

NORTH OF TYNE VOLUNTEERING AREA OF EXCELLENCE

CREATING A FAIR AND WELCOMING APPLICATION PROCESS

ALIGNMENT WITH THE HEALTH CHECK FOR VOLUNTEER-INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS

The Health Check for Volunteer-Involving Organisations considers whether you have a volunteer recruitment process in place. This includes the extent to which you provide prospective volunteers with relevant information about the organisation, role, and the recruitment process, as well as whether your application and interview processes are fair and welcoming.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Organisations need to develop an application system that suits their needs but also does not put off potential volunteers or place unnecessary barriers in people's way.

It is not appropriate to adapt overly formal application processes used to recruit paid staff.

The application process is as much about the volunteer deciding whether they like the organisation, as about the organisation deciding to take on the volunteer.

DEALING WITH INITIAL ENQUIRIES

Often organisations launch recruitment campaigns without properly considering what they will do when people respond to them. It is important that people's enquiries are dealt with in a way that will make them want to find out more.

It is a good idea to have an information pack available to send to people interested in volunteering. The pack could contain information about the organisation, the volunteer role, practical information about expenses and training and maybe information from existing volunteers about what they get out of volunteering for your organisation. Avoid putting in formal policies as it is better to deal with these in the volunteer's induction.

You should view the information pack as an extension of your recruitment materials. You need to provide information for the potential volunteer to decide if your organisation is right for them but at this stage you are still selling volunteering within your organisation.

Remember that for people who have never worked or volunteered before, applying to an organisation is a nerve-racking business and they do not know quite what to expect. Anything that you can do to put them at their ease will be much appreciated and should ultimately result in more committed and informed volunteers who really feel that they have a stake in the organisation.

APPLICATION FORMS

By asking someone to fill out a complex form you may be unintentionally putting barriers in the way for people who have problems with their sight, for whom English is not their first language or whose level of literacy is not high (all of whom may have lots of other skills and experience that you would not want to lose). Most organisations find that it is possible to get the information they need when they meet the volunteer in person, rather than getting them to fill out a form themselves.

You may find that people are much more forthcoming about why they want to volunteer and their skills and experience when chatting to you, than on paper.



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INTERVIEWS

The word interview can be very off-putting. Asking potential volunteers to come in for a chat makes the process sound much friendlier. It is also helpful to remind them that this is their chance to ask you questions and find out if the organisation is right for them.

You may want to tell them about:

- The organisation and the role of volunteers
- Training and support offered
- Your expectations of volunteers (including a brief outline of policies that impact on volunteers)
- Time commitment (frequency and duration)

You may want them to tell you:

- What they like about the idea of volunteering with your organisation
- What they hope to gain from volunteering
- Relevant skills, interests and experience
- Time availability
- Resources they will need

Matching

At the end of the discussion both you and the volunteer together should be in a position to agree whether you want to proceed further. If you are not certain that the volunteer has the skills or experience to carry out the role you will need to explain this, making it clear that your assessment is based on the requirements of the role description. This is perfectly reasonable, but it is important to be open with potential volunteers about what you are suggesting and why.

At the end of the interview you should be in a position to:

- Check whether the volunteer has any further questions or information to give you
- Check that they have the necessary information to take away
- Agree what will happen next and when you expect to be in touch again

