What will volunteers do and not do, and why?

When creating new kinds of volunteer roles, think carefully about the position your volunteers will be placed in. Voluntary activity should complement the work of paid staff, rather than substitute work which staff currently do or recently did.

While volunteers shouldn’t feel over-committed or over-loaded, it is important that they are engaged in productive tasks so that they feel a sense of achievement from their role.

Volunteer role description

It is useful to write a volunteer role description for the role that you would like the volunteer to do. This gives a clear outline to the volunteer what is expected of them and a written description shows you are well organised.

It will also indicate the type of person you are seeking for the role and potentially put off any unsuitable people, as well as prevent any misunderstanding about the nature of volunteering. It is also a useful tool to support future supervision sessions.

Care needs to be taken when writing these roles especially not to use the term ‘job description’ as this can blur the lines between volunteering and employment and can in some cases be legally problematic.

Policy

Volunteers should not be asked to do anything which would contradict any policies your organisation have such as Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Lone Working policy etc.

When is it not appropriate to involve volunteers?

• When answers to the questions you have asked yourself and other stakeholders about involving volunteers have raised issues for the organisation that cannot be resolved.

• To replace a paid member of staff.

• When volunteers will be delivering a service that is usually paid for and the recipients could clearly pay.

• When the work is intended to make a profit.