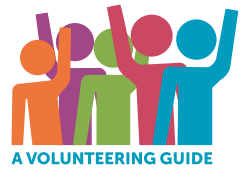


**CLiNKs**

Supporting the voluntary sector  
working in the criminal justice system



# Managing volunteers

Managing volunteers in organisations  
working in the criminal justice system



in partnership with



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**Developing a volunteer programme**



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# Foreword

## **There is a long tradition of organisations working in the criminal justice system involving volunteers in the services they offer.**

Volunteers are often in a position to provide a more personal response, which is particularly true of people with experience of the criminal justice system who choose to volunteer. They can provide an invaluable link to the local community which can be very important when challenging public perceptions.

The purpose of this guide is to help ensure that organisations working with people with experience of the criminal justice system engage volunteers well. There is a lot of good practice within the criminal justice system of involving volunteers, however, there is also inconsistency in the way that volunteers are recruited, managed and reimbursed.

The guide is designed as a reference document and each section has links to further information, particularly the Knowhow website, which is a valuable source of information. NCVO Knowhow offers advice and support for voluntary organisations.

## **About Clinks**

Clinks is the infrastructure organisation supporting voluntary organisations in the criminal justice system in England and Wales. Our aim is to ensure that organisations and the people they support are informed and engaged in order to transform lives and communities.

## **About the National Council for Voluntary Organisations**

NCVO champions the voluntary sector and volunteering because they're essential for a better society. Each day, millions of people make a difference through voluntary organisations and volunteering. Their vision is a society where we can all make a difference to the causes that we believe in.

# Developing a volunteer programme



## 1.1 The aim of this guide

**This publication has been written to help those managing volunteers optimise the potential of their volunteer programme by following simple good practice guidelines.**

Although aimed at volunteer-involving organisations that provide services for people with convictions, the guidance here could also be used and adapted for volunteer programmes within the wider criminal justice system (CJS), for instance organisations that deliver services to the victims of crime or involve volunteers in preventative work.

It should be noted that the terms good practice and best practice are often used interchangeably, but don't necessarily mean the same thing. In the context of this document, good practice means:

- Reasonably assessing situations, procedures and practices
- Considering the framework in which the volunteer programme will operate
- Exploring which legal obligations apply
- Considering the above from the volunteer's perspective
- Identifying measures that organisations can take to go beyond the above to create a welcoming, accessible and inclusive environment for anyone that wants to volunteer.

In contrast, the term best practice implies an ideal to strive for, which may be a longer-term aspiration for the organisation. It also raises the question 'best for whom?' It's important to recognise that what works well within one organisation may not succeed in another and that a flexible approach often works best.

Throughout the document there are references to volunteer managers, but there are other members of staff, and sometimes volunteers, who may have



responsibility for managing and/or coordinating volunteers as part of their role. Volunteer manager has been used in this guidance as a shorthand term for anyone managing volunteers.

Where the term service user has been used, organisations may prefer to use their own terminology, such as end user, client, etc.

It should be noted that while work experience placements and training schemes can play a vital role in enabling people in the criminal justice system to develop new skills and progress with their rehabilitation, this guidance excludes work experience and training schemes, as these have a specific context and function. While such schemes may sit comfortably alongside a volunteer programme, participants will have different expectations and requirements from volunteers and thus will need to be managed in a slightly different way to volunteers.

## 1.2 Identifying the need for volunteers and creating volunteer roles

### Identifying the need for volunteers

For an organisation thinking of setting up a volunteer programme, or developing their existing one, a key starting point would be to consider how it can potentially engage volunteers in its work.

While some volunteer roles may come to mind immediately, others may be less obvious and only reveal themselves through an examination of how the organisation actually works.

### Creating volunteer roles

Roles should be of value to volunteers, as well as adding value to the work of the organisation, whether through providing experience, offering rewarding opportunities or a chance to meet new people. Roles that are demotivating will not keep people involved and engaged for very long.

For prisoners and people with convictions, volunteering provides the opportunity to do something positive, help others, gain self-esteem and self-confidence, as well as developing skills and interests that may help with gaining employment.

Normally all volunteer roles should have an associated role or task description. This clarifies the organisation's expectations and indicates the level of support it can offer to the volunteer. Where practical, role or task descriptions should be viewed as flexible and should reflect the volunteer's abilities and capabilities and the needs of the service.

When creating a volunteer role, the following questions should be considered in partnership with service users and staff who will be working alongside the volunteer:

- What tasks will the volunteer be expected to carry out?
- Who will provide support for the volunteer?
- Is there a valid role for the volunteer?
- What training will the volunteer need to perform the role and how will it be identified and provided?
- What other resources are required (space, equipment and so on)?
- Are these resources available?
- What ongoing feedback and support will be available to the volunteer?

Organisations should also consider the environment that the volunteers will be working in. In some settings, additional risk assessment may be needed. For example, if the volunteer is a prisoner or has a conviction then, depending on the nature of their conviction, there may need to be greater safeguarding measures in place regarding the safety of other staff and volunteers. This could include more in-depth risk assessment of the particular volunteer or any personal safety training or protocols that other volunteers and staff may require.

In some settings, such as prisons, there may be other security issues to bear in mind when creating volunteer roles.

### Engaging stakeholders

It's also important to ensure that other stakeholders within the organisation support the need for a volunteer programme. If the volunteer programme is a fully integrated component of the organisation, and paid staff know and understand the reasons for volunteer involvement and support it, then the volunteer programme is more likely to succeed within the organisation.

### Practical issues

There are also practical issues to consider, such as the resources that will be needed to implement the volunteer programme. For instance, a funding bid could include the following costs:

- A salaried post to manage the volunteers
- Training for the volunteer manager and the volunteers (where appropriate)
- Other staff time (for inductions, training, support and supervision, etc.)
- Volunteer expenses
- Any new equipment that may be needed (for instance, chairs, desks, telephones etc. depending on the volunteer roles)
- Recruitment materials, such as flyers, posters, advertisements, etc.
- Production of materials and resources in alternative formats and/or other languages, where necessary
- Taking steps to help enable people to volunteer who might not otherwise be able to do so
- A thank you event for the volunteers.

 See the **Writing volunteer role descriptions section** of NCVO's **Knowhow Nonprofit website**:

[www.knowhownonprofit.org/your-team/volunteers/recruiting/writing](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/your-team/volunteers/recruiting/writing)

## 1.3 Writing volunteer policies and agreements

### Setting the framework

A volunteer policy should provide the foundation for how the organisation engages volunteers in its work, giving cohesion and consistency to all the elements of the organisation's life that affect volunteers. By having a volunteer policy in place, an organisation is able to:

- Demonstrate its commitment both to its volunteer programme and to the volunteers themselves
- Ensure that volunteers are managed in a fair, consistent and equitable manner, rather than making decisions on an ad hoc basis
- Ensure that volunteers know how they can expect to be treated and who they can turn to if they feel that things are going wrong
- Explain to paid staff, senior management and trustees why volunteers are involved within the organisation, and the role they have to play.

The volunteer policy should establish the organisation's rationale for involving volunteers, as well as setting boundaries to prevent genuine volunteering roles becoming confused with the work undertaken by staff in paid positions. The policy should demonstrate to funders and partner organisations, both the organisation's commitment to involving volunteers, and its procedures for achieving this.

### Stakeholder involvement

The development of a volunteer policy should also include involvement from senior management where applicable, as this will help to ensure that the document is taken seriously within the organisation.



Where volunteering is occurring in prison, probation or police settings, the relevant prison, probation or police service should also play an active role, even if the project is being delivered by an external organisation. This will help with raising awareness of volunteering in these settings and may even encourage volunteering programmes within other aspects of the prison, probation or police service.

Any staff that supervise or work with volunteers as part of their overall duties should be issued with a copy of the volunteer policy, as well as related policies and procedures, or similar guidance on working with volunteers, even if their involvement with volunteers is minimal. In some organisations this may even be linked to staff appraisal.

Trustees or the management committee should review and approve policies every eighteen to twenty-four months or whenever there is a change in legislation. Again, a review of the volunteer policy can benefit greatly from the input of volunteers, staff and service users.

Where the volunteering is occurring in a specific setting such as a prison, or within the probation or police services, it is advantageous to have the the volunteering policy approved by management, to ensure a commitment to volunteering within that particular setting.

## Accessibility

In order to demonstrate its commitment to equal opportunities, and to develop a diverse volunteer base, it's necessary for an organisation to be proactive when recruiting volunteers. Before beginning the recruitment process the organisation should ensure that its volunteer policy is an accessible and understandable document.

The volunteer policy should be:

- Developed with input from volunteers, staff, and service users, to ensure that it's a relevant and working document that people can and will refer to for information
- Written in plain, volunteer-friendly language.

Try to avoid jargon and be aware that some volunteers may have learning difficulties or speak English as a second language.

## Elements of a volunteer policy

There is no set format for volunteer policies, as each organisation will want to devise a policy to suit its own needs. Where some aspects of the policy link in with organisational documents that apply to everyone (such as a health and safety policy), then some organisations may prefer just to refer to these other documents, rather than reproducing them in their entirety within the volunteer policy. This will also help to avoid overwhelming the volunteer with information, while enabling them to find and read the other documents as and when they choose.

Some organisations may prefer to regard the volunteer policy as a statement of intent, with the day-to-day operational procedures referred to in separate policies or a volunteer handbook. The volunteer policy needs to promote consistency and good practice in managing volunteers. Overleaf is a list of the key elements that should be included in a volunteer policy.

## Code of conduct

It may also be useful to set out a code of conduct for volunteers. This should express in clear terms what the organisation considers to be inappropriate conduct. Examples include breaching confidentiality or entering into financial transactions such as lending money to service users. For organisations involving people in the criminal justice system as volunteers, there may be more specific codes of behaviour that may need to be included in this.

# Key elements of a volunteer policy

## 1 / Introduction and policy statement

This should set out the organisation's reasons for involving volunteers, the principles underpinning their involvement and how this helps to meet the organisation's key objectives.

## 2 / Staff-volunteer relations

This section should set out the nature and boundaries of volunteer involvement, ensuring that paid staff have a clear understanding of the remit of volunteers and the limitations on their involvement within the organisation. It could also state that volunteers will not be used to replace or displace paid staff.

## 3 / Equal opportunities and diversity

This will help to put a volunteer's mind at ease as some, especially those with convictions, may be concerned about possible discrimination while volunteering with the organisation.

 See 2.5 *Equal opportunities and diversity* (page 36) for further information.


## 4 / Recruitment and selection

This should summarise the organisation's recruitment and selection process.

 See 2.0 *Recruiting volunteers* for further information (page 26).


## 5 / Screening

Screening methods help to ensure that potential volunteers are suitable and able to work with specific client groups.

 See 2.1 *Understanding safeguarding* (page 27) and 2.3 *Screening potential volunteers* (page 32) for further information.


## 6 / Induction and training

This should outline the induction process for the volunteer, and any training they will need, both when they begin their role and throughout their involvement with the organisation.

 See 1.4 *Induction* (page 12) and 1.5 *Training* (page 13) for further information.


## 7 / Support and supervision

This should set out support and supervision mechanisms available to the volunteer.

 See 1.6 *Support and supervision* (page 14) for further information.

## 8 / Problem solving procedures

This section should provide details of how the organisation deals with problems, complaints and issues raised by or about a volunteer.

 See 1.7 *Dealing with problems, complaints and disputes* (page 16) for further information.

## 9 / Confidentiality policy

Confidentiality policies are usually organisation-wide, so should refer to volunteers, paid staff and service users. A volunteer policy could either signpost volunteers to the organisation's confidentiality policy, or be included within the volunteer policy, to make it more accessible to volunteers.

## 10 / Expenses policy

This should describe which expenses will be reimbursed and how.

 See 1.12 *Expenses* (page 24) for further information.

## 11 / Health and safety

This section should refer volunteers to the organisation's health and safety policy and include a risk assessment for the volunteer role.

See 1.10 *Health and safety, and insurance* (page 19) for further information.

## 12 / Insurance

This should outline the insurance that the organisation has in place to protect its volunteers.

See 1.10 *Health and safety, and insurance* (page 19) for further information.

## 13 / Monitoring and evaluation

This should explain how the volunteer programme will be monitored and evaluated and the contribution that volunteers can make to this.

See 1.8 *Monitoring and evaluation* for further information (page 17)

## 14 / Recognition of volunteers

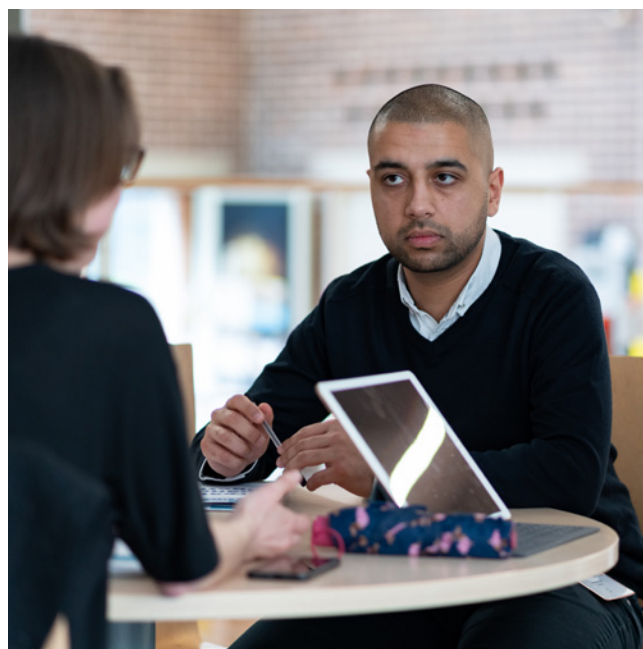
This section should describe how the organisation recognises the contribution of its volunteers.

See 3.2 *Reward and recognition* (page 46) for further information.

## 15 / General Data Protection Regulation

This should describe how the organisation collects, uses and stores the data it holds on volunteers.

See 1.11 *General Data Protection Regulation and Copyright* (page 23) for further information.



The code may cross reference with the organisation's equal opportunities and zero tolerance to violence policies, but may also include guidance on accepting gifts from service users or their relatives, appropriate language and representation of the organisation.

## Volunteer agreement

A volunteer agreement can enhance the bond between the volunteer and the organisation. It sets out the relationship with the volunteer, outlining mutual expectations. It is not intended to be a binding document. It can, however, be helpful to have a written agreement – one that specifically states that the document is not a contract of employment or deemed to have any legal status as an employment arrangement.

Care should be taken to avoid setting out mutual obligations. The agreement should be framed in terms of hopes and expectations.

**Guidance on what can be included in a volunteer agreement can be found on the Knowhow website:**  
[www.knowhownonprofit.org/your-team/volunteers/keeping/volunteer-agreements](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/your-team/volunteers/keeping/volunteer-agreements)

## 1.4 Induction

### Preparing volunteers for their role

All volunteers should have an induction appropriate to their level of involvement. This may be fairly basic for volunteers engaged in short-term or one-off volunteering projects. For volunteers with more regular involvement, the induction should aim to prepare them fully for their role and give them an understanding of the aspect of the criminal justice setting in which they'll be volunteering. A well structured induction programme ensures that the volunteer is fully informed of the tasks expected of them and is able to voice any doubts or concerns that they may have.

While the information given to the volunteer may vary according to their role, it could include the following elements:

- An introduction to the volunteering role and the organisational setting
- An introduction to working with the client group (for instance, prisoners or people with convictions)
- An introduction to the criminal justice system and how it works
- Information on other volunteering opportunities within the organisation in order to demonstrate the scope of the volunteer programme
- An introduction to staff and other volunteers as appropriate
- An introduction to volunteer policies
- A physical tour around the building, space or site
- Where to find information they need e.g. Health and Safety information, First Aid, fire procedures, manual handling, etc. as relevant to the volunteering role
- Expenses procedures (such as explaining how to fill in an expenses form)
- Confidentiality
- General information.



A volunteer handbook or induction pack could be produced as a handy reference guide for volunteers to use after their initial induction.

It should be noted that where volunteers are working off-site, for example in a prison, probation or police setting, then an induction into the working practices of that particular setting will also be required. This could include a list of do's and don'ts when volunteering in these specific settings and any reporting requirements that may be in place.

Volunteers in these settings may also require information about escorting and supervision procedures, security issues and protocols and knowing how to report accidents, as well as dangerous or serious incidents.

Some organisations also have an introductory period, so that the volunteer can find out if they feel comfortable in their new role (and with the organisation) and the organisation can find out if the volunteer is suited to the role.

## 1.5 Training

### Making volunteers feel valued

Training enhances status, provides vital information and guidance and makes the volunteer feel valued.

Volunteers should receive adequate training to carry out their roles. Training needs should be assessed at the informal interview stage and during the volunteer's induction. Style and content of the training will depend on the tasks the volunteer is being asked to carry out. As well as role-specific topics, training in areas such as volunteer/service user boundaries may also be appropriate.

Remember that everyone learns differently so consider using a variety of learning styles, for example, mixing talks with other activities such as quizzes or working in pairs. The training could also include informal learning, such as coaching from a more experienced volunteer, which will also provide development opportunities for both new and established volunteers.

### An ongoing process

Also remember that, depending on their roles, training may be an ongoing process for many volunteers. This is especially true if information, guidance or procedures change over time, or if the volunteer's role changes. It's a good idea to keep a list, including dates, of the training courses that individual volunteers have attended, as this will help with identifying any training gaps or refresher courses that may be needed.

### Potential legal issues and good practice

Any training provided must be intended to help the individual carry out their role. This should also be the case where prisoners or people with convictions are in volunteering roles. Training that is not relevant to the volunteer's role may be regarded as a perk (legally known as consideration) and could affect the legal status of the volunteer.

 See 1.9 *The legal position of volunteers* (page 18) for further information.


### Types of training

Depending on the organisational setting and client group, organisations may wish to offer volunteers training in areas such as:

- Drugs and alcohol
- Mental health
- Housing
- State benefits
- Mentoring and befriending
- Health and well-being
- Finance and debt
- Supporting families and children
- Working with with people who pose a high risk of harm.

### Training for staff

Recruiting, supporting and managing volunteers require different skills to managing paid staff, so staff working with or managing volunteers on a regular basis may benefit from additional guidance or training in this area. Further information can be found in the National Occupational Standards for Volunteer Managers.

 **Further information about the National Occupational Standards can be found at:**  
<https://volmanagers.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/national-occupational-standards-for-volunteer-managers-with-matrix.pdf>

The volunteer programme should also feature in the induction programme for paid staff, as this can help to clarify the reason for involving volunteers within the organisation and the contribution that they make to it.

### Training costs

Training to help someone to carry out their role should be available and easily accessible throughout the volunteer's involvement. A budget should be set aside for this aspect of the volunteer programme. Any organisation setting up such a programme needs to be aware of the cost implications of induction and training for

volunteers and should factor such costs into the overall budget for the volunteer programme, as well as future funding bids. Volunteers are not a cost free resource. Their induction and development must be properly invested in for the organisation to maximise the true potential of their volunteers.

Where volunteers in several organisations require similar training, organisations could explore the possibility of sharing training sessions and costs.

If an organisation is working in liaison with another body such as a prison, the probation service or police service, it may be possible to share the training they hold for their staff, or at the very least borrow their training materials and resources.

 **Clinks offers a one day training course on working and volunteering in prison.**

**For more information contact:**  
[events@clinks.org](mailto:events@clinks.org)

 **NCVO has a national training programme for practitioners:**

[www.ncvo.org.uk/events](http://www.ncvo.org.uk/events)

 **Further information on induction and training for volunteers can be found on the Knowhow website:**

[www.knowhownonprofit.org/your-team/volunteers/training](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/your-team/volunteers/training)

## 1.6 Support and supervision

### Support

All volunteers need support and supervision, although the form that this takes will vary considerably. It will depend on factors such as the nature of the volunteer's involvement, who is most appropriate to provide the support and the needs of the individual volunteer.

All volunteers should have a named person to offer them support and guidance and to resolve any queries or concerns that they may have. Volunteers in prison, probation or police settings should also have a point of contact within that particular organisation if the volunteer programme is being delivered by a third party volunteer involving organisation. This is especially important where there are additional health and safety and security issues to adhere to.

Some volunteers will require more help and support than others. In some cases, this may be due to a disability or mental health problem. The best way to find out if a volunteer has any support needs is to ask them.

Some people may need a little extra training or on the job coaching. Other volunteers may lack confidence and need reassurance that they are carrying out their roles correctly.

Other types of support include:

- Volunteer meetings
- Peer support, mentoring and buddying schemes
- Group supervision.

### Supervision

While supervision meetings may not be appropriate for all models of volunteer involvement, for many volunteers it is the best way of ensuring that they get a chance to give and receive constructive feedback.

Some volunteers may view supervision as an appraisal or performance review. Organisations should aim to deconstruct this workplace model and replace it with an informal, volunteer-friendly approach. Reassure volunteers that supervision provides an opportunity for both parties to talk in private, without disruption, and that it's as much about the volunteer talking and being listened to as it is about the volunteer's supervisor talking.

Arrange a private space for the supervision meeting and try to ensure that there won't be any disruptions. Some questions to ask the volunteer are:

- What's gone well?
- What hasn't gone so well?
- Do they feel there is any support or training that they need?
- Is the volunteering role meeting their needs or fulfilling their motivations for volunteering?
- Are there any other tasks within the organisation they would like to do?

Encourage volunteers to raise problems or concerns, because it's much easier to deal with a problem at an early stage than when it has had a chance to grow into a much bigger issue.

Ensure that the volunteer is given clear feedback and that they know that the organisation is pleased with their work. If there are problems with a volunteer's work, don't be afraid to raise it with them.

## Other supervision models

Where regular formal supervision meetings aren't appropriate, consider finding other ways of giving and receiving feedback. For instance, this could be through informal catch ups, or ringing remote volunteers for a telephone supervision session. Remember that all volunteers should have a point of contact with whom they can raise any concerns that they may have.



## Communication

As well as providing individual feedback and support there should be communication from the organisation with the volunteer group as a whole. This could be via newsletters, email bulletins, online forums, etc. As well as providing news and information on the work of the organisation or the involvement of volunteers, it can also help to foster a sense of belonging among volunteers.

**Further information can be found in the *Supervising and supporting volunteers* section of the Knowhow website:**  
[www.knowhownonprofit.org/your-team/volunteers/keeping/supporting-volunteers](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/your-team/volunteers/keeping/supporting-volunteers)

**NCVO *Mentoring and befriending* webpages contain publications, toolkits and case studies to help you develop a mentoring scheme:**  
[www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/information/mentoring-and-befriending/resources](http://www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/information/mentoring-and-befriending/resources)

**See 1.7 *Dealing with problems, complaints and disputes* (page 16) for further information.**

## 1.7 Dealing with problems, complaints and disputes

For organisations that are delivering services in prison, probation, police or other statutory settings, there should be procedures in place for dealing with issues that arise as a result of volunteering in the actual setting. For instance, where a volunteer has a complaint against a prisoner, the statutory body itself or a member of staff within the statutory body, they will need to know how to take the complaint forward. Such procedures should also clarify how a member of staff, a prisoner, or others, can make a complaint against a volunteer.

This should form part of a service level agreement (SLA) between the organisation and the statutory service.

### Good practice

It is good practice to have procedures in place to deal with any issues, concerns or problems raised by, or about, volunteers. Not only does this demonstrate the organisation's commitment to its volunteers, it also provides evidence of the organisation's commitment to equal opportunities. By having such procedures in place an organisation can deal with any problems or issues in a fair, consistent, equitable and open manner.

It should be noted that procedures for paid staff (such as grievance and disciplinary) should not be used for volunteers, as these form part of the staff terms and conditions of employment.

It is better to have separate problem solving procedures for volunteers, which should have a less formal tone and use volunteer-friendly

language. Keeping the procedures for paid staff and volunteers separate will also help to reduce the risk of confusion of volunteers being regarded as workers or employees.

### Problems with volunteers

Generally, problems with a volunteer's work, behaviour or attitude can be identified through good supervision. Most matters can be resolved simply and internally. For example, through training or changes to the volunteer's role.

If this is not possible, then problem solving procedures should be used to ensure that such matters are dealt with consistently, effectively and in a timely manner.


### Serious misconduct

Where an allegation has been made relating to serious misconduct – this may include, but is not limited to, theft, acts of violence, harassment, malicious damage, safeguarding, serious breaches of the spirit of the equal opportunities policy – the individual may be asked to temporarily stop volunteering while the matter is internally investigated. There should be a timeframe on this, although in some cases this may be postponed pending the results of an external investigation.

The volunteer should have the opportunity to put their case forward. In some instances, the volunteer may be asked to permanently cease volunteering with the organisation.

### Volunteers with problems

If a volunteer has a complaint against a member of staff, service user or other volunteer, there should be a procedure for them to follow to help resolve the situation.

 **Further information about problem solving procedures can be found in the *What to do if things go wrong* section of NCVO's website:**  
[www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/if-volunteering-goes-wrong](http://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/if-volunteering-goes-wrong)



## 1.8 Monitoring and evaluation

### Monitoring and evaluating a volunteer programme

There are numerous reasons for monitoring and evaluating a volunteer programme, including being able to provide information to current and potential funders, being accountable to beneficiaries and other stakeholders and learning how a programme can be improved.

### Key terms

#### Identifying outcomes and outputs to be measured

The first step in monitoring and evaluating a volunteer programme is to identify its planned outputs – what it will do, and outcomes – the difference it will make. Following this, indicators (specific data to collect) can be identified. Output indicators are things you can measure to show to what extent your intended outputs have happened. Outcome indicators can be measured to show the extent to which your intended outcomes have come about.

 **There is guidance on planning your evaluation at:**  
[www.knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/impact/plan-your-impact-and-evaluation](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/impact/plan-your-impact-and-evaluation)

#### Gathering information to measure outputs and outcomes

To measure outputs, you'll usually want to collect data on how many products/services have been delivered and how many people have accessed them. When setting up the volunteer programme consider how the organisation will keep records and produce statistics and reports for this purpose.

Demographic information such as age, gender and ethnicity can provide a breakdown of the diversity of the current volunteer base, which can

then be used to plan future recruitment campaigns that target under represented sections of the local community. Such information can also be used to identify how accessible the volunteer programme is in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. You will probably also want to collect similar information on the profile of your programme's beneficiaries so you can see if you are reaching the people you intended to.

There are a range of methods that can be used to collect quantitative (numbers) and qualitative (narrative) data about outcomes. Questionnaires, interviews, focus groups and creative methods are commonly used to collect data from beneficiaries, volunteers, staff or external stakeholders. It's important to choose a method that works well in your context.

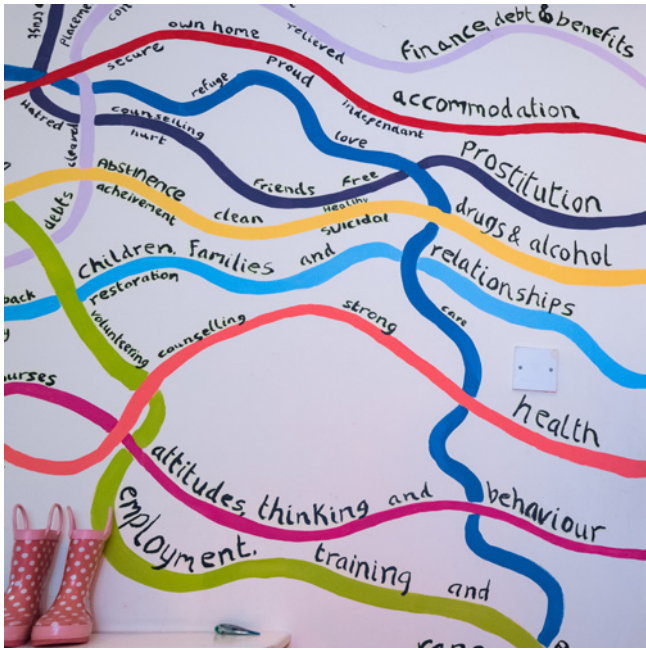
 **Information on methods and how to choose between them is here:**  
[www.knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/impact/measuring-your-impact](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/impact/measuring-your-impact)

#### Analysing the information

Once the information has been gathered, it will need to be analysed and interpreted. Analysis is about making sense of the data you have collected. It will enable you to generate evaluation findings that you can report on and use. You can analyse quantitative and qualitative data using different approaches.

 **There is guidance on analysis and reporting at:**  
[www.knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/impact/evaluation-and-impact-reporting-1](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/impact/evaluation-and-impact-reporting-1)

Also remember to evaluate the monitoring and evaluation procedure itself – did it provide the information needed to identify areas for improvement? Could the information have been collected more easily or efficiently? If so, adapt the monitoring and evaluation procedure for next time.



## 1.9 The legal position of volunteers

### Extent of legal protection

In UK law volunteers do not have a legal status as such. Put simply, they are not covered by employment legislation, unlike paid staff. While paid staff have terms and conditions they need to abide by, such as grievance and disciplinary procedures, these do not apply to volunteers. This means that volunteers have no legal protection from unfair dismissal and they are not covered by employment legislation or the Equality Act.

However, there are some pieces of legislation that cover volunteers as members of the public. This includes health and safety and data protection legislation.

See 1.10 *Health and safety, and insurance* (page 19) and 1.11 *Data protection and copyright* (page 23) for further information on these topics.

### Good practice

Volunteers should be afforded the same respect and care as employees, whilst making it clear that the organisation has a different, non-contractual relationship with them.

Volunteers should be included in organisation wide policies such as equal opportunities, health and safety, conduct, confidentiality, safeguarding and data protection.

Policies that relate directly to the volunteer's relationship with the organisation, such as how the organisation deals with complaints raised by or about volunteers, should be separate from the policies used for paid staff.

### Reporting to staff, volunteers, senior management and the trustee board

Remember that for a volunteer programme to be successfully integrated within the life of the organisation everyone needs to be involved, including volunteers themselves, staff, senior management and the trustee board or management committee. Also, don't forget to share evaluation findings with contributors as this will help them to make informed decisions about how the volunteer programme will evolve or to improve programme delivery.

**A range of different reporting methods are available – from traditional reports, to creative methods including podcasts and video. Read more at:**  
[www.knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/impact/evaluation-and-impact-reporting-1](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/impact/evaluation-and-impact-reporting-1)

Monitoring and evaluating the volunteer policy  
Remember that the volunteer policy itself should also be subject to regular review so that it can be updated to reflect changes in volunteer involvement within the organisation. It should be discussed with volunteers as part of their induction, to make sure that they are aware of it.


## Contracts

It should be noted that volunteers can be seen as workers or employees in the eyes of the law if they can demonstrate that they are working under a contract. A contract is a description of a relationship and is not necessarily a written document. Care should be taken to avoid creating circumstances that imply an employment relationship.

In the area of employment, contracts may arise where there is consideration, which is the exchange or promise of something of material value, in return for work.

Examples to consider include:

- Any money over and above actual out-of-pocket expenses
- A perk with a substantial financial value, such as vouchers, tokens or other gifts of appreciable value
- Training that is not necessary for the volunteer's role, for instance, offering IT training to befrienders simply to enable volunteers to improve their employment prospects.

 **Further information on how to manage the relationship with volunteers and reduce risk of treating volunteers as staff, can be found on the Knowhow website:**  
[www.knowhownonprofit.org/your-team/volunteers/keeping/treating](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/your-team/volunteers/keeping/treating)

 See 1.12 *Expenses* (page 24) for further information on how to avoid the main areas of consideration.

There also has to be an intention to create a binding relationship, but this can be inferred by tribunals or similar bodies from the relationship itself. To summarise, there are two key parts to creating a contract:

- Consideration (money or something of value).
- Intention (does it feel like a binding agreement?). Depending on the nature of the contract, the individual may be eligible to receive the national minimum wage and protection from the employment provisions of equal opportunities legislation and even from unfair dismissal.

## 1.10 Health and safety, and insurance

### Organisations working with statutory agencies

For those volunteering in prison settings, governors should have formal agreements between the prison and voluntary and community groups. This should clearly state where the responsibility lies for health and safety issues, reporting procedures, insurance and other related matters.

### Duty of care

Health and safety legislation places duties on employers towards their employees.

While volunteers fall outside the definition of employee, they are still protected by the duty of care and legal responsibilities on organisations towards people they don't employ, but who may be affected by their activities.

The duty of care is a common law duty to take reasonable care to avoid causing harm to others. Organisations have a duty of care towards their volunteers. Equally, volunteers have a duty of care to those around them, such as service users, colleagues and members of the public.

Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 imposes a duty on every employer:

*"...to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, that persons not in their employment, who may be affected by their undertaking, are not exposed to risks to their health or safety."*

and

*"...to give to persons (not being their employees) who may be affected in a prescribed manner information as might affect their health or safety."*

In other words, while volunteers are not included in health and safety legislation in the same way as paid staff, the organisation has clear responsibilities towards them.


## Risk assessment

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 compels employers to assess risk not only to employees, but to anyone who might be affected by their activities. Where the organisation has more than five employees there should be written risk assessments in place. Even where an organisation has fewer than five employees, it is still good practice to have a written health and safety policy and risk assessments in place to help demonstrate its duty of care towards those that come into contact with it.

The risk assessments should cover not only the premises that the volunteers will be working in, but also the different volunteer roles that the organisation offers. If a risk assessment reveals an unacceptable level of risk for a volunteering activity or a place where the volunteering will take place, then action should be taken to reduce the risk to an acceptable level. Risks can typically be lowered through providing information, training, further supervision and any necessary safety protection that may be required.

The aim of a risk assessment isn't to remove all elements of risk entirely, as this would be impossible. Instead, a common sense approach is needed to reduce risks to a level that the organisation considers to be acceptable.


Where organisations are delivering services in prison, probation and police settings, they should ensure that these obligations are suitably met within the agency's own health and safety policy and risk assessments. Therefore, liaison with staff within the particular setting will be necessary.

 **The Health and Safety Executive's website contains further information on health and safety and risk assessments:**  
[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

## Lone working

For volunteers involved in lone working or one-to-one work with people in the criminal justice system, there need to be additional safety measures in place to protect their safety. Lone working can occur both on and off site. For example, some volunteer mentors will meet their mentees in public, whilst other volunteers may do so in a prison or probation setting.

Where volunteers are working alone this must be recognised within the risk assessment of the volunteer's role and lone working practices developed accordingly. Where lone working may occur within a statutory agency such as a prison, probation or a police setting, then organisations are advised to consult with the agency to ensure that robust safety measures are in place to protect volunteers.

 **The Suzy Lamplugh Trust website contains further information on personal safety and lone working:**  
[www.suzylamplugh.org](http://www.suzylamplugh.org)

 **Further information on health and safety, risk assessments and lone working can be found on the Knowhow website:**  
[www.knowhownonprofit.org/your-team/hr/health-and-safety](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/your-team/hr/health-and-safety)

## Induction, training and guidance

Volunteer inductions should include relevant health and safety and first aid information, as well as details of how the health and safety policy affects them and where they can find a copy of it. Volunteers should also be informed of their health and safety duties to the people around them.

It's also a good idea to go through the risk assessment for the particular role that the volunteer will be performing to ensure that they are aware of the potential risks and can take appropriate action as necessary.

For instance, some volunteers such as mentors or befrienders may visit a service user off site so will need to familiarise themselves with the organisation's policy on lone and off site working.



## Being inclusive

Remember that some volunteers may have impairments, disabilities or learning difficulties. In these cases, alternative formats of the organisation's health and safety policy may be required. Also, the organisation may need to factor in how such volunteers are managed in an emergency and this can be incorporated into an evacuation procedure.

It should inform them that they will be indemnified through the organisation's insurance, provided that they are carrying out activities with the agreement of their supervisor and within any guidelines or codes of conduct that have been issued to them.

## Insurance

All organisations that employ (as may be phrased in an insurance policy) volunteers are responsible for ensuring that their contract of insurance provides appropriate indemnity cover should a volunteer be injured in the course of their duties as a result of the organisation's negligence.

Charity and not-for-profit organisations that insure with specialist insurers will more than likely find that the definition of employee under the employer's liability section includes volunteers.

Private and public sector organisations may need to specifically request that their insurance policy is endorsed to include volunteers if they are not already included within the definition of employee or third party. This would be acceptable under either the employers' liability or public liability sections of the insurance document.

The main types of insurance for volunteers include:

- Employer's liability insurance
- Public liability insurance
- Professional liability insurance
- Personal accident insurance.

As a matter of good practice, organisations should follow these pointers to ensure that the appropriate insurance is in place to cover volunteers:

- Ensure that insurance policies explicitly mention volunteers because they may not be automatically included in the organisation's insurance cover.
- Check with the insurer if there are upper and lower age limits for volunteers before recruiting younger or older volunteers.
- As a policyholder, the organisation has a duty to disclose all facts that are material to the cover being afforded by the insurer, more commonly known as material facts. A material fact is information that would influence an underwriter's decision as to whether to accept a proposed risk, and, if so, on what terms. Such information would be details of the activities that the organisation is asking the volunteers to undertake. If the activity is of a high-risk nature then underwriters may impose special terms or conditions for the organisation to comply with in order for indemnity to attach should a claim arise.
- All organisations should have a robust risk management policy that treats both employees and volunteers in the same manner and is used in the daily running of the organisation. This policy should include risk assessments for the activities to be undertaken, training requirements and supervision needs, all of which will need to be documented.

This will demonstrate to insurers that the risk the organisation poses is well managed and should lead to more favourable terms and premiums.

It should be noted that people with convictions that are volunteering would be included under the definition of an employee as a volunteer. The fact that these individuals have broken the law needs to be disclosed to underwriters as a material fact to the risk being proposed. This will need to be supported with details of how this risk will be managed. For example, identifying appropriate roles, providing suitable training and supervision, all of which will need to be recorded.

For organisations that exist to serve people within the criminal justice system such as prisons, individuals should be included under third party in the public liability section of the document.

### Insurance for volunteer drivers

If an organisation owns the vehicle being used then it is responsible for arranging insurance for the vehicle. If the volunteer owns the vehicle then he or she is responsible for arranging insurance and informing the insurer about their volunteer driving. The volunteer should also notify the insurer of the nature of the organisation's business.

Organisations accepting the use of privately owned vehicles by volunteers, and employees, should request to see:


- Annually, the individual's current insurance policy and certificate that states that the vehicle can be used for business use – business use refers to the business of the organisation that the person is volunteering with. The volunteering activity itself could fall under social, domestic and pleasure or business, depending on the insurer.
- Annually, the current MOT certificate to confirm that the vehicle is maintained in a roadworthy condition.
- Every six months, the individual's driving licence to ensure that they are not disqualified or that they do not have an adverse conviction history.



If a driver has an accident during their volunteering and there is a problem with the insurance for that vehicle, the organisation could be held responsible, whether or not it owns the vehicle involved. The organisation can take out a contingent liability policy to protect it from this risk. It should be noted that the majority of public liability policy wordings include motor contingent liability as an automatic extension.

For organisations that depend on volunteers or employees using their own vehicles, insurance can be purchased to protect the individuals against the loss of no claims bonus or the payment of an excess should they be involved in an accident in the course of their duty.

Volunteers using their own vehicles as part of their volunteering must confirm that their own vehicle insurance policy covers this activity. You should seek evidence that volunteers have informed their insurance company that they are using the vehicle during their voluntary activities.

 **Further information on insurance and volunteers can be found on the Knowhow website:**  
[www.knowhownonprofit.org/your-team/volunteers-and-your-organisation/insurance-and-volunteers](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/your-team/volunteers-and-your-organisation/insurance-and-volunteers)

## 1.11 Data protection and copyright

### Good practice in data collection and storage

In the UK, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) updates and replaces the Data Protection Act 1998. It places greater obligations on how organisations handle personal data. This law came into effect on 25 May 2018.

GDPR applies to personal data, which means any information relating to a living identifiable person who can be directly or indirectly identified.

GDPR applies to organisations that control or process data that operate within the EU. It also applies to organisations outside the EU that offer goods or services to people in the EU.

The new law differs to the old Data Protection Act 1998, in three specific ways:

- Organisations must seek explicit consent from volunteers offering clear and transparent explanation about why it is requesting their data and how it intends to use, handle and store volunteers' data and for how long
- If a volunteer makes a subject access request, organisations must respond accordingly within 30 days
- If an organisation commits a data breach, it must report this to the Information Commissioners Office within 72 hours of the breach.


Organisations need to gain explicit consent from volunteers based on a clear explanation of why they are requesting data, what data is being requested, how the organisation intends to use and store data and how long the volunteer's data will be held.

The only data held should be that which is necessary for the volunteer's involvement with the organisation. Care is needed to ensure that the information collected is adequate and up to date.

It should only be used for the purposes for which it was collected. Volunteers should be aware of what information is held, and why. Explicit consent should be asked for the collection, use and storage of sensitive personal information, such as ethnic or racial origin and physical or mental health.


Information must be kept securely and access to personal information should be restricted to relevant parties only. Information should only be kept for as long as its original purpose is valid and in line with data protection and internal human resources guidelines.

When no longer required, information should be destroyed by being shredded by the organisation, or returned to the volunteer. Volunteers should be made aware of their rights to view information held by the organisation under GDPR and this should be explained in your data protection policy.


 **Further information on insurance and volunteers can be found on the Knowhow website:**  
[www.knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/operations/dataprotection](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/operations/dataprotection)

### Copyright

Copyright normally belongs to the person or persons who created the work. While the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 states that material produced by employees belongs to their employer, it doesn't refer to volunteers. Consequently, the copyright of a volunteer's work remains with them and not with the organisation. Organisations requiring copyright of works produced by volunteers should ask the volunteers to assign or transfer copyright to them, or even agree a licence to use the work in certain situations or publications.

 **Further information can be sought from the Intellectual Property Office:**  
[www.ipo.gov.uk](http://www.ipo.gov.uk)

Volunteers handling other people's personal data will need to be trained in how to process and store data in accordance with your data protection policy.

 **Further information about data protection and subject access requests can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website:**  
[www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)

## 1.12 Expenses

### Making the case for reimbursing expenses

There are a number of reasons why it's good practice to offer and encourage volunteers to claim reimbursement of their expenses:

- Volunteers give their time for free, and it's unfair to expect them to be left out of pocket as well
- It demonstrates that the organisation values the volunteers' time, and doesn't want them to be out of pocket for this contribution
- By reimbursing volunteer expenses, the organisation is helping to reduce barriers to volunteering by enabling those on low incomes and state benefits to participate
- This in turn could help the organisation to recruit a new source of valuable and committed volunteers
- The reimbursement of expenses is an equal opportunities issue, because failing to do so excludes a number of potential volunteers who wouldn't be able to afford to take part otherwise
- By encouraging volunteers to claim their expenses, this gives the organisation an idea of the true cost of this aspect of their volunteer involvement, which they can factor in to future funding bids for their volunteer programme.

If volunteers don't want to be reimbursed for their expenses, then still encourage them to submit an expenses form and tell them that they can donate the money back to the organisation if they wish to do so. Another option is to include a box on the expenses form that volunteers can tick if they prefer to donate their expenses to the organisation. Do bear in mind that this shouldn't cause any peer pressure among the volunteers, especially for those that do need reimbursement.

### Types of expenses that could be reimbursed

Typical expenses may include (but are not necessarily restricted to):

- Travel to and from the place where the volunteering is taking place
- Travel whilst volunteering
- Meals taken whilst volunteering where reasonable
- Parking
- Supply of protective clothing
- Supply of special equipment (for example, an induction loop) to enable someone to volunteer
- Reimbursement of clothing or property damaged while volunteering
- Post and phone/internet costs
- Care of dependants (for example, children or elderly parents) while volunteering.

Where appropriate, additional out of pocket expenses may be determined by the organisation. The organisation may also determine where expenses would not be paid, for example parking fines or reimbursement for loss of personal possessions.

### Mileage rates

Where volunteers use their own vehicles to travel to and from their place of volunteering, or to transport goods or people as part of their volunteering role, it is important to have a consistent mileage rate. As the costs of running a vehicle are the same for staff and volunteers, it is recommended that volunteers are reimbursed for their mileage at the rates set by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

At the time of writing (February 2020) these rates are:

- Cars and vans – 45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles, 25p per mile over 10,000
- Motorcycles – 24p per mile
- Bicycles – 20p per mile.

 **These rates can be checked on the HMRC website at:**  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/rates-and-allowances-travel-mileage-and-fuel-allowances/travel-mileage-and-fuel-rates-and-allowances](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rates-and-allowances-travel-mileage-and-fuel-allowances/travel-mileage-and-fuel-rates-and-allowances)

It should be noted that reimbursement of mileage above the HMRC rates could be regarded as taxable income for volunteers and staff.





## Transport

Policies should encourage volunteers to use the least expensive form of transport available to travel to and from the site or place of volunteering. An agreement on taxi use may be appropriate where volunteers have limited mobility or will be working in situations where they may be vulnerable, such as volunteering late at night. Volunteers should be informed of which recommended and reputable taxi companies to use. Some organisations may even make arrangements with private hire companies if using them on a regular basis. Some volunteers cannot use public transport, so a policy on taxi usage shows that they are valued, irrespective of their capacity, circumstances or disability.

## How to reimburse expenses

Volunteers should be given a simple expenses claim form to fill in that they should submit along with any relevant receipts, travel tickets etc.

Volunteers should be encouraged to claim their expenses and should be reimbursed as promptly as possible. Ideally, this should be on the same day in cash if possible, to ensure that those on low incomes or state benefits are not left out of pocket for too long.

It is also possible to give volunteers an advance, which can be helpful for volunteers requiring the costs of their travel before actually travelling, or for volunteers who may need to purchase special equipment, clothing or other items as part of their volunteering. Once the volunteer submits their expenses form with their receipts, then the amount can be deducted from the advance, or additional reimbursement can be given to the volunteer as appropriate.

The implications for giving flat rate expenses, if rounded up to be more than the actual expense, is that they can then be classed as earnings and as such can affect a volunteer's state benefits, be subject to tax, and could affect the employment status of volunteers, making the organisation liable to pay the national minimum wage and other employment rights. Expenses should therefore be reimbursed against receipts and public transport tickets.

 **Further information aimed at volunteers can be found on the NCVO website:**

[www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/volunteering-and-benefits](http://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/volunteering-and-benefits)

# Recruiting volunteers



## 2.1 Understanding safeguarding

Safeguarding means the measures we take and procedures we put in place to protect individuals from potential harm. An organisation's approach to safeguarding must also deal effectively with issues should they arise. Any organisation engaging volunteers needs to consider what level of safeguarding is proportionate to the activities their volunteers are involved in and how safeguarding will be factored in to:

- Recruitment
- Training
- Supervision and support
- Disclosure and barring checks (see below).

### Duty of care

All organisations owe a duty of care to employees, volunteers, service users and others they come into contact with. The Charity Commission advises that safeguarding should be a priority for all charities, not just those working with groups considered at risk.

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (SVGA 2006) was introduced to help avoid harm, or the risk of harm, by preventing people who are deemed unsuitable to work with children and vulnerable adults from gaining access to them through their work.

Every child and vulnerable adult has the right to protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation. The SVGA 2006 places legal obligations on organisations to:

- Safeguard children and vulnerable adults
- Promote their welfare
- Conduct additional checks (criminal record checks – see below for further information) on employees and volunteers who are carrying out certain activities
- Communicate concerns to relevant local agencies.



All voluntary organisations and particularly those that are commissioned by local authorities or other statutory and public services, should ensure they have in place and regularly review their safeguarding policies, measures and practices.

### Working with children and vulnerable adults

Organisations who work with children and/or vulnerable adults should take into account the increased risk of potential harm, for example sexual, emotional and financial abuse and that, by definition, children and vulnerable adults may not be able to protect themselves.

Arrangements include having a safeguarding policy that explains their way of working, which also applies to volunteers.

### Disclosure and barring checks

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) helps organisations make safer recruitment decisions and aims to prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups, including children.

A DBS check provides information about a volunteer's criminal history at that point in time.

It can help organisations determine whether a person is a suitable candidate for the volunteer role for which they are applying. It forms one part of the wider volunteer safeguarding process. Careful consideration should be given to whether it is necessary to conduct a check or whether other safeguarding measures provide adequate protection. Only certain volunteer roles and activities are eligible for checks. It is an offence to apply for a DBS check if the role is not eligible for one. DBS checks should not be used simply as a just in case box ticking exercise.

 See 2.4 *Checking a person's criminal record* (page 34) for more information on checking a person's criminal record.


## What to include in a safeguarding policy

If your organisation works with children or young people up to the age of 18 or with adults at risk in vulnerable situations, it must have a safeguarding policy.

The policy should communicate your commitment to safeguarding and clearly set out the role that all volunteers and staff have to play in protecting people from harm.

It should also give clear procedures for how to report and record any concerns and incidents.

You should make sure that all staff and volunteers are familiar with the policy and know where to find it.

 For information on what to include in a safeguarding policy, see the *Safeguarding section of the Knowhow website*:  
[www.knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/operations/safeguarding](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/operations/safeguarding)

## If your organisation is regulated by a body

For organisations which are regulated by bodies such as Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission, and other organisations that carry out regulated activities with children or vulnerable adults

whether nationally or internationally, there will usually be roles for which the organisation should require that an individual completes DBS checks (or equivalent in respect of non-UK based citizens) before starting the role.

Taking the duty of care seriously among other organisational safeguarding measures and safe recruitment practices may include obtaining disclosures for volunteers working with vulnerable clients if they are eligible for one. Organisations should risk assess volunteer roles to determine whether the role is eligible for a DBS check. Insurance companies like to see that organisations are doing everything they can to protect their clients and may expect DBS checks to be carried out.

If an organisation with staff or volunteers in regulated activities dismisses an individual (staff or volunteer) because they harm someone, or dismisses them or changes their role because they might have harmed someone, or if the individual resigns before a dismissal takes place, the organisation must report them for inclusion on lists of people barred from working with children or vulnerable adults.

Although DBS checks are an important way to protect vulnerable clients, they should not be seen as the only or the best safeguard, as they only provide information on people who have an existing criminal record.

## 2.2 Recruitment

### Recruitment methods

Recruitment methods may depend on the nature of specific roles, but typical options are:


- Local volunteer centres
- Posters, leaflets, talks
- Advertising in local media (press and radio), including media which target specific communities and age groups etc.
- Local community events and open days
- Volunteering open days to explain more about the organisation
- Local business and statutory sector pre-retirement courses
- Student community volunteering, based within local students' unions
- Websites and social media.

If someone wants to volunteer, make it easy for them to do so. Be aware that their first contact with the organisation is very important. Make sure that potential volunteers have a named contact to speak to, or can leave a voicemail message if no one is available to take their call. Ensure that all members of staff and volunteers are able to respond to enquiries from potential volunteers and can signpost them on to the appropriate point of contact within the organisation. All enquiries should be responded to promptly, to avoid potential volunteers losing interest or changing their minds.

Word of mouth can be a powerful tool for volunteer recruitment, but it should not be relied on as the sole method of recruitment, as it tends to reinforce the demographic profile of current volunteers.

People tend to know people like themselves, so the word of mouth approach is unlikely to reach out to currently untapped sections of the community.



 **Details of local volunteer centres can be found at:**  
[www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/  
find-a-volunteer-centre](http://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/find-a-volunteer-centre)

### Being inclusive

Recruitment material should take diversity into account. The images and language used in the organisation's publicity materials should be inclusive. Try to ensure that materials are suitable for those who are colour blind or visually impaired. If the organisation is targeting a specific section of the community, depending on the requirements of the group, then recruitment materials may be needed in alternative formats or other languages. Remember that the locations chosen to display recruitment material should be selected to reflect the local community.

Some people may have preconceptions about the various aspects of the criminal justice system, specific client groups or volunteering in general, so aim to tackle these perceptions by presenting an alternative to possible perceived stereotypes. It's important that potential volunteers understand the challenges that are presented by working with people in the criminal justice system. Equally, the recruitment message should emphasise how satisfying and rewarding it can be to discover what

a difference it can make to clients in terms of the progress they make. Where volunteering roles will be based in prison, probation or police settings, then potential volunteers should be made aware of the implications of volunteering in such settings.

## Application forms

When dealing with a large number of requests from potential volunteers, application forms are usually the best way to manage the process. Complex application forms may be off putting for potential volunteers. They can also present a barrier to many people, such as people with English as a second language, learning difficulties, dyslexia, poor literacy skills, visual impairments and so on. Application forms should be as simple and easy to use as possible, asking only for the information that is needed for the recruitment process.

An alternative option could be to work through the form with the potential volunteer during an informal interview or chat. The benefit of this is that some people may be able to express themselves far better verbally than they would when conveying themselves in writing. Remember to explain why the information is being gathered, how it will be used, how long it will be stored for and how it will be disposed of.

To encourage applications from people with convictions, it is helpful to clearly state in your recruitment information that they are positively welcome to apply, otherwise people may assume they would not be eligible. If using a formal application process consider carefully whether a DBS check is necessary for the role. If it is, rather than ask about convictions on the application form, this information can be obtained later in the recruitment process.

 See *Disclosure and barring checks* in section 2.1 (page 27) for more information.

## Informal interviews or chats

Informal interviews or chats should offer potential volunteers the chance to find out more about the role and what it is like to work with the organisation's service users.

It's good practice to hold the interview in a comfortable and friendly environment, without interruption. Prepare a set of questions to ask the applicant, but make sure it's a two-way process so that the potential volunteer has the opportunity to ask questions as well. Prepare a checklist of information to give to potential volunteers, including literature on the organisation. This will help to answer questions that potential volunteers may think of after the interview. It is important to tell them about:

- The organisation and the role of volunteers within it or connected to it
- The service user group
- The training and support offered to volunteers
- The organisation's expectations of volunteers, including a brief outline of the policies that are relevant to volunteers
- The commitment needed for the role - how often the person should ideally volunteer for and for how long - in order for them to get the most out of the volunteering experience
- The resources available to volunteers, such as reimbursement of expenses, support and supervision, volunteer meetings, etc.


Some topics for the informal interview include:

- What they like about the idea of volunteering with the organisation or doing this type of volunteering
- What they hope to gain from their volunteering experience
- Their relevant skills, interests and experience
- Their understanding of relevant issues or service user groups
- The times and days they are available

- Any resources they will need, for example, an induction loop, reimbursement of care costs, support from outside the organisation
- The names of potential referees
- Other commitments they may already have within the organisation, for instance if they're a member of staff or a service user
- Any concerns they may have about volunteering in this particular setting
- Any health concerns that may be relevant to the applicant's volunteering.

Applicants should be given a clear timescale for a decision. If they will need a DBS check before commencing the role, then let them know that a decision cannot be made until the DBS check has been received. If the organisation requires references, then state that this may be another cause of delay.

Remember to keep in contact with the applicant whilst waiting for the results of a DBS check or references, as this will help them to feel that they are becoming a part of the organisation which will help to keep them interested in volunteering with it.

 See 2.4 *Checking a person's criminal record* (page 34) for further information.

## References

Given the vulnerability of the organisation's client group, whether prisoners or people with convictions, it is recommended that references are taken up where possible. Where an organisation does ask for references, these should be fresh requests rather than pre-prepared letters. Generally, family members are not appropriate as referees, although friends can be a good source for character references.

While it is useful for one referee to be a previous employer or volunteer supervisor, it is important to remember that not all volunteers will have such a referee. There should be a degree of flexibility and potential referees should be discussed with the volunteer.

Remember that some volunteers will have particularly limited options in seeking references. For instance:

- Asylum seekers and other people who have not been in the country for very long
- People who have never had a paid position or haven't been in employment for a long time.

Other suggestions for referees include religious or cultural leaders, teachers or tutors, case workers, social workers or community leaders.

## Health screening

When recruiting volunteers, some organisations like to ask potential volunteers if they have any health conditions or disabilities. It should be made clear to the potential volunteer that this information is sought purely so that the organisation can work out if someone is suitable for a particular volunteer role, whether the role needs to be adapted or whether the applicant will require additional support to carry out the role. If asking for this information on an application form, use a statement that clarifies why it is being asked for.

For example, an application form could state:

***“Do you have any health conditions and/or disabilities that may affect your volunteering? Any information that you provide will help us to ensure that the volunteering role is right for you and tailored appropriately.”***

In some cases, experience of health conditions or of drug or alcohol addiction may enhance what the potential volunteer can bring to the service, as they may be able to draw on their experiences when helping service users with similar issues.

## Introductory period

It is good practice to have a clearly defined introductory period. This gives volunteers the chance to try out their volunteer role, gives them the opportunity to change tasks (or locations if appropriate), and also allows them to not continue

in the role if they feel it is not appropriate. An introductory period also means that the volunteer manager can monitor the volunteer in action, so can decide if they are suitable for the volunteering role.

Introductory periods will vary depending on the nature of the volunteering role and how much contact the volunteer has with the organisation.

A review meeting should be held at the end of the introductory period.

### Unsuccessful applicants

If an applicant is not suitable for volunteering with the organisation, then provide them with honest feedback delivered in a supportive way. Offer support to identify alternative forms of volunteering, such as signposting the person to the local volunteer centre.


### Too many applicants?

If the organisation's recruitment campaign has been so successful that there are now more potential volunteers than there are volunteering opportunities, be ready to signpost unsuccessful applicants to other organisations that are also looking for volunteers.

This could include other organisations within the criminal justice system, or other voluntary organisations.

The local volunteer centre may also be able to help potential volunteers find suitable volunteering roles.

 **Contact details for volunteer centres can be found at:**  
[www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/find-a-volunteer-centre](http://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/find-a-volunteer-centre)

 **Further information can be found in the *Volunteer recruitment process* section of the Knowhow website:**  
[www.knowhownonprofit.org/your-team/volunteers/recruiting/copy\\_of\\_process](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/your-team/volunteers/recruiting/copy_of_process)

## 2.3 Screening potential volunteers

### The importance of having a screening process

Essentially, the screening process is used to answer two questions:

- Is the potential volunteer suitable for the project/service user group?
- Is the project suitable for the volunteer and will it meet their expectations?

Screening forms an important part of the risk assessment process. Volunteer managers should always make every effort to place a new volunteer in a role which would be suitable and safe for them and for anyone else coming into contact with them, such as other volunteers, paid staff, service users or members of the public.

There may be some occasions where the volunteer manager is unsure whether a particular role is suitable for a new volunteer. If so, it might be wiser to suggest a different volunteer role for them. In other cases, the organisation may decide to give the volunteer a chance to try out the role and offer them extra support or training as necessary.

Organisations will be aware of the different challenges that come with working with their particular client group. For instance, organisations working with people who pose a high risk of harm would probably prefer to involve volunteers with previous experience of similar service user groups, rather than involving people new to volunteering.

The key is to ensure that potential volunteers are matched with suitable volunteering roles that enable them to give the best of themselves, gain essential knowledge and experience whilst not putting themselves at unnecessary risk.

Screening should also be a continuous process.



Supervision and other feedback methods can also be used to check whether a particular role is still suitable for a volunteer, or whether anything has changed their ability to perform the role.

For organisations that are delivering services in prisons, police or probation settings, the statutory agency may have additional screening methods that volunteers are required to comply with.

## Tools and methods of screening

There are various ways of screening volunteers, including:

- Having clear recruitment policies and procedures in place, including how to say no to an applicant
- Having effective application forms that ask relevant questions
- Interviewing potential volunteers
- Taking references
- Carrying out a DBS check where applicable – remember that these alone are not sufficient screening measures, and they can only be used when the volunteer will be working directly with vulnerable groups
- Providing clear role descriptions to ensure that potential volunteers know what is expected of them
- Having an introductory period
- Providing full induction and training, including ongoing training
- Conducting regular support and supervision
- Conducting exit interviews.

Remember that when placing volunteers on projects the organisation has a legal duty of care to ensure the volunteer is suitable for that project and must act reasonably when making that decision.



Making a mistake does not necessarily mean that the organisation has not acted reasonably. Reasonable steps to take:

- Do not rely on gut instinct
- Ensure that policies and procedures have been followed correctly and that there is written evidence of this
- Where appropriate, seek advice from other advisory or regulatory bodies
- Talk to the volunteer if there are any concerns
- If in doubt, reconsider the risk assessment for the project and, where necessary, adapt the activities so that potential risks can be reduced to more acceptable levels
- If a potential volunteer is unsuitable for a role, explain the reasons with honesty and sensitivity
- Suggest alternative roles within the organisation or signpost the applicant to a volunteer centre which can help them to find other local volunteering opportunities
- Hold volunteer information in line with your data protection policy.

## 2.4 Checking a person's criminal record


### Spent convictions

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 aims to ensure that people with convictions who have not reoffended for a period of time since the date of their conviction are not discriminated against when applying for work, whether paid or unpaid. The Act applies to those who have received a sentence of less than two and a half years in prison. If they have not committed an offence during the rehabilitation period for their particular sentence, they may afterwards be regarded as a rehabilitated person and the conviction will be spent.

When a conviction is spent, an individual doesn't usually have to declare it when applying to work or volunteer. However, an organisation is entitled to ask about unspent convictions if a person wishes to work or volunteer with children or vulnerable adults. It should be noted that the definition of vulnerable adult now extends to people:

- Detained in a prison, remand centre, young offender institution, secure training centre or attendance centre
- Under the supervision of probation services.

This means that organisations working with clients within these settings may request a DBS check for both paid staff and volunteers.

 **For further information on criminal records and when convictions are spent, see Unlock:**  
<http://hub.unlock.org.uk/knowledgebase/differences-unspent-spent-convictions>


### Disclosure and Barring Service

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) was set up to help private, public and voluntary organisations by identifying applicants who may be unsuitable to work with children or other vulnerable members of society.

The DBS maintains an up to date list of individuals who are not permitted to work with vulnerable people. This is known as the barred list.


A DBS check will tell the organisation whether a volunteer or staff member has a criminal record. It is one way of reducing the risk of recruiting volunteers who may be unsuitable to work with children or other vulnerable people. However, it only provides information on people with an existing criminal record. It will confirm whether someone is barred from working with children or vulnerable adults. Organisations requiring DBS checks will be required to have a written statement on how they involve ex-offenders in their work.

 **Further information on getting started with criminal records checks can be found at:**  
[www.knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/safeguarding/checklists-training-and-other-support/specialist-guides/getting-started-with-criminal-records-checks](http://www.knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/safeguarding/checklists-training-and-other-support/specialist-guides/getting-started-with-criminal-records-checks)

 **The DBS offers a simple online tool to help you assess the nature of the role and whether it is eligible for a DBS check:**  
[www.gov.uk/find-out-dbs-check](http://www.gov.uk/find-out-dbs-check)

DBS checks are free for volunteers. This exemption does not apply to individuals on work experience or students on work placements.

 **The Disclosure and Barring Service has produced detailed guidance aimed at employers on DBS checks:**  
[www.gov.uk/guidance/dbs-check-requests-guidance-for-employers](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/dbs-check-requests-guidance-for-employers)

 **There is a list of organisations that can carry out bulk DBS checks on behalf of other organisations:**  
[www.gov.uk/find-dbs-umbrella-body](http://www.gov.uk/find-dbs-umbrella-body)  
 Implications for organisations



Organisations working with vulnerable groups will:

- Be under a legal obligation to carry out a DBS check if their employees or volunteers will be working or volunteering with vulnerable people
- Be under an increased duty to disclose any information received about a volunteer to the scheme, even if the volunteer has left.

Any organisation requesting DBS checks will need to make sure any requests for DBS checks are compliant with their data protection policy. This includes having an equal opportunities policy statement on how the organisation will not discriminate against people with criminal convictions but will take into account their individual circumstances.


In addition, under the General Data Protection Regulation information must be held sensitively and securely, and be accurate, relevant and only disclosed where necessary. It must not be held for longer than necessary.

 **Visit the Information Commissioner's Office website at:**  
[www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)

## Implications of regulated activity for people with convictions

Any activity that is defined as a regulated activity will need to be risk assessed.

Whilst not all people with convictions will be barred from volunteering, it should be noted that those on the barred lists may no longer be able to volunteer with vulnerable people, such as other prisoners, or people under the supervision of probation services. This could potentially have a significant impact on some volunteering schemes, such as peer to peer mentors in prisons.

 **A full definition of regulated activity with children can be found at:**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/550197/Regulated\\_activity\\_in\\_relation\\_to\\_children.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550197/Regulated_activity_in_relation_to_children.pdf)

 **A full definition of regulated activity with adults can be found at:**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/216900/Regulated-Activity-Adults-Dec-2012.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/216900/Regulated-Activity-Adults-Dec-2012.pdf)

## Protecting volunteers

Organisations working with people who pose a high risk of harm will need to ensure that sufficient measures are in place to protect the safety and wellbeing of their volunteers. This should include:

- A thorough health and safety induction for volunteers, focusing on the volunteering role, the volunteering setting and the client group
- Training for volunteers, including personal safety, lone working, dealing with difficult situations and conflict management
- Working with staff either within the organisation or in the statutory agency who are trained in risk management to help reduce the levels of risk
- Working in close partnership with the relevant statutory agencies, for example, under the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) when appropriate
- Appropriate guidance for mentors.

## 2.5 Equal opportunities and diversity

### The legal position

It should be noted that volunteers are generally not covered by equal opportunities legislation, unlike paid staff and those in receipt of goods and services provided by the organisation.

To clarify the situation, where volunteers are helping an organisation to deliver services to its clients, but aren't themselves clients of the organisation's service, then they would not be covered by equal opportunities legislation.

If, however, an organisation is providing volunteering opportunities to its client group as part of its service delivery, then those volunteers may be covered by equal opportunities legislation through being recipients of the organisation's service.

### Representing and reflecting the community

Even though equal opportunities legislation doesn't generally apply to volunteers, it is good practice to include them in the organisation's equal opportunities and/or diversity policy because this demonstrates that the organisation takes this issue seriously.

A diverse group of volunteers makes the organisation both more welcoming to and representative of the local community and also helps generate new ideas and fresh approaches.

The organisation's approach to equal opportunities and diversity should be explained as part of the volunteers' induction. Volunteers should be made aware of their responsibility to follow the spirit of such policies. It should also be made clear that, even though equal opportunities legislation doesn't protect volunteers, other



members of staff and service users should treat the volunteers with the same courtesy and respect that they would treat each other.

The organisation should have a clear equal opportunities and managing diversity statement that includes reference to volunteers as well as paid staff and service users. This statement can either be included in the volunteer policy, to make it more accessible to volunteers, or volunteers could be signposted to where they can find a copy of the organisation's equal opportunities and diversity policy.

### Being proactive

While many organisations would consider themselves to be following equal opportunities by operating services that are open to anyone that needs them, the reality is that they may remain inaccessible to some people if the organisation fails to engage with specific sections of the community. The same is true of volunteering, so a proactive approach is needed when designing a recruitment drive for a volunteer programme.

## Children and young people

While there are legal restrictions on employing young people, they do not apply to volunteers. However, it is worth being aware of the legislation and remembering that young people have other demands on their time outside volunteering, such as homework and socialising.

## People aged 10-20

The #IWill campaign delivered by Step up To Serve exists to build the next generation of young volunteers. It has produced resources for organisations that wish to encourage young people to volunteer.

 **Details can be found at:**  
[www.iwill.org.uk/about-us/about-iwill-campaign](http://www.iwill.org.uk/about-us/about-iwill-campaign)

## Older people

Ideally, there should be no upper age limit on volunteering. Volunteers should be treated as individuals, with the only measure of suitability being their capability to carry out duties in a safe manner and in line with the organisation's policies.

Having said this, sometimes the nature of the volunteering role may mean that the organisation is unable to insure volunteers beyond a certain age. Where this is the case, the organisation can either shop around to find an insurance policy that will cover older volunteers, or they may be able to find or create a more suitable volunteer role.

 **Further information can be found in the Case studies section of the Knowhow website:**  
[www.knowhownonprofit.org/case-studies](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/case-studies)


## Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people

Whilst some groups in society are easily identifiable in terms of their age, gender or ethnicity, other groups are harder to identify, so may be inadvertently forgotten about when organisations consider their commitment to equal opportunities and diversity. This is true of groups such as students, people in the criminal justice system, people

from overseas and people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning or intersex.

When targeting potential LGBT volunteers, it's best to consider the organisation's approach to LGBT involvement across the board – from staff and trustee recruitment to service user engagement.

The reason for this is that the more LGBT friendly the organisation is, the easier it will be to recruit LGBT volunteers, as they'll feel more comfortable in a safe environment that welcomes LGBT people.

 **More information can be found on LGBT Consortium's website at:**  
[www.lgbtconsortium.org.uk](http://www.lgbtconsortium.org.uk)

## Vulnerable people

Some adult volunteers may be vulnerable or require additional support, for example if they have a substantial physical or learning disability, have mental health problems or are recovering from addictions. Other vulnerable people could include homeless volunteers, and non-English speakers.

It is important to remember the organisation's commitment to equal opportunities and diversity. By refusing to take on anyone who is vulnerable the organisation could be losing out on good volunteers, as well as preventing people who are often at risk of social exclusion from taking an active role in the community.


However, just as when working with young people, care is needed to make sure that vulnerable people are not at risk and are adequately supported to carry out their role. It is important to remember that different people have different support needs and that individuals are usually the best judges of what they can and cannot do and of the types of help that they need.

 **Further information can be found in the Case studies section of the Knowhow website:**  
[www.knowhownonprofit.org/case-studies](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/case-studies)



## Student volunteers

Most Higher and Further Education institutions, such as universities and colleges, have volunteering offices for their students and staff. These are usually based within the student union or careers centre.

 **Contact details for local higher education institutions can be found at:**  
[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

 **Further information can be found on the Student Volunteering Network website:**  
[www.studentvolunteeringnetwork.com](http://www.studentvolunteeringnetwork.com)

## People with convictions

People with convictions may often regard volunteering as part of their rehabilitation, or a means of gaining experience in a particular area that may help them to secure paid employment. It should be noted that just because someone has a criminal record, this isn't necessarily a bar to them volunteering.

 See 2.4 *Checking a person's criminal record* (page 34) for further information on people with criminal convictions.

## Virtual, online or remote volunteers

Virtual volunteering is a way for people to make an impact on their communities via the internet, a computer, or any other digital platform. Although relatively recent, this rapidly growing form of volunteering allows people to have the flexibility to complete tasks at a time and place that suits them best. Participants are also sometimes described as online or remote volunteers.

There are numerous ways in which people can support an organisation through virtual volunteering:

- Moderating online forums or chat rooms
- Setting up and maintaining databases and other electronic records
- Designing recruitment materials for the volunteer programme, or publicity materials to raise awareness of the organisation's work
- Writing and editing an online magazine or newsletter
- Maintaining an organisation's website
- Fundraising campaigns
- E-mentoring for prisoners or young people with convictions.

## 2.6 State benefits, refugees, asylum seekers and people from overseas

### State benefits

The following applies to receiving state benefits in England and Wales. Rules may vary for other parts of the UK.

A person can volunteer as many hours as they like while receiving state benefits as long as they keep to the rules for getting them.

Volunteering must meet the government's definition of volunteering, which is, "when a person chooses to give their time and energy to benefit other people without being paid for it."

Jobseeker's Allowance claimants can do as much volunteering as they like providing that they remain available for and are actively seeking work. This means that they will have to show that they are looking for work and applying for jobs where appropriate.

If an individual is volunteering, then they are entitled to 48 hours' notice if they have to attend an interview and a week's notice before starting work. These are concessions to the 24 hour notice normally allowed.

Volunteer involvement should be flexible enough to accommodate volunteers having to attend Jobcentre Plus for meetings and to sign on and the possibility of interviews being arranged at short notice.

Universal Credit recipients can volunteer as long as they also undertake any activities, such as job searching, training or other requirements, identified by their Jobcentre Plus

adviser. This is likely to form part of a claimant commitment which they will need to agree to.

Income Support should not be affected by volunteering, as long as the claimant does not receive anything apart from reimbursement of out of pocket expenses. There is no hour limit on volunteering.

A person should continue to actively look for work and they should still be available to attend a job interview with 48 hours' notice. Volunteering might count as looking for work if:

- It's likely to help a person find a job
- It's reasonable that they are not being paid for the work they are doing as a volunteer.

Disability Living Allowance is an allowance paid in acknowledgement of the fact that life for someone with a disability may be more expensive. For instance, someone with mobility problems may be reliant on taxis. Volunteering will not affect whether an individual receives this benefit or not.

Housing Benefit/Local Authority Housing Allowance is usually paid to people receiving Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Pension Credit or who have a low income. It should not be affected by volunteering but claimants should inform their local authority about any volunteer expenses they receive.

If a person receives Employment Support Allowance they can volunteer. People may worry that starting to volunteer will automatically trigger an investigation into their need to claim Employment Support Allowance, but this should not happen.


It is possible to volunteer and do some paid or unpaid work while getting Employment Support Allowance and it won't affect a person's benefit. This is called permitted work, or supported permitted work.

Any job can be permitted work as long as each week a person is working under 16 hours and earning less than £125.50.

## Informing Jobcentre Plus

It is a mandatory requirement for volunteers in receipt of benefits to declare their volunteering activities to Jobcentre Plus staff. Volunteer managers should make volunteers aware of this requirement, although the decision to inform Jobcentre Plus staff rests with the volunteer. There is no onus on the organisation to do this.

Volunteer managers can help benefits claimants to feel more confident about explaining their volunteer role to Jobcentre Plus staff. This could include providing publicity leaflets about the organisation's work and a simple volunteer role description to clarify the types of activities the volunteer usually carries out.

 **Further information can be found in the *Volunteering and benefits* section of the NCVO website:**  
[www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/volunteering-and-benefits](http://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/volunteering-and-benefits)

## People from overseas

### Refugees

People who have refugee status or humanitarian protection and their family members are allowed to do any type of work and can also volunteer.

### Asylum seekers

Asylum seekers – people in the process of applying for refugee status – and family members are not allowed to work while their claim is being decided, but they can volunteer in both the public and voluntary sectors. This also includes while they are appealing against a decision to refuse them asylum.

### Volunteers from within the European Union (EU) and the European Economic Area (EEA)

There are no restrictions on volunteering for people from within the EU/European Economic Activity (EEA) area. However, for people outside the EEA, there are various restrictions based on what type of visa they are travelling on and the rules are complex and specific.

### People who wish to volunteer in addition to the central purpose of their stay in the UK

If an organisation is approached by a potential volunteer from outside the EU/EEA, the volunteer manager should explain that the individual must check their own visa or entry clearance conditions, to ensure that they are allowed to volunteer in addition to their main purpose for entering the country. If the applicant is unsure whether they are allowed to volunteer, then they will need to contact UK Visas and Immigration for clarification.

### Students from overseas

Students can volunteer in the UK while they are studying if they hold a Tier 4 visa.

People granted short term student visas are allowed to volunteer.

It is up to the student to check with UK Visas and Immigration that their visa permits them to volunteer in the UK.

 **Further information can be found in the *Recruiting volunteers from overseas* section of the Knowhow website:**  
[www.knowhownonprofit.org/people/volunteers/recruiting/volunteers-from-overseas](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/people/volunteers/recruiting/volunteers-from-overseas)

### People from outside the EU or EEA

It is always worth advising individuals to check with the UK Visas and Immigration because visa rules and permissions may change at short notice.

 **Further information can be found on the *UK Visas and Immigration* website:**  
[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration)

### Visitors

People holding a Standard Visitor Visa are allowed to volunteer for a registered charity for up to 30 days during their stay in the UK.



## 2.7 People with convictions as volunteers

### Benefits for organisations

Recruiting people with experience of the criminal justice system enables the organisation to recruit from a wider pool of potential volunteers, which can help to increase the volunteer base. According to figures from crime prevention charity Nacro, almost a quarter of men and women of working age has a criminal record. If organisations exclude people with criminal records they will automatically lose access to a significant proportion of potential volunteers.

By proactively targeting people with experience of the criminal justice system as part of a recruitment campaign, an organisation is able to demonstrate its commitment to equal opportunities and diversity. Where an organisation refuses to treat people as individuals by assessing each case on its own merit they will be operating on the basis of ill-informed prejudice, which can have a detrimental effect on the organisation's reputation in the wider community.

### Benefits for individuals

Not only can organisations and their service users benefit from the volunteer's contribution, but they may also notice the change within the volunteer. By giving a person with convictions the chance to volunteer, the organisation is effectively enabling them to empower themselves.

Volunteering can help provide stability and routine, as well as boosting confidence and increasing self-esteem. By volunteering, a person can also gain new skills, interests and experiences, which will improve their quality of life and may even lead to employment. A substantial period of volunteering activity that proves an individual's commitment, capabilities and honesty can result in a reference that may prove invaluable for future job applications.

Encouraging people in the criminal justice system to volunteer can provide enormous benefits to the individual in terms of both their personal development and their opportunities for further progression. Where an individual has previously volunteered whilst in prison, it may be possible for them to gain a reference from the prison governor or the organisation they volunteered for.

### Challenges for organisations

Organisations that proactively seek to involve prisoners and people with convictions as volunteers often find that they face many challenges in doing so. Not only do they need to ensure that they follow any statutory procedures that may be in place, but they also need to have sufficient safeguards to protect others where they will be in contact with people with convictions that pose a high risk of harm. Other challenges include tackling perceptions of people with convictions that are held by both the general public and by funders. Some funders may not be supportive of projects that involve prisoners or people with convictions as volunteers, especially where the project may be focusing on issues such as drug addiction. Other funders may require volunteers to have no outstanding unspent convictions, or to have been free of offending for a specific period of time.

### Prisoners as volunteers

The number of opportunities for people to volunteer whilst in prison is increasing, with roles covering a wide range of peer support. Such roles include becoming a listener, an insider (a supervised prisoner who helps provide first night support to new prisoners) and advisors for joint initiatives with other organisations such as Citizens Advice and Shelter. In addition to peer support roles, there are various other volunteering opportunities for prisoners to participate in. If the organisation recruits prisoners as volunteers, then the volunteer policy will need to reflect this to ensure that prisoner volunteers are treated fairly and consistently. Also, because prisoners are classed as vulnerable this will have safeguarding implications on staff and other volunteers working with them.

 See 2.1 *Understanding safeguarding* (page 27) for information on safeguarding.

## Finding suitable roles

Some people with convictions can offer a wealth of skills and experience to an organisation that other volunteers wouldn't necessarily have. For instance, a person with a history of substance misuse may wish to volunteer as a mentor or befriender to a young person with a drug addiction, or give talks in schools on substance misuse. By drawing on their own experience, a volunteer may have a far bigger impact than other staff or volunteers.

However, it's important to be mindful of the fact that just because someone has committed an offence, they won't necessarily want to draw on their previous experiences to help others in similar situations. Some people will be keen to put the past behind them and move on. They may simply regard volunteering as a way of gaining new skills that may help them to find paid work.

## Recruiting someone with a criminal record

There are many factors that an organisation needs to consider when deciding whether to recruit someone with a criminal record. These include:

- The potential volunteer's suitability for the role
- The relevance of the offence
- The level of risk they pose to the organisation and those that come into contact with it
- The setting in which the volunteering activity will take place.

## Suitability for the volunteering role

One starting point for making a decision on whether to recruit someone would be to work out their suitability for the role:

- Can the person undertake the task that is required of them?
- Do they have the essential skills or experience needed for the role?
- If not, do they have the ability to develop them?

If the answer is yes, only then should criminal convictions be taken into account when weighing up someone's suitability for the volunteering role.

## The relevance of the offence

### Managing risk

Organisations interact with people in the criminal justice system at different stages of their journey through the system and this will inevitably have an impact on the level of risk management that is required.

Whilst some organisations will find the above checklist helpful, those working with volunteers who have experience of the criminal justice system may need a different set of criteria when assessing the risk posed by an individual. This is especially true of organisations that enable people who pose a high risk of harm to participate in volunteering roles.


Some ways in which organisations manage risk include:

- Requiring a person with convictions to not have offended for a specific period of time before they are able to volunteer
- Adapting the volunteering role to reduce levels of risk
- Providing additional levels of supervision for the volunteer.



### Engaging prisoners and people with convictions as volunteers

Once the organisation has made the commitment to involve people with convictions as volunteers, it's a good idea to ask them how they would like to be engaged within the organisation. Ideas generated by service users and volunteers, which are then put into practice, can be very empowering, so do remember to communicate with all the volunteers to gather their thoughts, comments and opinions about the organisation.

 **A case study can be found on the Knowhow website:**  
[www.knowhownonprofit.org/case-studies/setting-up-an-offenders-volunteer-programme](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/case-studies/setting-up-an-offenders-volunteer-programme)

- Identifying if staff or other volunteers need to be aware of any health and safety or personal security issues when working alongside volunteers
- Adapting existing risk management policies and procedures to accommodate volunteers with experience of the criminal justice system
- Having a specific policy in place to demonstrate how the risk of harm posed by the individual will be reduced.

## The volunteering setting

### Equal opportunities

It could be argued that to have such a process of risk assessment may seem unfair and that all potential volunteers should be treated equally. While organisations should aim to avoid treating people with convictions differently from other volunteers, it must also be recognised that the organisation has a duty of care to those that come into contact with it, so the issue of equal opportunities and risk management needs to be finely balanced.

# Rewarding, recognising and retaining volunteers



## 3.1 Accreditation of volunteering

Accreditation of volunteering may include certificates or an annual award ceremony, or small thank you gifts that recognise and thank volunteers for their contribution to the organisation.

The contribution of volunteers may be highlighted in publicity and press releases. Where the organisation would like to feature volunteers as case studies it will be necessary to seek their permission first.

The organisation could set up an internal award scheme, or nominate people for external volunteer awards, although the individual volunteer's permission should be sought before nominations are made.

### The benefits of accreditation

Accreditation is the formal recognition of the achievements of an individual that are linked up to an internal or external standard. Formally recognising a person's achievements through their volunteering has benefits for both volunteers and the organisation.

Benefits for volunteers include:

- Motivation
- Increased skills
- Increased likelihood of gaining paid work after their experience of volunteering
- Personal development
- Recognition of their contribution to the organisation.

Benefits for the organisation include:

- Volunteers who are more effective and skilled in their tasks
- Improved retention of volunteers
- Easier recruitment of volunteers
- Improved service/results of volunteering.

### Key issues

When thinking about introducing an accreditation scheme for volunteers, the organisation should consider what it hopes to gain from doing so, as this will help to identify the most appropriate accreditation programme for the organisation's needs.


There are some key issues to consider before going ahead:

- Offering accreditation of volunteering can result in attracting volunteers who may be better educated and/or who are participating in volunteering as a step towards paid employment. It should be made clear to volunteers that accreditation is for anyone and shouldn't be equated with formal or written examinations. It needs to be properly presented and explained to avoid deterring people who may have had previous bad experiences in education or who are not very confident of their own abilities. If it is handled properly, accreditation can make a positive contribution to equal opportunities by enabling people who may have no or few qualifications to gain in confidence and skills.
- Accreditation can bring assessment and possible success or failure into volunteering. Some people volunteer to escape these pressures.
- For accreditation to succeed, the volunteer must be performing specific tasks which demonstrate particular skills. This demands a clear role description for the volunteer and may reduce the flexibility of their volunteering role. The organisation will also need to keep proper records of all the activities that volunteers carry out to provide evidence for their accreditation.
- Be prepared for some costs in time and money. Initial costs may be incurred in the meetings and working groups involved. There may be the costs of engaging a consultant to assist in the preparatory stages or of a trainer to run seminars or prepare tutors. Continuing costs may include materials and tutor fees. It may be possible to source funding for accreditation schemes.



- All training provided for volunteers, whether accredited or not, must be relevant to the volunteer's role. If not, this could be seen as offering a gift or perk in return for the volunteer's work. This can have significant implications for the legal relationship between a person and an organisation.

 See 1.9 *The legal position of volunteers* (page 18) for further information.

 Further information can be found in the **Accrediting volunteer learning** section of the **Knowhow** website:  
[www.knowhownonprofit.org/your-team/volunteers/training/accreditation](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/your-team/volunteers/training/accreditation)

## 3.2 Reward and recognition

### Saying thank you

Saying thank you to volunteers is easy, especially if staff get into the habit of saying it at the end of every session that a volunteer attends. Thanking volunteers individually is a way of acknowledging their contribution and recognising that they are making a difference, not just to the organisation, but to the service users as well.

### Events

Some organisations thank their volunteers by arranging special events that may be specifically for volunteers or may also include staff. Such activities can include meals, lunches, coffee mornings, fun days, champagne receptions, sporting activities such as bowling, or maybe a visit to the organisation's head office. This helps volunteers get a sense of how they fit in to the overall structure of the organisation. Funding for such events should be included in the budget for the volunteer programme. Remember, volunteers give their time for free and organisations should recognise this by demonstrating how much their volunteers are appreciated.

 **Volunteers' Week (1-7 June):**  
[www.volunteersweek.org](http://www.volunteersweek.org)

 **Student Volunteering Week:**  
[www.studentvolunteeringweek.org](http://www.studentvolunteeringweek.org)

 **Interfaith calendar:**  
[www.interfaith-calendar.org](http://www.interfaith-calendar.org)

 **Refugee Week:**  
[www.refugeeweek.org.uk](http://www.refugeeweek.org.uk)

## Other ideas

- Thank you cards from service users to volunteers
- A thank you noticeboard for service users and staff to show their appreciation
- Informing a volunteer if they've inspired a service user to become a volunteer, or helped change their life in some other way.

## Award schemes

Award schemes are also a popular method for recognising the achievements and commitment of volunteers. There are some award schemes which specifically focus on voluntary groups and others which recognise individual volunteers.

**Further information can be found in the *Thanking volunteers* section of the Knowhow website:**

[www.knowhownonprofit.org/your-team/volunteers/keeping/thanking-volunteers](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/your-team/volunteers/keeping/thanking-volunteers)

**The Butler Trust Awards for anyone working in prisons, probation or youth justice settings, including volunteers:**

[www.butlertrust.org.uk/our-annual-awards](http://www.butlertrust.org.uk/our-annual-awards)

**Queen's Award for Voluntary Service:**

[www.gov.uk/queens-award-for-voluntary-service](http://www.gov.uk/queens-award-for-voluntary-service)

**Lord Ferrers Awards for volunteers in policing:**

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/lord-ferrers-awards-2019](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lord-ferrers-awards-2019)

**Points of Light Awards for outstanding volunteers making a change in their community:**

[www.pointsoflight.gov.uk](http://www.pointsoflight.gov.uk)

**Mayor of London's Volunteering Awards (various categories):**

[www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/volunteering/effective-community-engagement/team-london-awards-2018](http://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/volunteering/effective-community-engagement/team-london-awards-2018)



When considering whether to nominate an individual or group of volunteers for an award, remember to check in advance whether they are happy to be nominated and wouldn't object to any media attention as a winner or runner up. Also bear in mind that other volunteers may feel left out, so don't forget to find other ways to thank or praise them.

## Other methods of retaining volunteers

Providing support and supervision, relevant training and offering extra responsibility demonstrate that the organisation is committed to its volunteers. These tasks usually form part of a volunteer management strategy that takes place all year round.

## 3.3 Moving on

Volunteering can help people to gain new skills and experience and for some it can provide a stepping stone into paid employment.

### Supporting prisoners and people with convictions to move on

Some organisations that recruit people with convictions as volunteers may devise their volunteering opportunities in such a way as to enable people to develop new skills, build up social networks and gain confidence and self-esteem.

Some may even take a proactive approach to helping volunteers find paid employment when the time comes for them to move on. Where organisations do commit to offering this extra layer of support, they should ensure that there are sufficient resources to do so, so that all volunteers are treated fairly, consistently and equitably.

Where organisations are supporting prisoners who are volunteering, it would be helpful to try and ensure that the prisoner has a point of contact for further volunteering opportunities once they have been released. When prisoners are released they are often unable to continue in their volunteering role within the prison. By helping prisoners find new volunteering opportunities either just before they are released or soon afterwards helps to maintain some consistency as well as a sense of moving on. If organisations working with prisoner volunteers are unable to find suitable volunteering opportunities, then at the very least they should signpost the person to the local volunteer centre.

### Volunteers who stay too long

In some cases, a volunteer may join an organisation and remain with them for a number of years. While this isn't necessarily a bad thing, some volunteers can become institutionalised and may feel that their authority extends beyond their volunteering role.



Where possible, such behaviour or attitudes should be dealt with during supervision sessions. If the behaviour persists, but isn't enough to raise a complaint about the volunteer, then some options could include changing or adapting the volunteer's role, developing a new role for them, or maybe placing them within a different part of the organisation.

Finally, if all else fails, the volunteer manager may decide to encourage the volunteer to move on from the organisation. This needs to be dealt with tactfully and may involve the volunteer manager arranging a supervision session or a review with the volunteer to discuss the following:

- The volunteer's achievements during their time with the organisation
- What the volunteer might expect to gain from their volunteering in the future
- What the organisation can realistically offer the volunteer in the future
- How the volunteer's needs may be better met elsewhere.





Ideally, the volunteer will recognise that if they've fulfilled their motivations for volunteering then it may be time for them to move on. However, if this doesn't happen then the volunteer manager may need to emphasise that the organisation can no longer offer the volunteer anything new or exciting, but that the volunteer has a wealth of knowledge and experience that would benefit another organisation. If there are local organisations that would really appreciate the volunteer's help, then give the volunteer their details. Alternatively, give the volunteer the contact details for the local volunteer centre. Above all, remember to be kind, firm and polite when dealing with a delicate situation.

 **Details of local volunteer centres can be found at:**  
[www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/find-a-volunteer-centre](http://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/find-a-volunteer-centre)

## When volunteers leave

It's a good idea to have a written policy on how to say thank you to volunteers when they leave the organisation to ensure that all volunteers are treated fairly, equally and consistently. This will be especially helpful for other members of staff if a volunteer leaves whilst the volunteer manager is away for any reason.


For instance, the organisation may decide to give the volunteer a thank you card that other members of the organisation can sign, and/or a small commemorative gift. The volunteer could also be presented with a certificate to acknowledge their volunteering contribution. Some people may regard this as a souvenir of the time they've spent with the organisation, whilst others may find a certificate a useful way of demonstrating the skills that they've learnt and developed whilst volunteering for the organisation.

## Giving references

Volunteering can be a valuable source of experience and is often a route into employment for many volunteers. One way of recognising a volunteer's contribution to the organisation is to offer to give them a reference. This may be more applicable for volunteers who have been with the organisation long enough to understand their volunteering role and get the most out of it.

## Exit interviews

It is good practice to conduct an exit interview when a volunteer decides to leave the organisation, as it is an opportunity for them to reflect on their role, what they have enjoyed, what has gone well and whether they would recommend any changes to the role. When volunteers announce that they intend to leave the organisation, remember that they are free to come and go as they choose. Unlike paid employees, volunteers do not have to serve a notice period. Depending on the circumstances, some volunteers may simply telephone to say that they're unable to continue volunteering. Others may give a date that they intend to stop volunteering.

 **See 1.8 Monitoring and evaluation (page 17) for further information.**

# Further information and resources



## 4.1 Clinks resources

### **Evaluating the impact made by volunteers (2020)**

[www.clinks.org/publications](http://www.clinks.org/publications)

### **Valuing volunteers in prison (2016)**

[www.clinks.org/resources-reports/valuing-volunteers-prison-review-volunteer-involvement-prisons](http://www.clinks.org/resources-reports/valuing-volunteers-prison-review-volunteer-involvement-prisons)

### **Volunteering resources**

[www.clinks.org/our-work/volunteering-and-mentoring](http://www.clinks.org/our-work/volunteering-and-mentoring)

## 4.2 Other

### **Ministry of Justice**

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-justice](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-justice)

### **Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service**

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/her-majestys-prison-and-probation-service](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/her-majestys-prison-and-probation-service)

### **Disclosure and Barring Service**

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service)

### **Health and Safety Executive**

[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

### **UK Visas and Immigration**

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration)

### **HMRC**

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/rates-and-allowances-travel-mileage-and-fuel-allowances/travel-mileage-and-fuel-rates-and-allowances](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rates-and-allowances-travel-mileage-and-fuel-allowances/travel-mileage-and-fuel-rates-and-allowances)

### **Information Commissioner's Office**

[www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)

### **Intellectual Property Office**

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/intellectual-property-office](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/intellectual-property-office)

## 4.3 National standards

### **NCVO Investing in Volunteers**

NCVO Investing in Volunteers is the UK quality standard for all organisations that involve volunteers in their work.

[www.investinginvolunteers.org.uk](http://www.investinginvolunteers.org.uk)

### **National Occupational Standards in Volunteer Management**

National Occupational Standards in Volunteer Management provide a clear description of what Volunteer Managers need to know and what they need to be able to do to perform a job successfully.

<https://volmanagers.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/national-occupational-standards-for-volunteer-managers-with-matrix.pdf>

### **NCVO Mentoring and Befriending Approved Provider Standard is a national standard for all types of mentoring and befriending projects.**

[www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/quality-and-standards/approved-provider-standard](http://www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/quality-and-standards/approved-provider-standard)

### **Clinks**

Block C, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Tavistock House,  
Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JJ  
020 7383 0966  
[info@clinks.org](mailto:info@clinks.org)  
[www.clinks.org](http://www.clinks.org)

Clinks is a registered charity no. 1074546 and a company limited by guarantee registered in England no. 3562176.

### **National Council for Voluntary Organisations**

Society Building, 8 All Saints Street,  
London N1 9RL  
0845 305 6979  
[volunteering@ncvo.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@ncvo.org.uk)  
[www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering](http://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering)

NCVO is a registered charity no. 225922 and a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales no. 198344.

## Our vision

Our vision is of a vibrant, independent and resilient voluntary sector that enables people to transform their lives.

## Our mission

To support, represent and advocate for the voluntary sector in criminal justice, enabling it to provide the best possible opportunities for individuals and their families.

## Join Clinks: be heard, informed, and supported

### Are you a voluntary organisation supporting people in the criminal justice system?

Join our network of over 500 members. Clinks membership offers you:

- A voice to influence change
- Practical assistance to be effective and resilient
- Support from a community of like-minded professionals.

Membership starts at just £20 per year and is free for organisations with little income.

[www.clinks.org/membership](http://www.clinks.org/membership)

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