Knowledge Gateway

Practice Guidance and Information

Encouraging more women from diverse backgrounds to volunteer in your group or organisation

These Top Tips were produced by Volunteer Scotland and the National Inclusion in Volunteering Group.

Glasgow Women's Library (GWL) is a vibrant information hub open to all. It's an accredited museum and home to a lending library and archive, and also offers exciting events, activities, exhibitions and courses.

GWL's volunteering programme is for women-only, to ensure that women who do not feel safe or confident in mixed spaces are not excluded from volunteering. The programme, like all our activities, strives to be accessible to and inclusive of all women and is inclusive of Trans, Intersex women, non-binary and gender fluid people.

By reflecting on the following we would hope that these points would help you make your volunteering offer more inclusive:

1. Monitor the diversity of your volunteers:
    a. Our volunteers are asked annually to complete an anonymous online survey which asks them about their gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, disability and age. We also ask them for the first part of their postcode as a way of determining their socio-economic background (this can be a blunt tool but the best we could think of). All questions are optional and have "Prefer not to say" option. This information helps to identify underrepresented groups in our volunteer cohort, consider what barriers might be preventing some women from getting involved, and target our recruitment.

2. Understand the barriers to volunteering experienced by women:

   In addition to the barriers which people of all genders might be facing (see Top Tips from other Inclusion Group Members) these are some barriers which women are more likely to experience.

   Caring responsibilities:
   More women than men are the main carer for their children and they may care for other dependent relatives too which can affect emotional health, physical health, social activities and finances. It also means that if a child is unwell and off school, women might have to step in to look after them or respond to another emergency if someone needs to attend a GP or hospital appointment.

   Suggestions:
   a. Be flexible and supportive of women who have caring responsibilities.
   b. Provide volunteering roles which fit around dropping off and picking up children at school
   c. Schedule training and meetings within school hours and avoid school holidays

3. English as a Second Language:
   It can be more difficult for women to access English classes due to a lack of childcare and a shortage of English classes. However, volunteering can be very beneficial for women wanting to improve their English.

   Suggestions:
   a. We have successfully buddied native English speakers with women learning English to volunteer alongside each other.
   b. We also run Conversation Café sessions when volunteers come together with the aim of chatting while carrying out their volunteering role.

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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**