

4. Volunteers

4.7 How to retain volunteers

Support

All volunteers should know who to go to if they have any problems. The level of support you provide to volunteers will depend on what they are doing. For example, a volunteer counsellor will need more support than someone working in a charity shop, and a volunteer may need additional support because of an illness, a condition or lack of confidence. This should be identified at the early stage of a placement and reviewed regularly, as the need for support may decrease, as experience and skills are gained or increased at times of personal stress. Support can come in many different forms:

- paying out-of-pocket expenses
- mentoring
- group support meetings
- counselling
- telephone and one-to-one support
- inviting volunteers to attend team meetings
- organising social events

Supervision

Volunteers need regular supervision to provide them with the support they need to do the tasks they have been set. Regular supervision provides volunteers and the supervisor with an opportunity to:

- check whether they are enjoying their role
- identify if extra support is required
- explore other avenues of work
- assess if more training is required
- enquire how they are getting on with other staff, volunteers and service users

Offering volunteers regular supervision sessions emphasises the importance of the work they are doing. In preparing for supervision, whether formal or informal you should ensure that the basic principles are followed. The time you give to an individual volunteer should be exclusively for him or her, be free from distractions and take place at regular intervals. It is also useful to keep personal supervision records, copies of which should be given to volunteers.

Appraisals

When involving volunteers you will need to know that the work they are doing is continuing to meet the organisation's and volunteer's needs. Annual appraisals can be one way of identifying how volunteers feel about their roles, their individual performance and career development within the organisation. In order for appraisals to be effective it is essential that both the volunteer and the appraiser make the most of the opportunity for a full and open discussion.

The results of the appraisal should be documented and remain confidential to the volunteer and appraiser.

An appraisal should seek to address the following questions:

- since our last appraisal how are you finding the work?
- what do you enjoy?
- what don't you enjoy?
- is there anything we could be doing to make your role easier?
- is there any training you feel you require?
- can you see other areas of work within the organisation that you would like to try?

Valuing volunteers and giving recognition

Volunteers value being thanked and appreciated for the time and commitment they give. National Volunteers Week is an ideal opportunity to congratulate volunteers for all their hard work. It is usually celebrated during the first week in June each year. Wales Council for Voluntary Action administers the Wales Volunteer of the Year Award scheme each year, which gives certificates of recognition for special volunteering achievements across the country. Nomination forms are available December to March each year from Volunteer Centres or can be downloaded from www.wcva.org.uk.

Further information

Volunteer of the Year Award
Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Tel: 0800 2888 329
www.wcva.org.uk

Disclaimer

The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.

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Produced by WCVA, County Voluntary Councils and Volunteer Centres.
Last Updated:04/08/2011



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