GOOD PRACTICE IN VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT
PART FOUR TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to part four of this course on good practice in volunteer management. So far, in parts one, two and three we’ve looked at:

- what good volunteer management is
- what practical skills and knowledge a good volunteer manager needs to have
- why it’s important to acknowledge the contribution your volunteers make, plus suggestions of different ways you can recognise and reward your volunteers.

In this final part we’re going to look at what tools you should have at your disposal when managing volunteers. Think of yourself as having a toolbox with a set of tools that would help you do your job well. Whilst it may not be necessary to have every one of these tools, we suggest:

- a robust recruitment process
- volunteer induction
- a volunteer policy.

Let’s look at each of them in more detail.

A robust recruitment process

This should be written down and reviewed regularly to see whether it is helping you to create the right awareness about your volunteering roles and how effective the process is in attracting the volunteers you are seeking to reach. Having a written process will ensure consistency which will make recruitment fair for all volunteers.

Remember recruitment starts with creating volunteer roles that are meaningful and add value.

Volunteer induction

Volunteer inductions should help volunteers become familiar with your organisation, for example, the history, ethos and structure of the organisation and incorporate orientation such as personal
introductions, understanding how volunteering adds value to the organisation which will be outlined in the volunteering policy.

Induction will also help a volunteer to know where to find things such as volunteer expenditure claim forms and whatever they need in order to carry out their task. Induction will include the values and polices of your organisation. So induction will be a mix of reading, meeting, talking, listening and possibly site tours.

Don’t forget induction should cover health and safety and if volunteers will be handling other people’s personal data, you will need to cover data protection too.

Other policies relevant to volunteers if appropriate for the tasks they will be undertaking are your safeguarding and equal opportunities policies. Always check back regularly with your volunteers to ensure they have read your policies and encourage them to ask you questions if there is anything that they do not understand.

You may wish to include a volunteer induction checklist that covers:

- introducing them to other staff and volunteers
- showing them around the building or volunteering site
- explaining who they can go to if they have any questions or problems
- showing them where they will be carrying out their activities and where they can find any equipment they may need
- letting them know about breaks
- showing them how to claim expenses
- explaining your organisation’s policy on volunteers using telephones or accessing the internet for their own use
- asking them to shadow other experienced volunteers or paid members of staff.

The length and depth of a volunteer induction will depend on the role and level of resources you have available. A good induction will provide you with a better picture of how a volunteer works, what support they will need, and what they are hoping to gain. This will help you support them in their volunteer journey.

**Volunteer policy**

A volunteering policy is a framework for your volunteer programme. It helps define the role of volunteers within the organisation, and how they can expect to be treated. Your volunteer policy should include the following:
• Recruitment of volunteers, including equality and diversity
• Induction and training
• Expenses – eligible volunteer expenditure and process of how to claim
• Supervision and support that volunteers can access and from who
• Health and safety
• Confidentiality and data protection
• Problem solving and complaint procedures
• Volunteer role description – use volunteer role descriptions to recruit and refer back to with your volunteers, your volunteers may have valuable feedback for you on the relevance and remit of the roles you have created
• Expenses policy – your expenses policy will outline what items are eligible items of expenditure and this will be a policy that applies to everyone, whether staff or volunteer

Remember it is good practice to offer your volunteers regular catch-up meetings to discuss and review how they are finding their role, the organisation and feeling part of your team, and to identify if there are any emerging training needs in order for them to carry out their volunteer role more effectively. Meeting with your volunteers will also provide them opportunities to feedback to you, which will help to improve your volunteering offer.

Not everyone has an enjoyable or rewarding volunteering experience and we’re going to look now at common issues that arise. What typical problems can you think of that might occur when managing volunteers?

Here are some commonly identified problems:
• Poor communication
• Expectations of one party not met or not clear
• A complaint
• Personality clash
• Issue with performance, conduct or behaviour
• Relationship break-down

This is why having good induction and regular catch ups with your volunteers is so important, as they can help to pinpoint issues before they become problems.

Having policies and procedures, and making sure your volunteers: have access to them, understand their implications, and understand how to apply them – is another way to avoid the problems identified.

If you have a complaints policy, make sure your volunteers understand how to use this so if they do wish to make a complaint, they follow the right process.
Prevention is better than cure and good, open communication can mitigate problems well before they arise. If problems occur we advise that you:

- offer reconciliation to your volunteer – say sorry and outline how you will do better in future
- accept responsibility in how you have interacted with them
- accept that it is ok for you to say goodbye to your volunteer if things have changed immeasurably.

If you don’t have a complaints policy, we recommend you adopt one, and that this problem solving process follows the 3R promise. The 3R promise is based on research and practice with volunteer-involving organisations who came together to find solutions to complaints raised by volunteers, and conflict experienced by them.

The four stages of the problem solving process are:

1. Oral or informal stage
2. Written or formal stage
3. Opportunity to appeal
4. Opportunity for external mediation

This needs to be available to all staff and volunteers because a volunteer may complain about a staff member or vice versa, or a volunteer may complain about another volunteer. During the problem solving process you should:

- assess the problem
- make a change
- if it is not serious misconduct, then provide time and opportunities to change
- be firm but understanding throughout and communicate to the concerned individuals or parties during all stages of the problem solving process.

We’ve come to the end of this course on good practice in volunteer management. You should now know:

- five key principles that underpin good volunteer management
- four practical skills needed to manage volunteers effectively
- a variety of ways you can reward and recognise your volunteers
- which policies and procedures you should have in place in your toolbox to aid volunteering
- explored how to resolve difficult situations should they arise
- clarified where to find further practical support for volunteer management.

Thanks for watching and good luck in your volunteer management work.