



4. Volunteers

4.15 How to work with hard to place volunteers

Most organisations will at some point come across people who are simply not suitable. If, during the course of selection, you decide that a volunteer is not suited to the opportunity s/he has applied for, establish whether there is anything else they could do for the organisation.

Whatever the basis for deciding that a volunteer is not suitable, the process should be fair and transparent and within the procedures detailed in your Equal Opportunities policy.

If during the selection process you have gut feelings or intuitions about a volunteer, don't necessarily ignore them, but make sure that they are not the result of personal prejudices.

Ask yourself the following:

- What exactly triggered the negative feelings? Make sure it is a legitimate concern and not just a reaction to someone who is 'different' (discrimination on the grounds that someone is not like you is unacceptable).
- Was your concern triggered by any inconsistencies in the information the volunteer gave as part of the selection process, e.g. something they said in the interview or on their application form, gaps in employment or frequent moves from place to place, a reference that was very vague? This does not

necessarily mean the person is unsuitable but they may be points to investigate further.

- Get a second opinion. Discuss issues that concern you with a colleague or ask them to sit in on the interview.
- Make further checks, e.g. take up another reference or hold a second interview. Make sure any additional checks are for a good reason and are something you can justify later.

The environment should be such that volunteers are encouraged to, and feel confident, about discussing personal information which may have a bearing on their volunteering. Throughout the selection process volunteers should have the opportunity to de-select themselves without losing face.

Anyone who is turned down by your organisation should be told honestly of the reasons why, and offered help to find alternative volunteering opportunities. It is a good idea to make notes of the steps taken so that your decisions are transparent and justifiable.

If you are rejecting a volunteer because of an unsatisfactory criminal records check, be honest and explain that this is likely to prevent them from working with a particular client group or in a particular field of activity.

Also explain that there may be other opportunities where their skills and experience would be welcomed. If you cannot identify an alternative opportunity in your organisation suggest that they visit their local volunteer centre.

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