Knowledge Gateway

Practice Guidance and Information

# Promoting Positive Volunteer and Staff Relations

## Why are positive volunteer and staff relations important?

### Volunteers are likely to volunteer alongside paid staff. Most of the time this works well, and staff value the extra support volunteers bring.

Having staff aware of how to support volunteers and make them feel welcome is important to ensuring volunteers have a positive experience. Here are some suggestions how you can help create positive relationships with staff and volunteers.

### What do I need to think about?

To help you develop positive volunteer staff relations we have developed some things to consider.

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| **Planning for new roles** | It's really helpful to involve staff in developing new volunteer roles. This means they can discuss what would go well with the work of staff and existing volunteer roles. They'll also understand why the role was created, what it's achieving and value the role. |
| **Involve trade unions** | Sometimes it is valuable to involve your trade union when developing new roles. An underpinning principle should be that volunteers do not do the work of paid staff. Please see The Volunteer Charter for more information, we ask organisations to adhere to the charter. |
| **Developing confidence in each other** | Paid staff need to feel confident that all volunteers are able to do their role well and that they are not a threat to employment or conditions of service. They might also want to know how you'll deal with any problems if they come up. Volunteers should feel confident that staff value their involvement, and they are welcomed and recognized for their role in achieving the organisation's aims. Providing regular opportunities for volunteers and staff to meet to discuss activities and any successes or challenges will help develop confidence. |

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| **Code of conduct between staff and volunteers** | It is in everyone's interest to ensure that all volunteers have a positive experience. It is important to think about dignity and respect for all those involved in your organisation, including volunteers. Sometimes this can be as basic as acknowledging and thanking volunteers. Some organisations have a Respect Policy that outlines the behaviour expected of both staff and volunteers when working together. |
| **Communicating** | You can use a range of ways to communicate effectively with staff and volunteers that can help to identify or avoid difficulties. This could include a monthly volunteer report to the board, volunteer representatives at staff meetings and vice versa, an agenda item about volunteering at staff meetings and vice versa, joint meetings between staff and volunteers, a staff/volunteer newsletter, social media, annual award for staff and volunteers, part of the website dedicated to volunteering updates, a volunteer staff forum, or a suggestion/idea box. Joint social/ networking. |
| **Adding Value** | A good way of thinking about volunteer roles is that it should be complementary to the activities of staff. It's useful to provide an example of how volunteers complement the work of paid staff and show how the combined efforts of paid staff and volunteers provide an enhanced service with added value. |
| **Named contact** | It is important that volunteers have a named person who can be contacted with any questions or concerns. |
| **Staff & Volunteer Inductions** | Along with the communication mentioned above, organisations/groups should include volunteering in staff inductions. Share the volunteer policy for new staff that describes their organisation's commitment to volunteering and the volunteer roles. All volunteers should understand how what they do fits into the overall activity of the organisation and how it sits with staff roles. |

Volunteer coordinators or managers will often have to be flexible in the approaches used to create good relations between staff and volunteers. Check frequently if what you are doing is working and do not be afraid to ask staff and volunteers what else is needed to create positive relationships.

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The Knowledge Gateway is created and led by **Volunteer Scotland**

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This is a regularly reviewed resource. If you have any suggested updates, please email Volunteer Scotland at **hello@volunteerscotland.org.uk**