

The selection process

Planning an interview

An interview should provide an opportunity for you to learn about the applicant and it should allow the potential volunteer to understand what is expected of them and what they can expect from your organisation.

- Interviews, however informal, are conversations with a purpose.
- Decide on a formal or informal approach.
- If you are taking on a number of volunteers you may want to organise a 'taster day' and hold group interviews.
- Be clear on what you do or do not need to know about an applicant.
- Ensure there is a clear arrangement for time and place.
- The environment should be comfortable and free from interruptions, away from telephones, other personnel and the public if at all possible.
- Allow sufficient time for the interview to take place.
- Bring relevant information to the interview (application form, expense claim form, documents to give to the interviewee, etc.)
- Decide how you will record the details of the interview.

Interviewing

- Relax.
- Introduce yourself and help the interviewee feel as comfortable as possible.
- Clarify the purpose of the interview.
- Let the interviewee know they can ask for questions to be repeated.
- Give some details about the organisation and where volunteers fit in.
- Outline any relevant policies.

- Summarise the main points at the end of the interview and agree on the next steps: e.g. when you will let them know the outcome, taking up of references, starting date, induction details, etc.

Do...

- Listen closely to what is said.
- Ask open questions as these gain more information and more honest answers.
- Follow up answers you are unclear about, ask for more details if required.
- Allow the interviewee the chance to ask questions.
- Thank interviewees for their time and interest.
- Be clear about what happens next. If you are unable to give the result of the interview on the day let the interviewee know your decision as soon as possible.

Sample volunteer interview questions

- Have you volunteered anywhere else?
- What do you hope to gain from volunteering with us?
- What support can we give you to make your volunteering a more positive experience?
- Do you have any questions about the role?
- How much time do you have available to volunteer?
- Do you have any limits on travel?
- Why do you want to volunteer for us?

Also have a list of questions about the specific role, to determine if the person is suitable.

References and checks

- References are good practice and a useful way of gaining insight into the volunteer's qualities.
- It may be appropriate to talk through possible referees with the interviewee and make suggestions, e.g. colleague, family friend, college tutor etc.

- Referees should not include close relatives or people under 18.
- A reference that indicates a problem does not necessarily mean the volunteer is unsuitable. For example, the information can be used to identify sensitive situations that should be avoided.
- Consider whether a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check needs to be taken. Will the volunteer be working with vulnerable clients? E.g. The elderly, young children. What is your organisation's policy? Remember DBS checks are free for volunteers though there will be a small admin cost to your organisation.

After the interview

- Look over your recorded information and make clear evaluations.
- Ensure that any decisions you make are based on the needs of the organisation and reflect your equal opportunities policy not personal prejudices. It is useful to have an interview 'panel' so you can discuss the candidate's suitability with colleagues and avoid personal bias.