

Good Practice Factsheet

If your organisation uses volunteers, you will need someone to recruit, train and support them. This may be someone different from the person who deals with them day-to-day. This role is often called a volunteer manager or volunteer coordinator.

In smaller organisations, someone will often be doing this role alongside their main duties. If so, they should be given adequate time and support to manage volunteers.

Volunteers will need support and supervision, and this varies depending on how complex or hazardous the task is. A good way to supervise volunteers is by meeting with them regularly. This can also help build a good working relationship.

You could talk about:

- what they are enjoying in their role
- their successes or difficulties, or
- any future support or training they might need.

It can be hard to talk to each volunteer, especially if you are responsible for many, but it's essential for the opportunity to give and receive feedback.

Make it clear who volunteers can contact if they have a problem, and when help is available. If volunteers are available in the evenings or at weekends, you may need to offer support at those times.

Some voluntary roles will be easier to supervise than others. If volunteers are at home or in the community, you won't be able to check what they are doing all the time.

Give people the resources and guidance to help them be as independent as possible. A reporting or logging system helps see what volunteers have done. A debrief at the end of a shift let volunteers talk through their tasks and any concerns.

Make sure it's clear to everyone who has responsibility for supervising volunteers. This might be a different person from the one who recruited them.

A voluntary role that is emotionally demanding or a very specialist like social care, counselling or psychotherapy means they might need more supervision. Make it clear how they will get this so they can meet professional or ethical standards.

The feedback you get from volunteers is vital to providing a good experience. You can learn what they enjoy about volunteering or what might be causing problems. You can also find out how useful the training and support you offer is for their role.

Volunteers are often the best support for each other. Make it easy for them to speak and learn from their colleagues. You can do this by setting up group sessions, having a buddy system or online groups.

Some of your organisational policies need to cover voluntary roles, as it may be your organisation's legal duty.

You may need specific organisational policies or procedures for your volunteers, and these can also define the values and principles you want them to follow.

It's important to consider any risks associated with your voluntary roles. There are all kinds of risks, from health and safety, safeguarding and professional boundaries to financial, reputational, and organisational risk.

Further Information

For more information on Involving Volunteers visit VIN's website.