Good Practice Volunteer Management Toolkit

VOLUNTEERS FOR HEALTH NORTHANTS

2026

Volunteers for Health Northants
Embedding Volunteers in Health Care

VOLUNTARY
IMPACT NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Developed *by: Volunteers for Health Northants*

Introduction

Volunteering for Health Northamptonshire has created this Good Practice Volunteer Toolkit for Health and Social Care organisations across Northamptonshire who work with health and care volunteers. Included are advice, guidance, templates and links to resources, from creating roles through to volunteers leaving.

This guide has been developed in companion with the [Volunteer Charter.](#) We recommend reading these documents together and using the [Good Practice Volunteer Management Check List.](#)
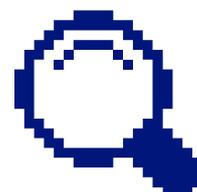
Outcomes

The outcomes of the Volunteers for Health Programme focus on volunteering becoming a valued part of the health and social care system.

We want to help build a strong, supportive infrastructure for volunteers to make it easier for organisations to offer great experiences.

And an integral part, is to encourage a more diverse volunteer community, so everyone feels welcome and included.

Contents

Important Note

This toolkit provides general good practice and links to authoritative guidance; it's not legal advice. For borderline DBS eligibility, complex data processing, or safeguarding cases seek specialist advice. Always check the latest national guidance and your organisation's policies.

Purpose of this Toolkit

This toolkit provides a proportionate, consistent and inclusive approach to managing volunteers in health and care.

Who it's for

Volunteer managers/leads/coordinators, service managers, safeguarding leads, HR/people teams, health-related VCFSE partners, and data protection staff.

Core Principles

- Safeguarding first: keep people safe while enabling inclusive access to volunteering.
- Consistent with agreed VCFSE standards: aligned with NHS Volunteer recruitment.
- Safe recruitment – Proportionate risk management for roles
- Inclusive & fair — equity, diversity and inclusion embedded across the journey.
  - Equity is ensuring fairness by giving people what they need to have equal opportunities, rather than giving everyone the same thing.
- Compliant — follows GDPR regulations.
- An agreement, not a contract - avoid creating employment contracts; handle benefits/expenses carefully.
- Passport volunteering — enable volunteers' portability through shared standards.
- Volunteer to Career — signpost into paid roles where relevant.

Governance & Key Policies

This section suggests some essential governance and policy requirements that volunteer-involving organisations should have in place to ensure safe, ethical, and effective practice. It provides you with a minimum set of organisational policies needed to support volunteers confidently and in compliance. It does not replace your organisation's existing policies.

Minimum set of organisational documents

Volunteer Policy
See our Volunteer Charter, developed for and by partners in Volunteers for Health

Safeguarding (Adults & Children) and safer recruitment

Health & Safety

Incident Reports

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

Data Protection & Confidentiality

Expenses Policy

Insurance Policy

Complaints & feedback Policy

The Volunteer Journey

We suggest using these as your "minimum standards" across the partnership.

Attract

Design

Advertise

This section supports you in [designing meaningful volunteer roles](#) and promoting them effectively. It offers practical guidance on shaping roles that meet your needs while appealing to diverse volunteers, and provides tips for advertising opportunities in ways that are inclusive, engaging, and accessible. Check our [Recruitment Flow Chart.](#)

✔ Standards

- Co-design role descriptions with service users and/or volunteers where possible; include time commitment, tasks, interests, skills, location, supervision, training, risks, and **whether portability applies** for quicker onboarding.
- [Safe Recruitment](#) – do not overburden potential volunteers with unrelated tasks.
- Avoid jargon, use inclusive language, highlight benefits and training available
  - Check out our [Inclusive Language Guide](#) for more information.
- Build inclusive recruitment plans and remove unnecessary barriers (plain language, accessible formats, audio copy, reasonable adjustments).
  - Check out [Example of Competency List for Volunteer Role Descriptions.](#)
- Create [Web Content Accessibility Guideline (WCAG)](#) digital content.
  - The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are international standards developed by the [World Wide Web Consortium](#) (W3C) to make web content accessible for people with disabilities. They outline how websites should be perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust so that all users can access information effectively

Templates

1. [VfH | Template Role Description](#)

Advertise/Promote role

Define the ideal volunteer profile, and clearly communicate the role's value and requirements—ensuring it's genuinely rewarding and meets your organisation's needs. To recruit effectively, understand why people volunteer and what draws them to your organisation.

Where to advertise your roles

There are lots of places locally and nationally to advertise volunteering roles. It's good to think about the demographic of volunteers you may want to recruit and where they might look for voluntary roles. Remember to advertise in more than one place.

CAN – Community Action West Northants
Community Action Northants offers a shop window of opportunities for organisations to advertise.

NHS Volunteering
NHS Volunteering is a national shop window website that advertises volunteering roles in health only. It is open to organisations outside of the NHS to advertise on.

GOVO by Royal Voluntary Service (RVS)
GOVO is a national volunteering website run by the voluntary service.

Libraries
Your local library welcomes a wide range of people and they may have a notice board.

Job Centre
Job centres often encourage people seeking work to Volunteer through Volunteer to Career schemes.

Social Media
Share on your social media pages. Don't forget to share posts on local area groups particularly village groups for rural communities or ask other organisations to share your posts.

Community Centres
Community centres understand their local communities, they may have a notice board you can advertise on or be able to sign post people.

Word of Mouth
Don't forget to let everyone in your organisation know that you are actively recruiting volunteers. You never know who knows who!

Acknowledge receipt of the application

- Provide a prompt acknowledgement and thank you, ideally within 2-3 working days and outline the next steps and time frame.
- Set the tone of the role and the organisation in your response, informal and chatty vs formal and professional.

Expressions of Interest (EOI) & Applications

This section supports you in reviewing expressions of interest and applications. It offers practical tips for assessing initial information, identifying potential matches, and responding promptly to keep volunteers engaged.

✔ **Standards**

- **Respond promptly** - Acknowledge receipt quickly to keep volunteers engaged.
- **Scan for alignment** – Match the volunteer's interests, availability, and motivations to the role and your organisation's needs.
- **Be open-minded** - Consider diverse experiences and backgrounds.
- **Use a consistent approach** - Apply the same criteria to all applications to ensure fairness and transparency.
- **Follow up with care** - If more information is needed, ask clearly and kindly. Keep communication warm and encouraging.
- **Keep records organised** - Track applications securely and in line with data protection policies.
- Keep the **EOI short**; only collect data needed at this stage (name, contact, interest, availability, support needs).
- Provide your [Privacy Notice](#) upfront (purpose, lawful basis, sharing, retention, rights).

Templates

[2. VfH | Volunteer EOI Form Template](#)

APPLY NOW

Informal chat/interview

This section offers guidance on [organising](#) and conducting informal chats or interviews with prospective volunteers. These conversations are a valuable opportunity to explore motivations, clarify expectations, and build rapport before confirming a role. Being friendly and flexible helps you assess suitability while making volunteers feel heard, respected, and welcomed into the organisation.

✓ **Standards**

- Ask if any additional support is needed, this is good practice and lets the volunteers know they will be supported from the start.
- In the interview discuss the role and culture of the organisation and what they could get out of volunteering.
- Explore their reasons to volunteer and any reasonable adjustments they may need.

Inclusive Recruitment *see our [Inclusion Guide](#) for more details*

- Give as much information as possible before the interview.
- Clearly state the location, time and dates of the interview.
- Provide a clear link if the interview is online or a map with clear instructions: where to park, add a photo of your entrance, and of the interviewer.
- Provide the interview questions in advance for the candidate to process them.
- At the end of the interview, ask if there was anything they would like to add or go back to examples they may have missed.
- Allow time for candidates to process the questions.
- Allow fidget toys, offer drinks; put people at ease to reduce anxieties.

Screening & Selection

This section aims to help you navigate the screening and selection process with confidence and consistency - while keeping the volunteer experience positive and respectful. This guidance supports informed decisions that balance safeguarding with inclusion.

✔ Standards

- Use risk based **role screening**; don't default to the highest DBS level — check legal eligibility.(DBS eligibility & National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) overview.)
- DBS for volunteers: Enhanced/Standard checks for eligible roles cost £12, basic checks have a free.
- Encourage the DBS Update Service; volunteers have 30 days from certificate issue to register. (DBS Update service info sheet for Volunteer Co-ordinators, for volunteers.)
- Take inclusive, non-discriminatory decisions; apply Equity Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) principles.
- Include sensible policies and procedures when recruiting and working with volunteers with a criminal record. See Recruiting Ex-offenders and Supporting Volunteers with Criminal Records guides.

Templates

3. VfH | Reference Request Email Template
4. VfH | Reference Request Letter Template
5. VfH | EDI Check List
6. VfH | Vetting Matrix

Offer Role & Pre-Start

This section guides you with offering roles with clarity. It provides guidance on how to present volunteer opportunities in a way that sets expectations, builds trust, and ensures volunteers feel welcomed and valued from day one. This is the foundation for a positive volunteer journey.

✔ Standards

- **Confirm the role clearly**: Use simple, jargon-free language to describe responsibilities, time commitment, location, and any required skills or checks.
- **Check for mutual fit**: Ensure the role aligns with the volunteer's interests, availability, and motivations through meaningful conversations.
- **Provide a welcoming offer**: Send a friendly, personalised message confirming the role offer, including next steps and key contacts.
- **Prepare an induction plan**: Outline what the volunteer will need to know on day one, including introductions, safeguarding, and practical information.
- **Set expectations early**: Share guidance on boundaries, communication, and how support will be provided throughout their volunteering.
- **Make space for questions**: Encourage volunteers to ask anything before they start.
- **Celebrate the start**: A warm welcome — whether in person, by email, or through a buddy system — can make a big difference in how valued a volunteer feels.
- Issue a **non-contractual Volunteer Agreement** and Code of Conduct. (National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO): avoid employment status triggers.)
- Confirm **identity**, permission to volunteer if relevant, and any **occupational health** requirements
  - Occupational Health requirements for volunteers ensure that individuals are fit to carry out their roles safely and without risk to themselves or others. This usually involves basic health screening relevant to the tasks, consideration of any adjustments or support needs, and ensuring volunteers understand how to work safely within the organisation's policies. It helps create a safe, supportive environment while meeting legal and duty of care obligations.

Templates

7. VfH | Volunteer Agreement Template

Alternative Role/ Organisation

Not everyone will be a match to the volunteer role, the organisation or to the beneficiary. Where a volunteer decides not to continue, or an applicant is found unsuitable, it's good practice to explore alternative opportunities that better match their interests, skills, or availability. This approach helps maintain engagement and shows respect for the individual's willingness to contribute.

If you have existing agreements with partner organisations, signpost volunteers to their website and provide a named contact where possible. Let the partner organisation know that volunteer(s) may get in touch, but do not share any personal details without the volunteer's explicit consent.

For more details on supporting volunteers look for alternative roles, see our Passporting section.

Templates

8. VfH | Generic signpost leaflet
9. VfH | Signposting Email Template
10. VfH | Signposting Letter Template
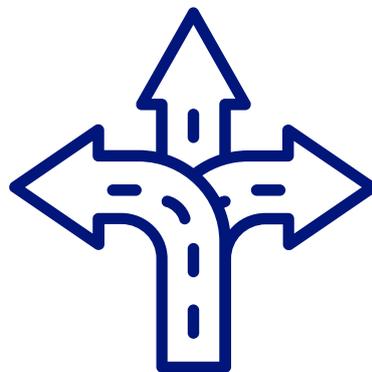
Onboarding, Induction & Mandatory Learning

Volunteers should receive a clear and welcoming induction that covers essential information about the organisation, their role, and key contacts. Mandatory learning — such as safeguarding, health and safety, and confidentiality — should be delivered in an accessible format, with support available to ensure understanding and completion.

For more information please see our [Onboarding of Volunteers Guide](#) and NCVO's guidance on [Running a Volunteer Induction](#).

✔ Standards

- Provide an organisational induction plus role/setting specific modules of training.
- Record completion of training in a shared record when portability applies. This supports portability between organisations.
- Organisation tour, meet the teams, policies, incident reporting, lone working, digital tools, role shadowing, signoffs.
- Discuss health conditions (privately) complete risk assessments if relevant.
- Consider creating easy-read versions of policies and procedures.

Templates

[11. VfH | Volunteer Induction Check List](#)

Start Volunteering, Support, Supervision

A smooth and welcoming start sets the tone for a positive experience. Volunteers should be given a clear induction, introduced to key contacts, and supported to understand their role and responsibilities. Early check-ins help build confidence and ensure any questions or concerns are addressed promptly.

✔Standards

- Assign a supervisor (where relevant) buddies or mentor; provide reflective one to one's with appropriate frequency.
- Ensure expenses are reimbursed promptly.
- Start logging volunteer hours.
- Allow volunteers to take a break from their duties to avoid burn-out and role-fatigue. This can be in short or long periods of 'pause', depending on individual needs, with a clear and supportive pathway for re-engagement when they're ready. See our guide to support volunteers before, during and after burnout. Develop flexible recruitment processes.
- Offer suitable wellbeing support to volunteers within and outside your organisation.
- Listen to volunteers feedback, act on it where possible and relevant.

Templates

12. VIN | Supervison Record Template
13. NCVO | Risk Assessment
14. GOV.UK | Incident and Accident Form

Exit / Transition

[Ending a volunteer placement](#) should be handled with care and appreciation. A simple thank-you, an opportunity for feedback, and a clear process for wrapping up responsibilities help ensure a positive conclusion. Where possible, offer a certificate or reference and invite the volunteer to stay connected for future opportunities. Celebrate wins, milestones, recognise contribution.

✔ Standards

- Provide a positive exit: notice, handover, kit return, exit conversation, [offer of reference](#) (where appropriate), and invite to volunteer network.
- Update DBS/training records and **revoke access** to systems; retain data per schedule, then delete.
- Update local records, notify service user if relevant, notify other organisations if relevant.
- Ask volunteers if they would like to keep in touch or receive updates from your organisation.

Retention Rate Calculator

Use a [Volunteer Retention Rate Calculator](#) to calculate how many volunteers your organisations retains.

Templates

15. [VfH | Volunteer Exit Interview Paper Form](#)
16. [VfH | Volunteer Exit Interview Online Form](#)
17. [VfH | Volunteer Exit Check List](#)
18. [VfH | Outbound Reference Letter Template](#)
19. [VfH | Outbound Reference Email Template](#)

Volunteer Portability

Aim: reduce duplication of checks, training and speed up safe movement of volunteers between roles and organisations, should the volunteer wish to with their consent to share personal information.

What is Portability?

Portability is a system that allows volunteers to carry verified credentials — such as DBS checks, references, ID, and core training — between organisations, reducing duplication and speeding up onboarding.

Scope for Volunteers for Health Northants:

- **Core Elements:** DBS status, safeguarding training, ID verification, training certificates, support volunteers with career pathways (i.e. NHS volunteer roles), support volunteers on employability benefits with DWP
- **Purpose:** Make volunteering across health and care seamless, especially for multi-organisation roles.
- **Boundaries:** Not a full HR record; focuses on compliance and essential training only.

Why it's good practice

- Combines volunteer recognition with career progression pathways.
- Provides real-time reporting for organisations and impact measurement tools
- Shared standards for vetting and training.
- Volunteer empowerment (ownership of data, recognition of skills).
- Integration with career pathways (e.g., NHS & VCFSE sector roles, employability).

Data & Trust Framework

- Gain consent from volunteer
- Develop Data Sharing Agreement with NHS Trusts and VCFSE partners if appropriate.
- Passporting never bypasses legal DBS eligibility rules, safeguarding duties, or proportionate risk assessment.

Volunteers from Diverse Communities

Volunteering attracts people for many different reasons, a stepping stone to paid employment, giving back to the community, building confidence or a reason to leave the house.
Below are some scenarios you may encounter.

Receiving Benefits

Individuals can volunteer and receive benefits. There are restrictions with some benefits to the amount of hours and volunteering may be cut short if offered a job. Volunteers on benefits can receive expenses if they are reasonable and documented. Read our guide on Volunteering while claiming benefits quick and long guides.

Young People Volunteering

Lots of young people volunteer to improve their job or university applications and gain 'real' world experience. Read our working with young volunteers quick guide and the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 for more information.

Refugee & Asylum Seekers

Asylum seekers are allowed to volunteer at any stage of the asylum process, and this is actively encouraged by the Home Office. Read our volunteering for asylum seekers guidance and our quick table for more information.

Remote Volunteers

Volunteers may want to work remotely for a number of reasons including childcare commitments, health issues and flexibility to fit around other commitments. Offering remote volunteering diversifies the volunteers you could attract.

Physical Disabilities

Volunteers with physical disabilities may need additional adaptations to make volunteering inclusive. Read our information sheet reflecting current UK Guidance.

Support Volunteers with lived experience (LEx)

Lived experience refers to the personal perspective, knowledge and insights gained through direct involvement in specific life situations or challenges, such as mental health issues, addiction, homelessness, or disability. Individuals with lived experience possess valuable perspectives that can enhance service delivery, inform advocacy efforts, and shape supportive environments. Their first hand understanding can lead to more empathetic responses, better practices, and tailored programs, ultimately benefiting both the individual and the community as a whole. Please see our Volunteers with Lived Experience and Lived Experience as Strength guides for detailed information.

Standards

- ✔ **Peer Support Spaces:** Create regular, safe spaces for reflection and connection
- **Flexible Policies:** Allow time out for pause periods and recovery time
- **Trauma-Informed Supervision:** Train coordinators in trauma awareness and lived experience sensitivity.
- **Inclusive Recruitment:** Share interview questions in advance, offer alternative formats, and allow support companions.
- **Co-Produced Policies:** Involve LEx volunteers in shaping policies that affect them.
- **Develop flexible recruitment processes**

Templates

20. VfH | Lived Experience Wellbeing Action Plan
21. VfH | Organisation Letter for a Volunteer's Benefit Office

For More Information

If you would like to find out more about this Toolkit or the Volunteer Charter, please contact: :

John Soto - Project Manager

john.soto@voluntaryimpact.org.uk

Ella Sage - Project Administrator

ella.sage@voluntaryimpact.org.uk

Charity Support

If you would like infrastructure support for your Charity Organisation, please contact:

West Northants - **Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire**

North Northants - **Aspire NN**

Reference List

- **National Council for Voluntary Organisations** (NCVO) is the umbrella body that supports and champions charities and voluntary groups across England.

- **National Association for Voluntary and Community Action** (NAVCA) is the national membership body that supports local voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations across England.

- **Health and Safety Executive** (HSE) is the UK's national regulator responsible for protecting people at work by overseeing and enforcing health and safety legislation. It provides guidance to organisations, conducts inspections, investigates workplace incidents, and ensures employers meet their legal duties to keep staff and the public safe. HSE also works to promote good practice, develop regulations, and support safer working environments across all sectors.

- **Information Commissioner's Office** (ICO) is the UK's independent regulator for data protection, ensuring organisations handle personal data lawfully, fairly, and securely under UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

- **Wellbeing Launchpad** is an online directory that helps people in Northamptonshire find local services supporting mental and physical wellbeing. It provides an easy way for residents and professionals to discover community groups, support options, and resources across the area, acting as a central hub for connection and guidance.

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