

Interviews or informal discussions

The interview

If an interview situation seems too formal for your group, then an informal chat may be more appropriate. When interviewing volunteers it is best to base initial questions around a set list. Set questions promote equal opportunities and are a more reliable method than 'instinct' or a 'gut feeling'.

It is important to tell volunteers about:

- The organisation and the role of volunteers within it
- Training and support offered
- The organisation's expectations of the volunteer
- The time commitment required for the role, both frequency and duration (if time limited)
- Resources available to volunteers, such as the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses

When conducting an interview, it is best to have a quiet area to speak to the volunteer. You need to make sure that the interview is a two-way process, and that you give the volunteer an opportunity to ask questions. This is a good point to find out what skills a volunteer can bring to a role, why they became a volunteer and what motivated them to apply for your specific role in order to establish if the role will meet their needs. For example, if a volunteer's main reason for applying is to meet other people and the role involves carrying out tasks on their own in a quiet space, it is unlikely that the role will fulfil the volunteer's needs.

If the volunteer is unsuitable for a role

If a volunteer is unsuitable to carry out the role required by your organisation, then they should be provided with constructive feedback. The organisation should help to identify other suitable roles (if any) before giving constructive feedback. If there are none available you should refer the individual to www.volunteertelford.co.uk so they can find a more suitable role.

Taking on volunteers who are in receipt of benefits

There is no reason why a person in receipt of benefits should not be considered for a volunteering role. In the past there has been confusion regarding whether a person in receipt of benefits could volunteer without it affecting their income. The current position is that the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) is happy for people in receipt of benefits to volunteer. This is partly in recognition of the potential benefits that volunteering offers in terms of working routine, social aspects and learning new skills.

Criminal record checks (DBS)

Not all organisations will need to check if volunteers have a criminal record. The need to screen will depend on what the volunteer is doing or who they are working with. It's important to realise that for many people with criminal records, the nature of their offence will have no bearing on their ability to volunteer. It's good practice to have a clear policy on this.

The online Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) has further guidance.

<https://www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service>

Useful Links

Disclosure and barring service (DBS) www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service

Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)

https://www.gov.uk/search?q=volunteering&show_organisations_filter=true

[Template volunteer application form](#)