

Wales Council for Voluntary Action

Supporting charities, volunteers and communities

4. Volunteers

4.7 How to ensure volunteer satisfaction



People volunteer for a number of reasons, however for a volunteering relationship to continue there must be a reciprocal benefit for both the organisation and the individual.

The culture of the organisation is crucial to ensuring that volunteers feel valued, motivated and supported to continue in their role. This means that everyone needs to understand the role of volunteers and the contribution they make towards the organisation's goals and how their role is additional and different to the role of staff. Satisfied volunteers are most often part of an inclusive, blended staff and volunteer team. Training needs to be provided to volunteer managers and all those who help manage volunteers to ensure they can provide best practice support. Regular communication from managers is key to ensuring volunteer satisfaction and therefore aids the retention of your valuable, already recruited and trained volunteers.

Involvement

Volunteers should be encouraged to feel a part of the organisation. This could be achieved through involving them in team meetings, development days and social events. A more formal method would be to encourage their participation in staff and volunteer satisfaction surveys, or at mixed staff and volunteer focus groups, and acting on the feedback. This ensures that volunteers not only feel involved but also that they can have influence – a crucial factor in building teams and a sense of belonging.

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 who they are and what they are doing. For example, a volunteer counsellor will need more support than someone volunteering 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 as early as possible and reviewed regularly, as the need for support may decrease as confidence, experience and skills are gained, or increased at times of personal stress.

Support can be provided in different ways:

- Swift and easy reimbursement of expenses so as not to cause hardship or embarrassment . This is an important equality issue and is often mentioned by volunteers as a barrier to their retention or feelings of not being valued
- training
- mentoring

- group support meetings
- signposting to other specialist support services, telephone and one-to-one support
- team meetings
- supervision

Supervision

Regular supervision provides volunteers and the supervisor with an opportunity to:

- Review how the role is being carried out
- Check out how the volunteer is experiencing their role
- Give feedback on the positive difference the volunteer is making e.g. successes for service users, amount of funding raised, other relevant quantifiers
- Address any difficulties sensitively
- Identify if extra support is required
- Explore other kinds of activity or involvement that might be of interest
- Assess if more training would be beneficial
- Discuss any issues arising from relationships with other staff, volunteers and service users
- ask volunteers for any suggestions to improve the service.

Offering volunteers regular supervision sessions emphasises the importance of what they are doing. In preparing for supervision, whether formal or informal, ensure that the basic principles are followed, ie: 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. You may want to keep personal supervision records, copies of which should be given to volunteers.

Sometimes what you offer as 'supervision' may be from a volunteers' perspective an informal 'catch up'. However it is done, it is the regularity and the giving of your time and attention that is the most important

Reviews

Annual reviews can be one way of identifying how volunteers feel about their roles, their individual performance and career development within the organisation. In order for reviews to be effective both the volunteer and the reviewer need to make the most of the opportunity for a full and open discussion.

The results of the review should be documented and remain confidential to the volunteer and reviewer.

A review should seek to address the following questions:

- Since our last review how are you finding your volunteering?
- What do you think has gone well? Is there anything you are proud of?
- What has not gone well? How do you think it could have been done differently?

- Is there anything we could be doing to make your role easier/better?
- Is there any training you think would help you in your role?
- Can you see other areas of involvement within the organisation that you would like to try?
- Do you have any personal goals for the future that volunteering could help you to achieve?

Valuing volunteers and giving recognition

If you are able to offer training that is accredited or formally recognised, this is often appreciated. As well as ensuring that volunteers are trained to a consistent standard it is a demonstration of your commitment and valuing of the contribution volunteers can make.

National [Volunteers Week](#) (1- 6 June) is an ideal opportunity to congratulate volunteers for all their hard work.

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 the WCVA website.

The [Millennium Volunteers Scheme](#) which provides certificates to young volunteers to recognise the hours of volunteering they have given.

There are also local volunteer recognition schemes within most CVCs, contact your [local Volunteer Centre](#) for details.

Further information

The [Investing in Volunteers Standard](#) requires that the organisation takes account of the varying support and supervision needs of volunteers (Indicator 8) and that the whole organisation is aware of the need to give volunteers recognition (Indicator 9).

Volunteers should have opportunity to make known their views about the organisation's work, including its policies and procedures, and to participate in decision making (Indicator 9.2) and to continue developing their skills and talents within the roles on offer, if appropriate (Indicator 9.4)

It also requires that people at all levels of the organisation have been informed of, and can articulate the organisation's reasons for involving volunteers and the benefit to volunteers (Indicator 1.3).

See also the following information sheets:

- 4.3 [Creating a Volunteering Policy](#)
- 4.4 [Recruiting, selecting and Inducting volunteers](#)
- 4.8 [Keeping volunteers safe](#)
- 4.13 [Volunteer expenses](#)

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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