through.