

## The volunteer application

Although practices will vary, and there is no one ideal application process, asking volunteers to formally apply for a role (e.g. through completing an application form) has a number of benefits.

- It may be the first opportunity for the organisation to collect their contact details and other relevant information.
- It is a positive way to find out more about them, why they want to do the role and make sure you can welcome them to the organisation properly.
- Most importantly, it should be part of your process for deciding if they are a suitable person for the role and for your organisation.

For many volunteers, overly long or officious application forms will be a 'deal breaker'. So make it positive, informative, welcoming and non-threatening. Here are three tips on creating an application form:

- Keep it simple. Too much information on forms will not give a good impression to most adults.
- Ideally go through the role description and application form together, in person. This allows you to expand on the role and the application process, without needing to overwhelm the volunteer with documents.
- Make sure you add in to the application form any other relevant organisational procedures you have.

## Once you have chosen a successful applicant

- Make sure their starting arrangements are clear and introduce them to other workers at the time of interview if possible.
- Start the volunteer in the role as quickly as possible. If there are any delays be clear as to why and set a start date.
- If there is a delay in a successful applicant's DBS Check then he/she can sign a disclaimer form and work, in a supervised manner, can start prior to the check being processed.

## For the unsuccessful applicant:

- If a person is not suitable give them your reasons for not accepting them in a clear, sensitive and honest way. Where possible suggest possible ways of strengthening their areas of weakness.
- If appropriate offer an alternative voluntary opportunity.

- Give the applicant the chance to discuss the decision you have made.
- You may refer interviewees back to your local Volunteer Centre for more volunteering opportunity information.

## **The volunteer agreement**

Many organisations have a volunteer agreement, where the volunteer signs to say what they are committing to do. We prefer to suggest a volunteer policy as it is more aspirational. A 'memorandum of understanding' is a similar idea to a volunteer policy, with a list of hopes and expectations on both sides. Asking volunteers to be committed is one thing and of course you want people to be reliable. But a fundamental element of volunteering is that you are not bound by a contract. The application form is another way to ask volunteers to sign their agreement, but be cautious and remember they are not staff members.