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Always bear in mind that it might take time to find the right volunteers for your organisation – not everyone will be right – but when you find them, they are a valuable resource.

Selection methods

Having met and/or interviewed the potential volunteer, you can now decide if they have the qualities, skills, experience etc. that you are looking for.

If they have – let them know as soon as possible and tell them what happens next – when they start, who they will meet, and what their first sessions might involve. It may be good to plan an introductory period – for both the organisation and the volunteer to decide if this is the right role for them.

Saying “No” to a volunteer

If you decide that the potential volunteer is not suitable for the role applied for, let them know and tell them how and why this was decided. It is best to do this face to face, enabling them to ask questions. Honesty is the best policy in these situations.

Consider alternative options such as other opportunities within your organisation, other organisations that would be more suitable or you can refer them to Bury VCFA.

If you are not sure about a volunteer, but they meet the criteria, or if they do not fit the criteria but you decide you can give extra support, you may decide to accept them but to carefully monitor and supervise their role. Having an introductory period for all volunteers helps you and the volunteer to review their progress after a fixed period.

The interview process

Groups and organisations vary in their approach to the selection of volunteers. Small groups may have the approach of meeting with potential volunteers for an informal chat, whilst larger organisations may want a more formal structure for their interview process.

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Informal interviews

Think beforehand about what you need to know from the possible volunteer, and what they need to know from you.

Where is the best place to meet with them? This might be at the group session itself, before or after, so that they have time to see what you do, or somewhere completely separate. Whichever it is, make sure that you can completely concentrate on them for the interview without interruption.

- Why are they particularly interested in helping this group?
- When are they available?
- What are they interested in doing with the group?
- Any skills, abilities that they can bring to the group?
- What support will they need to enable them to contribute?
- How long do they think they might be involved for i.e., is it a time limited commitment or longer term?

A formal selection interview.

Before the interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You should respond quickly to a volunteers request for an interview. • Be as flexible as possible about date, time, venue. • Give clear directions to the interview venue.
Your preparation on the day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a suitable venue away from other staff/volunteers. • Set out the venue so you will be sitting facing the volunteer, without a desk or table between you and make sure that your chairs are the same height. • Make sure that you will not be interrupted. • Make sure that you have allowed enough time for the interview. • Have all the necessary information to hand.
Introductory phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome the volunteer - 'thank you for coming....' • Introduce yourself again. • Explain the purpose and structure of the interview.
Explain more about the organisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work that the organisation does and the role that volunteers have within the organisation. • What you can offer to volunteers (expenses, support, training). • What your expectations of volunteers are. • What time commitment is needed.
Ask information	The information that you require will depend very much on the nature of the volunteer roles within your organisation and the person specification criteria you have identified.

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from the volunteer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is their motivation for volunteering? • What do they want to do? • Why are they particularly interested in your organisation? • What time do they have available? • What relevant experience, skills and interests do they have? • Any other information that you need to know.
Do they have any questions at this stage?	
Ending the interview	<p>You should aim to reach, with the volunteer, a decision about their suitability for volunteering with your organisation, based on the criteria laid down in the role description and person specification.</p> <p>Agree a next course of action. Taking up references (if required), arranging a time for the volunteer to start with your organisation, letting them know when the training will begin.</p>
Thank the volunteer for coming.	

Screening volunteers

Sometimes it is necessary to check on the suitability of an individual for your volunteer role. When planning your volunteer roles, consider whether screening is necessary or not. If you are not sure, ask Bury VCFA for help.

Checks should only be made with good reason, and with the prior consent of the potential volunteer. They are for the safety of the people who use your service, your organisation and for the volunteer themselves. You must only request information that is relevant to the volunteer role and your selection process.

It will be necessary for you to record personal information on individuals to obtain any screening required. This is confidential information and will need to be kept securely, with access limited only to those who need to see it, and have received permission from the individual, to use it in any way.

Making sure you put the right impression across

The person you are interviewing will notice and respond to your behaviour.

- You need to be reassuring.
- You need to be interested and sympathetic You need to be relaxed, calm and unhurried.
- Speak quietly and slowly and make sure you are using language that the volunteer will understand – avoid jargon and abbreviations, keep your vocabulary simple.
- Keep bureaucracy to a minimum; do not write anything down unless you must do so.

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What do volunteers need to know before they start?

Induction for New Volunteers	<p>A good induction for new volunteers is important to ensure they are supported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide what and who it is important that they know. Listen to them – are there things you have missed in your induction plan? • They need to know about the group or organisation. • Who will the contact person be to answer any questions they may have? • They will need to know how they are covered by insurance, health, and safety etc and how to claim any out-of-pocket expenses. • Ensure they are aware of and have read the relevant policies (it is good practice to allow some time for this to be completed). • Think about other ways of providing the information if reading is not possible.
Training	<p>Roles may require training before the volunteer starts, which may be provided either by the organisation or by another agency. As part of your recruitment plan, make sure that potential volunteers are aware of essential training and that they are committed to attending.</p>
Communications	<p>Volunteers provide a valuable contribution to groups and organisations. Encourage them to share their views and ideas for the group/organisation, give feedback and take part in the decision-making. A Support Group is one way of providing this opportunity.</p>

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