Volunteering pack

Recruiting volunteers
This document looks at the recruitment process for volunteers and associated issues such as recruitment materials, volunteer roles, application forms, appointment and who you can recruit.

Whether recruiting from outside or inside the trust the recruitment process should be in line with best HR practice, Department of Health (DH) guidelines and trust policies. Recruiting volunteers in the NHS frequently comes under the remit of the voluntary services manager (VSM) or coordinator (VSC), with support from HR.

Creating volunteer roles

There are many roles that a volunteer can undertake in the NHS. Volunteering England has a comprehensive list in its Volunteering Across the NHS guidance.

This list demonstrates the range of roles being undertaken but is not intended to be comprehensive.

When thinking about developing a volunteer role there are some key issues to be considered:

- volunteers should not be used to replace paid staff or cover formal healthcare roles
- include staff-side representatives, service users, volunteers and staff who will be working alongside or supporting volunteers in the development and implementation of new volunteer roles
- volunteers should not be used for roles that are primarily concerned with personal or physical care, for example bathing or toilet assistance
- roles should be of value to the community/service users, the volunteer and the organisation
- employees should have an understanding of the involvement of volunteers in service delivery and the value that they bring
- volunteer roles should have a description that clarifies expectations and indicates the level of support for the volunteer – these should be flexible and adapted to each volunteer’s skills and capabilities, while also reflecting the needs of the organisation
- new roles need to reflect local and national priorities
- consider what resources are needed for the role and the continued support of the person in this role.
Recruitment material and advertising

Methods of recruiting volunteers will very much depend on the role and the type of person you are looking for. The most common options for recruiting are:

- trust website or intranet
- staff notice boards and newsletters
- local media (radio, newspapers, freesheets) and community centres
- open days
- job clubs
- volunteer centres
- NHS Jobs
- the National Volunteering Database, www.do-it.org.uk
- local community events – such as summer fêtes, galas and so on
- local schools, clubs, further education establishments, universities
- local voluntary groups
- word of mouth.

Advertising for volunteer posts is not very different from advertising any position. Advertisements should meet all the same equality and diversity criteria as a paid post and be clear about the role. They should set out what the role is, what it involves in terms of time and commitment and what a volunteer might gain from the experience. Any advertisements should also refer to whether the post will be subject to Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and Independent Safeguard Authority (ISA) registration. Current volunteers can help to recruit other volunteers by commenting on recruitment materials, talking at meetings or speaking to potential volunteers about their volunteering role.
Application forms and employment checks

The same general principles apply to developing an application form for volunteers as for any post in the NHS, although you may wish to simplify the volunteer form to contain only the information that is needed. The general principles are:

• make it simple and easy to fill in

• offer a number of options, online versions, paper and the option to be able to complete it verbally

• remove as many barriers as possible, particularly for people with learning difficulties, dyslexia, poor eyesight or language skills – make it clear that help is on offer to those who need it

• ask only for the information needed for the role.

A sample application form for volunteers is included in Annex 1 of this document.
Employment checks

It may be necessary to explain to a volunteer the reasons why they need to fill in an application form and why they will also need to undergo employment checks as specified in the **NHS Employment Check Standards**.

These standards apply to permanent staff, staff on fixed-term contracts, temporary staff, volunteers, students, trainees, contractors and highly mobile staff employed through an agency. Not all volunteers require a CRB check, but, where posts involve access to patients and service users as part of their normal duties, a CRB check will have to be made.

The NHS Employment Check Standards include all pre-appointment checks that are required by law and those that are mandated by Department of Health (DH) policy. They form part of the robust risk assessment process which ensures patient and public safety, as well as the health and safety of the volunteer in question. In addition to CRB checks, individuals who intend to engage in regulated activity with children and vulnerable adults will be required to register with the ISA from July 2010. The CRB check and registering with the ISA is free for volunteers. However, should a volunteer later take up a paid post which requires registration with the ISA they will be asked to pay the registration fee.

Where an agreement is in place with an independent third sector organisation for the provision of volunteers, they will usually have carried out all of the checks that are required by law. It is then the duty of the NHS organisation to obtain confirmation from them, as part of the partnership agreement, that these checks have been carried out and meet all legal requirements. It is not generally necessary for these checks to be carried out again by the host organisation.

**References**

Two references should be sought. These should be recent contacts and not pre-prepared letters. Family members are not acceptable referees. It is useful for one referee to be a previous or current employer or volunteer manager – it is important to remember that not all volunteers will have such a referee. Some volunteers will have limited options, for example:

- people who have been unemployed for a long time
- people who have never been in employment
- asylum seekers and other people who have not long been living in the UK
- students.
For applicants who have not recently been in employment there are a number of individuals who could act as referees. These include:

- religious or cultural leader
- teacher or tutor
- case worker, community or social worker
- family doctor (in this case there may be a charge for providing the reference which the volunteer would have to pay).

**Appointment**

It is not always possible to find a suitable placement for someone offering to volunteer. If you have to turn down an offer of help, it is important to show that careful consideration has been given to the application before declining. Signposting to other organisations and suggesting realistic alternatives will help.

Unsuccessful applicants should be provided with considerate, honest feedback and, wherever possible, support to identify alternative forms of volunteering.

It is good practice to have a trial period for successful applicants that is clearly defined and which allows them to try out their volunteer role, or several roles to see which suits best. A trial period also means that the VSM and staff can see how the volunteer would manage their role and fit into the team. A review meeting should be held at the end of the period.

New volunteers will need to go through an induction programme which is appropriate to their level of involvement. An induction checklist will help ensure that the volunteer receives all the relevant information. An induction pack or booklet outlining the basic induction package, and which can be kept as a reference guide, is often a good idea. This can also be used as a record of training and any equipment received, as well as providing useful information. A sample induction checklist is included in the induction and training section of this volunteering pack.
Health checks

As part of the NHS Employment Check Standards, new volunteers will be expected to undergo a health check. It should be explained that the purpose of this check is to ensure that they will not be put at risk by the role they are about to undertake. Where there are concerns about the individual’s health, or the effect that volunteering may have on it, you should consider asking if your occupational health provider can talk to the individual’s GP or key worker for more information.

There are some volunteer roles where having a specific health condition may be seen as a requirement for the role. The best example of this is the Expert Patients Programme (EPP). Lay tutors for this programme are graduates of EPP and, by definition, must have a long-term medical condition. Self-help groups are another example where volunteers are more than likely to suffer from the condition the group is set up to support; their experience is part of their contribution.

Health screening for volunteers may therefore have slightly different criteria for some volunteering roles, where certain health conditions are integral to the requirements of the role. However, the main criteria for all individuals undergoing a health assessment is whether they can perform the tasks they are required to do without risk to themselves or others, and whether the role they have been asked to undertake may have any negative impact on their health. Most NHS organisations have their own local policies for managing health assessments and it will be necessary to take these into consideration when recruiting to this type of post.
Most people are eligible to become volunteers, but certain groups in society, such as ex-offenders or those recovering from addiction, raise questions of suitability for some roles and may need careful thought or special arrangements in place before they can be recruited. However, this does not mean that they should be excluded from volunteering.

Offering volunteering opportunities to adults or young people who may need support for a variety of reasons (such as mental ill health, learning disability, physical impairment, addiction) can be a real lifeline and an important way to make people feel more included in society. All NHS organisations have a commitment to equal opportunities and diversity, and by refusing to admit vulnerable people and other groups to volunteering programmes they are preventing people who are at risk from social exclusion from taking an active role in the community.

**Individuals claiming benefits**

Benefits rules do not prevent claimants from volunteering. Although claimants must declare their voluntary activity to Jobcentre staff, volunteer organisations are under no obligation to inform Jobcentre Plus about anyone who is volunteering for them.

Reimbursement of expenses should not affect entitlement to benefits but subsistence payments may have some impact. Claimants should be made aware of this when taking up a volunteering role.

Taking up a volunteering role while unemployed can be a positive step towards gaining paid employment as it can increase confidence, teach new skills, demonstrate commitment, increase social skills and help people to meet others who may be able to help them get a job, either by providing a reference or a contact.

Current Department for Work and Pensions guidance states there are no limits to the hours a volunteer can undertake, but individuals have to be able to attend job interviews and be available for work. Misconceptions exist that there is a limit to the hours a volunteer can work and, as a result, some people do not consider volunteering. VSMs should keep themselves up to date with benefit regulations to ensure volunteer involvement is in line with current guidelines. For more information visit the Jobcentre Plus website: www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk and Volunteering England’s website: www.volunteering.org.uk

Developing good relationships between a trust’s voluntary service managers, training and development managers, HR personnel and their local Jobcentre Plus will help to avoid problems for benefits claimants wishing to volunteer.

**Young people**

The subject of volunteers under the age of 18 causes some organisations considerable concern. Some trusts are very flexible on age and have successfully engaged 16-year-olds. Other trusts (on the working group that developed this document) had strict minimum ages of 18 and believed
strongly that this should be rolled out more widely. This document does not recommend a minimum age for volunteers, although a risk assessment should help to assess an individual’s suitability for the role.

Individual organisations have their own policies on using the 16 to 18 age group in an acute setting. Physiological and emotional maturity and management issues are often cited as barriers to using this group of individuals as volunteers in these settings. Trusts should develop a policy for under-18 volunteering which does not leave them open to accusations of discrimination on grounds of age.

A number of NHS organisations have a minimum age of 18 for volunteers because of the enhanced duty of care when involving younger people. However, each organisation will need to reach its own decision. Involving volunteers under the age of 18 raises a number of issues, both for patient care and the safety of the volunteer, but many young people want to volunteer in the NHS, regarding it as an opportunity to gain valuable experience.

For the NHS, taking on young volunteers can be a good way to give potential future recruits experience and knowledge of the wide range of roles in the NHS. When thinking about recruiting young people attention should be given to the Health and Safety of Young Persons Regulation 1997: www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si1997/19970135.htm

This Act requires an employer to take into account:

- the inexperience, lack of awareness of risks and immaturity of a young person
- the fitting out and layout of the workplace
- the nature, degree and duration of exposure to physical, biological and chemical agents
- the form, range and use of work equipment and the way in which it is handled
- the organisation of processes and activities
- the extent of the health and safety training provided or to be provided to young persons

Other issues to consider when enlisting young volunteers include:

- a full risk assessment must be done in line with the Health and Safety (Young Persons) Regulations 1997
- the role must be fit for the age and maturity of the young person in question
- supervision must be adequate to ensure the protection of the patients and the organisation.
Benefits of younger volunteers

Trends should question whether the cost of managing this would be offset by the benefits. Potential benefits could be:

- tasks get done that otherwise wouldn’t
- fresh company and different perspectives could boost patient morale
- helps NHS to ‘showcase’ different professions – not only doctors and nurses
- companionship for other young people who are patients.

Don’t automatically assume that young people will always want to work with or will get along with other young people. Mixing age groups can be rewarding for both parties.

Volunteers under 16 years

There are very limited opportunities for young people under 16 to volunteer in the healthcare setting, although there is scope to involve young people in areas such as local involvement networks (LINks). The charity ATTEND has addressed this issue by setting up the Attend 500, which is run by nine member and partner organisations and aims to increase opportunities that interest young people, such as:

- fundraising
- design and communications
- broadcasting on hospital radio
- retail/hospital shops.

For more information about this project and the partners involved go to www.attend.org.uk

Volunteers under 16 should be regarded as vulnerable. An individual risk assessment will enable a proper judgement to be made on whether placing a young person in a voluntary role would put them, or the people they work with, at risk.

The following basic principles should help with involving young people in your trust’s activities:

- young people should not be left unsupervised
- induction, training and supervision may have to be amended or increased for young volunteers
- informed parental/guardian consent should be obtained for volunteers under 16 – this shows that the volunteer’s parent/guardian understands the role the young person will be undertaking, what it involves, when and where they will be, and consent to this
additional permission should be sought if the young person will be undertaking activities away from the premises where they normally volunteer.

Volunteering England has recently published a guide, *Safeguarding student volunteering in the further education sector*, to assist further education institutions when establishing volunteering for young or vulnerable students. This document is useful for anyone working with young or vulnerable people in the volunteering setting. Download a copy from the Volunteering England website.

**Older people**

There is no upper age limit for volunteers. The only measure of suitability for volunteers is their capability to carry out duties in a safe manner and in line with trust policies.

There are distinct advantages to recruiting older volunteers. Older people (particularly the retired) tend to spend more time on their volunteering activities and stay longer in post than younger people. They bring maturity, experience, skills, commitment and continuity to their roles, engaging easily with patients and demonstrating empathy. Some older people have wide social networks which allow them to act as ambassadors for the organisation and can help to recruit or fundraise for the organisation. For other older people, volunteering provides their social network and that is one of the main reasons why they volunteer.

Some NHS organisations have imposed upper age limits for older volunteers, making the incorrect assumption that they cannot be covered by insurance. This is not true and a Home Office commissioned study in 2006 found that:

“*There are no insurance-related grounds for imposing compulsory retirement ages upon volunteers. Primary insurance protection for volunteers should be provided through an organisation’s liability policies and these have no exclusions on the basis of age.*”

The Government is committed to promoting and increasing volunteering among older people. One of the key principles of its compact with the third sector is that volunteering should be open to all, no matter what their background, age, race, sexual orientation or faith.

If an older volunteer becomes too frail for their normal tasks, the first course of action is to consider changing their role or redeploying them elsewhere within the organisation. If this is not practical, it is important that this is handled with sensitivity and respect for their dignity.

For more information about volunteering and older people visit the Volunteering in the Third Age (VITA) website: [www.wrvs.org.uk/vita](http://www.wrvs.org.uk/vita) and Voluntary worker: [www.voluntaryworker.co.uk/Volunteeringforolderpeople](http://www.voluntaryworker.co.uk/Volunteeringforolderpeople)
Volunteers from overseas

There is no restriction on those from EU countries coming to the UK to volunteer. However, Romania and Bulgaria joined the European Union in 2007 and at the time of writing freedom of movement and work has not been extended fully to citizens of these countries. For more information, contact the UK Border Agency:

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/eucitizens/bulgarianandromanianNationals

People from outside the EU who have a visa to work or study in the UK may volunteer, as long as they are still undertaking the activity that is stated on their visa. It is possible to get a visa to come to the UK to volunteer, but this must be arranged in advance and certain restrictions apply. People on visitor or tourist visas are not permitted to volunteer.

More information on overseas volunteers can be obtained from Volunteering England:
www.volunteering.org.uk and the Home Office: http://ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk
The purpose of this document is to provide a basic structure which will enable trusts to develop their own application form for volunteers. It is important to keep the application form as straightforward as possible, with a number of options available, including online versions, paper and the option to complete it with support.

Ask only for the information needed for the role, make it clear to the potential volunteer that help is on offer to those who need it, such as people with learning disabilities, dyslexia, visual impairments, or language problems.

Further advice and examples of application forms can be found on the Volunteering England website.
Application and registration to become a volunteer

Strictly confidential

If you require help to fill in this form please contact....

Your Details
Name .................................................................
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Address ..............................................................
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........................................................................
Postcode ............................................................
Tel no .................................................................
Mobile no ...........................................................
E-mail .................................................................
Date of birth ......................................................

Your volunteering
What type of volunteering roles are you interested in? ..............................................................
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........................................................................
or
Why are you registering your interest in becoming a volunteer at this trust? ......................
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Availability
When are you available to volunteer? Please tick the days and times that apply. (This is to provide an indication of your availability, don’t worry if you are not available at these times every week).

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Your interest in volunteering
Please give your reasons for applying to be a volunteer. Circle or tick the one which applies to you:
• to give something back after you or family have benefited from NHS services
• to support a particular cause, eg stroke unit, diabetic unit
• to explore a career in healthcare
• to fill spare time
• to gain some work experience
• to meet new people and make new friends
• to develop or maintain your skills and experience
• to help develop or improve specific services
• for spiritual fulfilment
• to maintain or improve your health and wellbeing
• other (please state) ........................................
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Do you have any previous experience of volunteering, or are you currently a volunteer? Please give details ........................................
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Other information
Do you have a driving licence? .........................
Do you have access to a car? ..........................

Disability information
Do you consider yourself to be disabled? ..........
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If yes, what support or adjustments do you think you will need to take up a volunteering post at this trust? ..........................................
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Nationality and immigration status
Are you a United Kingdom (UK) or European Community (EC) or European Economic Area (EES) National?
☐ YES      ☐ NO

Non-EU nationals
Not all visas allow you to volunteer. Please supply details of any visa currently held, including number, start/expiry date and details of any restrictions. Please confirm that the visa allows you to volunteer (if in doubt you should check with the UK Border Agency) ...............
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Any other information you would like to add in support of your application, for example hobbies or interests? ..........................................
..........................................................................
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References
Please supply details of two referees. These can be your current employer, teacher, tutor or a community leader, GP, youth worker or support worker. You may not use family members as referees.

Referee one
Name .........................................................
Address .....................................................
..........................................................................
..........................................................................
Postcode ....................................................
Relationship to applicant..............................
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How long have you known this person? ..........
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Referee two
Name .........................................................
Address .....................................................
..........................................................................
..........................................................................
Postcode ....................................................
Relationship to applicant..............................
..........................................................................
How long have you known this person? ..........
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Important information
Because of the nature of voluntary help given in healthcare, exemption under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 applies;

Have you ever been convicted of an offence?
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If yes, details of the conviction will be required and will be treated in the strictest confidence. Please supply details.
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All volunteers will be required to complete a Disclosure Application for the Criminal Records Bureau.

You will also be asked to complete the Trusts Health Questionnaire which may or may not result in you being asked to see the occupational health doctor.

Signature ..........................................................
Date ..................................................................

Please return this form to:
MONITORING INFORMATION
Strictly confidential

In order to check the effectiveness of our commitment to equal opportunities we would be grateful if you would complete this section of the application form. It will be detached from your application form and will be used for monitoring purposes only.

NHS organisations recognise and actively promote the benefits of a diverse workforce and are committed to treating all employees with dignity and respect regardless of race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief. We welcome applications from all sections of the community.

Age or date of birth ..........................................
Sex □ Male □ Female
□ I do not wish to disclose

Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
I would describe my ethnic origin as:

Asian or Asian British
□ Bangladeshi □ Indian
□ Pakistani □ Any other Asian background

Black or Black British
□ African □ Caribbean
□ Any other Black background

Mixed
□ White & Asian □ White & Black African
□ White & Black Caribbean
□ Any other mixed background

White
□ British □ Irish
□ Any other White background

Other Ethnic Group
□ Chinese □ Any other ethnic group
□ I do not wish to disclose this

Employment Equality Regulations 2003
Please select the option which best describes your sexuality
□ Lesbian □ Gay
□ Bisexual □ Heterosexual
□ I do not wish to disclose this

Please indicate your religion or belief
□ Atheism □ Buddhism
□ Christianity □ Islam
□ Jainism □ Sikhism
□ Judaism □ Hinduism
□ Other
□ I do not wish to disclose this

Communications/media
How did you hear about this volunteering opportunity?
□ Advert in newspaper/magazine
□ Advert on notice board
□ NHS Jobs website
□ Community group
□ Word of mouth/another volunteer
□ other, please specify
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