

## Issue 07

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The NCVO Members Quick Guide to

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# Recruiting Volunteers

What sort of volunteers do you need?

Recruiting the right people – Marketing

Recruiting the right people – Selection

Getting your volunteers ready

*NCVO champions and strengthens the voluntary sector, from the largest charities to the smallest community organisations. Inspired and empowered by over 10,000 members, we make sure the voluntary sector can do what it does best. Improve the world around it.*

This guide was produced for NCVO members.  
It should only be shared within your own organisation.

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Volunteers are more than just the heartbeat of a charity; they are the heartbeat of the country. Every year, over 20 million people across England and the UK volunteer, donating more than 100 million hours to their communities every week. It has been estimated that the economic value of this activity is worth in excess of £40 billion to our economy.<sup>1</sup>

The effectiveness of many charities is dependent on the additional resource, knowledge and enthusiasm that volunteers bring. Therefore a charity's ability to recruit and retain great volunteers, and at every level of their operation – from public fundraising, to upfront service delivery and running activities to back-office support – can mean the difference between delivering their mission, and falling short of what their beneficiaries need.

This Quick Guide gives you and your charity some practical ideas that you can easily employ to attract new volunteers and make sure they get off to a flying start.

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### References

- 1. [www.volunteering.org.uk/aboutus/news-releases/2275-2012-could-be-the-year-of-the-volunteer-but-investment-is-key](http://www.volunteering.org.uk/aboutus/news-releases/2275-2012-could-be-the-year-of-the-volunteer-but-investment-is-key)

# What sort of volunteers do you need?

Whether your charity is looking to recruit its first volunteers, replace volunteers who are no longer available, or expand its numbers, it's always a good idea to have a fresh think about what it is you actually need. You might want to use this checklist as a basis to ensure you'll be recruiting the people who'll make the difference.

## Top tip 1

If your charity has paid staff, involve them in this exercise, and communicate the results to them. This can help to reassure your staff about how volunteers will be there to complement their professional work.

- In what part of our operation do we need volunteers, and the benefits they bring, to help fulfil our strategic objectives?
- How many people do we need and in what locations?
- What skills and experience would be ideal?
- How long do we need them for? For example, most charities will always need continual fundraising resource, or perhaps you are having a one-off event and just need volunteers for a day.

- Will we be paying their expenses? (It is good practice to make sure people are not out of pocket through volunteering, but you need also to make sure you only pay expenses people have directly incurred. [Find out more in the Good Practice Bank.](#))

When you have the answers to those questions, you'll be able to start writing a description for the role(s). Make sure that, as well as detailing all the key points of the role, you also 'sell' the charity. Recruiting volunteers can be a competitive business, so spell out why someone should give their time to you. You might want to think about including some inspiring quotes from existing volunteers, or explaining how volunteers can learn skills that can then help them in their professional careers.

## Top tip 2

When the role description is ready, make it available from your website so you have somewhere to direct interested parties in the first instance.

More on this? Volunteering England (now part of NCVO) provides some [model volunteer role descriptions](#) on their website.

# Recruiting the right people – Marketing

So, you know the sort of person you need, what you'd like them to do, and you have an inspiring role description. The next step is getting your request out. Depending on how many volunteers you need to recruit, there might be some easy, and free, ways.

- Ask people who are already connected with your charity in some way – staff, trustees, donors, existing volunteers, or even service users – if they know of friends, family or professional colleagues who might like to volunteer.
- If your charity has a social media presence (eg Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+), put a request out to your followers, and ask them to share it. Make sure you include a link to the role description on your website.
- If you have a corporate partner you might already have an arrangement with them to supply you with volunteers. But if not, you can explain that having an employee volunteering programme is increasingly seen as an attractive feature for a business, and it can serve as valuable training for their staff's professional development.
- Advertise on your website – the likelihood is that people who are visiting your site are more prone to want to volunteer with you.

If none of those options are available to you, or you are looking to recruit a large number of volunteers or diversify your existing ones, then you might be better advertising with a third party.

- [Volunteer Centres](#) are located throughout the country and can be a great source of people looking for volunteering opportunities.
- [Do-it](#) is the national volunteering database, with over 1 million registered volunteers.
- NCVO members receive a range of discounts and offers on advertising volunteering roles with [CharityJob](#).

## Case study – The Charity

Pauline Hughes is Director of Communications at Whizz-Kidz

'At Whizz-Kidz we use volunteers for all sorts of roles – administration, campaigning, fundraising, and even strategic planning. One of the busiest areas is our Volunteer Buddy Scheme, where a volunteer is partnered with a young wheelchair user to provide support with their mobility training. We're always on the look out for enthusiastic volunteers, so recruitment is an ongoing activity. We recruit through advertising on third-party websites, usually for free through a partnership arrangement, but we find that we gain a huge amount from already warm supporters – perhaps people who have run a marathon for Whizz-Kidz, or work for one of our corporate partners. Many of them tell us that they've been keen to turn their hands to volunteering and just needed to be asked!'

## Recruiting the right people – Selection

The nature of what you will be asking the volunteer to do should determine how rigorous your selection procedure needs to be. For example, for some posts an informal chat about the charity's work and the potential volunteer's interests might be adequate. However, if the role has more responsibility, (eg managing money, working with vulnerable people, access to confidential information) then your procedure should be more formal. In such cases you should ask the candidate to illustrate their professional career history, conduct a formal interview, and take up references.

If you are working with children or vulnerable adults, you will need to assess how you safeguard them and how you select and supervise volunteers. Check whether criminal record checks, through the Disclosure Barring Service (DBS), are needed for the role. [Find out more about the DBS in this information sheet.](#)

### Top tip 3

**Treat the recruitment of a volunteer as seriously as a paid member of staff. If the fit isn't right, don't take them on; the wrong volunteer can become a drain on your time and resources.**

## Getting your volunteers ready

Getting the most out of your new volunteers requires them to be both motivated and informed. The most effective volunteers are often those who know what is expected of them, and how what they are doing is contributing to the charity. Volunteers should be continually reminded of these, but it is especially important when they first join you, so a well thought through induction process is crucial.

Regardless of the specifics of the role, every new volunteer should receive some sort of induction. This can be as simple as a welcome email, letter or telephone call, or a more detailed and formal training course, perhaps with an element of shadowing.

Although the nature of the induction will vary from charity to charity and role to role, there should be some common features.

- Take time to remind your new volunteer about the charity's mission. This may mean reinforcing some of the messages used in your marketing and selection stages, or getting into more depth.
- Provide some sort of written agreement, which clearly spells out the proposed duties of the volunteer, their expected time commitment, and who will support them and be a point of contact for any problems. It should also include your policy on reimbursing expenses.
- Many of the policies you have in place for your staff will be applicable to a volunteer, and probably already available in your staff

handbook or equivalent (eg health and safety, confidentiality and data protection, and use of phone and the internet/social media.) Problem-solving procedures on discipline, grievance and complaints will need to be adapted for volunteers; consider how you can follow the guidance in the '[3R Promise](#)'.

- Buddy up your new recruit with a seasoned volunteer. This shouldn't replace the need for a member of staff to manage the volunteer, but serves as additional support and perhaps a more relevant perspective.

### Top tip 4

**Your charity should have a clear understanding of where the responsibility for a volunteer's induction lies. Usually this will be part of the HR function, but if that hasn't been clearly defined, then a number of departments may claim it as their remit – or worse, none at all. As inferred from the list above, the best inductions will probably draw on input from more than one department.**

## Case study – The Volunteer

Alison has been volunteering for Chernobyl Children's Project for seven years.

'While I was on maternity leave I wanted to do some voluntary work, and having just become a mother I was drawn to child welfare causes. I found Chernobyl Children's Project through an advert in the local newspaper. It began with an informal chat on the phone – they explained what they were looking for people to do, and helped me to decide which roles my experience and availability might be best suited for. They really took time to ensure I was fully bought in to their mission, including putting me in touch with experienced volunteers. I began by hosting small fundraisers at my home, which fitted in perfectly with having babies, and I've since taken on more responsibility by having a family from Chernobyl stay with us for a few weeks every year.'

## More information and advice

### Member-only information sheets

Members can access a range of exclusive volunteering information sheets in the members' area of the NCVO website. Topics include health and safety, insurance, visas and problem-solving procedures.

<http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/members/your-services/information/volunteering-resources>

#### NCVO network bulletins

Sign up to free newsletters on a range of topics, including volunteering.

[www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/signup](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/signup)

#### Consultancy

Get help from an NCVO consultant or through our Directory of Approved Consultants.

- NCVO Consultancy (20% discount for NCVO members)

[www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/advice-support/consultancy/our-team](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/advice-support/consultancy/our-team)

- NCVO Directory of Approved Consultants (many Approved Consultants offer discounts to NCVO members)

[www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/DAC](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/DAC)

#### Free HR advice for NCVO members

All NCVO members can get 30 minutes of free telephone support a month from the PEACe HR advice service.

[www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/peacehr](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/peacehr)

#### Volunteering England Good Practice Bank

A comprehensive collection of information and advice for volunteers and volunteer managers.

[www.volunteering.org.uk/goodpractice](http://www.volunteering.org.uk/goodpractice)

#### Volunteer centres

Local volunteer centres are the key agencies which support and develop volunteering in their localities and help match people and opportunities.

[www.volunteering.org.uk/where-do-i-start?view=map](http://www.volunteering.org.uk/where-do-i-start?view=map)

#### Volunteers' Week (1–7 June)

An annual campaign supported by events throughout the UK.

[www.volunteering.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/volunteers-week](http://www.volunteering.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/volunteers-week)

#### England Volunteering Development Council (EVDC)

An independent representative and information-sharing body for volunteering organisations with a regional network

[www.volunteering.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/england-volunteering-development-council](http://www.volunteering.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/england-volunteering-development-council)

**This and all of the other  
Member Quick Guides can  
be found in the members'  
area of the NCVO website.**