

Selection



Selecting the right volunteers ...

The Selection Process

Not everyone who applies to your organisation will be *successful*, they might not be suitable/ meet the criteria that you're looking for. There is often an assumption that we should just recruit anyone who applies to volunteer as they are giving up their time for free and we should be grateful. However, we still need to be selective and ensure that the volunteers are suitable for the role that they will be undertaking.

You need to consider the following:

- **Your service users** (if applicable). They might be supporting service users, or vulnerable groups and you might need to recruit volunteers with specific skills and experience in order for your service users to be supported effectively.
- **Your potential volunteers.** You shouldn't set volunteers up to fail by recruiting them for a role that they will struggle to undertake/ not experienced enough to do.
- **Your organisation.** Volunteering is a *two way street* and both *volunteers* and the *organisation* should benefit. If this isn't happening, eventually the volunteering relationship will break down.

Saying No

Saying yes to someone who offers to volunteer with your organisation is easy, but saying no thanks to someone who isn't suitable, is a lot more difficult. That's why the process of volunteer selection is so important. It's important to make timely decisions and be honest. There are lots of options when providing feedback; verbal, e-mail, letter. You have choices in re: to how and the quantity of feedback that you want to provide. It's a good idea to provide short, concise feedback, rather than longer statements, that could potentially open up channels for continuing dialogue, so consider how you will formulate your responses. It's good practice to keep the feedback specific to their ability to undertake the role. They might have some really good skills and experience, but just not for the role that they applied to with you. Try to be honest, but sensitive and put yourself in volunteer's shoes when thinking about how to deliver feedback.

Transparency

Good planning is *essential* in making the selection process transparent and fair. Having a consistent and transparent volunteer selection process is important as it sends out a clear message to potential volunteers that your organisation behaves in a fair and professional way. Lengthy selection processes can put off some potential volunteers from applying, but sometimes depending on the nature of the role, this might be necessary. DBS checks and induction/ training may need to be undertaken first, prior to volunteers starting in role.

It's a good idea to keep in touch with volunteers throughout the selection process, to let them know where they are in the selection process and notify them of any potential delays e.g. DBS checks can take a few weeks, or you might run monthly inductions and they might have to wait for the next one. You are more likely to retain volunteers if they are aware in advance and if you keep in touch with them, so that they know what's happening. Unjustified delays can result in volunteers giving up during the application process and going elsewhere and then there's the possibility of your organisation's reputation being damaged.

It's also good practice to keep a record of who has applied previously and the outcome, in case you need to check back at a later date, or feedback is sought or a complaint made. In re: to keeping hold of application forms though and personal details, these may need to be destroyed in line with data protection rules. New guidance will be released on this shortly (national) and it's worth checking with your HR department in re: to what your organisation's procedure is on retaining information about volunteers.

