



# 4.0 Volunteers

## How to Ensure Volunteer Satisfaction

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This information sheet shares a variety of approaches to ensure volunteer satisfaction, enabling your organisation to build a positive volunteering experience that keeps volunteers engaged.

### Introduction

People volunteer for a number of reasons, however for a volunteering relationship to continue there must be a reciprocal benefit for both the organisation and the individual.

The culture of the organisation is crucial to ensuring that volunteers feel valued, motivated and supported to continue in their role. This means that everyone needs to understand the role of volunteers and the contribution they make towards the organisation's goals and how their role is additional and different to the role of staff.



It is important that volunteers feel valued and supported.

Image: Young volunteer smiling

Satisfied volunteers are most often part of an inclusive, blended staff and volunteer team. Training needs to be provided to volunteer managers and all those who help manage volunteers to ensure they can provide best practice support. Regular contact and communication from managers are key to ensuring volunteer satisfaction and therefore aids the retention of your valuable, already recruited and trained volunteers.

In the **Time Well Spent** survey, research indicates that 96% of volunteers are very or fairly satisfied with their volunteering experience which is a testament to the hard work of volunteer - involving organisations.

Achieving volunteer satisfaction and delivering organisational objectives can be a difficult balancing act. Meeting volunteers' expectations about the level and nature of management and the wider organisation can be a challenge in which organisations will need to consider how they can improve volunteers' experiences whilst not becoming too bureaucratic and inadvertently creating a culture which feels more like work.

The complex and dynamic nature of volunteering participation, according to **Time Well Spent** research, is shaped by a number of factors which are:

- **Inclusive** – offering inclusive volunteering opportunities and experience
- **Flexible** – creating volunteer journeys that can adapt to the variety of volunteers and their life circumstances
- **Impactful** – maximising the impact volunteering has on the individual and those they help
- **Connected** – thinking about different ways in which to connect people to the organisation, to others and the activities they participate in
- **Balanced** – ensuring an appropriate level of formalisation
- **Enjoyable** – trying to make the experience enjoyable for volunteers
- **Voluntary** – ensuring volunteering feels truly voluntary at all times
- **Meaningful** – supporting volunteers to give time in ways that are meaningful to them



**External Link**

[Time Well Spent survey](#)

# Further Considerations

## Involvement

Volunteers should be encouraged to feel a part of the organisation. This could be achieved through involving them in team meetings, development days and social events and by encouraging volunteers to bring their lived experiences to their volunteering roles.

A more formal method would be to encourage their participation in staff and volunteer satisfaction surveys and or at mixed staff and volunteer focus groups and then acting on the feedback received. This ensures that volunteers not only feel involved but also know that they can have influence – a crucial factor in building teams and creating a sense of belonging.

## Support

All volunteers should know who to go to if they have a problem and feel connected to the organisation. The level of support you provide to volunteers will depend on who they are and what they are doing.

For example, a volunteer counsellor will need more support than someone volunteering in a charity shop, and a volunteer, with an illness, or who lacks confidence, may need additional support and more contact. This should be identified as early as possible and reviewed regularly, as the need for support may decrease as confidence, experience and skills are gained or indeed increase at times of personal stress for the volunteer.

Support can be provided in different ways:

- **Swift and easy reimbursement of out of pocket expenses so as not to cause hardship or embarrassment.** This is an important equality issue and is often mentioned by volunteers as a barrier to their retention or feelings of not being valued.
- **Training** – role specific training to support the volunteer to carry out volunteering
- **Mentoring or buddying** –this could be done by linking up with another volunteer
- Group support meetings
- Signposting to other specialist support services, telephone and 1:1 support
- Team meetings
- Supervision with named manager

### Supervision

Regular supervision provides volunteers and the supervisor with an opportunity to:

- Review how the role is being carried out
- Engage with volunteers to understand what is important to them and how they can give their time in a fulfilling way
- Give feedback and expressing gratitude on the positive difference the volunteer is making  
e.g. successes for service users, amount of funding raised, other relevant quantifiers
- Manage people's expectations to avoid disappointment
- Address any difficulties, sensitively
- Identify if extra support is required
- Explore other kinds of activity or involvement that might be of interest
- Assess if more training relevant to the role, would be beneficial
- Discuss any issues arising from relationships with other staff, volunteers and service users
- Ask volunteers for any suggestions to improve the service or volunteering role.

Offering volunteers regular supervision sessions emphasises the importance of what they are doing and how they are valued. In preparing for supervision, whether formal or informal, ensure that the basic principles are followed, i.e. the time you give to an individual volunteer should be exclusively for them, be free from distractions and take place at regular intervals. You may want to keep personal supervision records, copies of which should be given to volunteers.

Sometimes what you offer as 'supervision' may be from a volunteers' perspective an informal 'catch up'. However it is done, it is the regularity and the giving of your time and attention that is the most important.

### Reviews

Regular reviews can be one way of identifying how volunteers feel about their roles, their individual performance and career development within the organisation. In order for reviews to be effective both the volunteer and the reviewer need to make the most of the opportunity for a full and open discussion.

The results of the review should be documented and remain confidential to the volunteer and reviewer.

A review should seek to address the following questions:

- Since our last review how are you finding your volunteering?
- What do you think has gone well?
- Is there anything you are proud of?
- What has not gone well?
- How do you think it could have been done differently?
- Is there anything we could be doing to make your role easier/better? Is there any training you think would help you in your role?
- Can you see other areas of involvement within the organisation that you would like to try?
- Do you have any personal goals for the future that volunteering could help you to achieve?

### Valuing Volunteers and Giving Recognition

Never underestimate enjoyment itself – taking an interest in volunteers and what they want to get from their volunteering helps to create a relationship which encourages a sense of enjoyment and connectedness.

A simple ‘thank you’ would be welcomed by many volunteers, who give their time freely to a cause they care about.

Training that is accredited or formally recognised is often appreciated. As well as ensuring that volunteers are trained to a consistent standard it is a demonstration of your commitment and valuing of the contribution volunteers can make.

**NB:** It is important, however, that training is relevant to the role undertaken by the volunteer.

Inviting a volunteer to take on an ambassador role for the organisation can be viewed as an approach to demonstrating that the volunteer is valued.

### National Volunteers Week (1- 7 June)

[National Volunteers Week](#) is an ideal opportunity to celebrate and to congratulate volunteers for all their contribution to the organisation.

### Volunteering Wales

Volunteers of all ages can log their hours on the [Volunteering Wales](#) website platform and earn digital achievement badges for 50, 100, 200, 500 and 1000 hours of volunteering

### Local Recognition Schemes

There are also local volunteer recognition schemes within most CVCs, contact your local Volunteer Centre for details.

### National Recognition Schemes

WCVA (Wales Council for Voluntary Action) administers the [Welsh Charity Awards](#), which includes several categories for volunteer recognition.

### Young Volunteers

[#iwill Week](#) is an annual week (in November), to share and celebrate the stories of young people that get involved in social action.

### The Diana Award

Established in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales, [The Diana Award](#) is the most prestigious accolade a young person aged 9-25 years can receive for their social action or humanitarian work.

This is the longest running award for young people through a retrospective nomination process only. Young people do not work towards the award, rather they demonstrate their suitability through their actions, without any expectation of reward.



There are also local volunteer recognition schemes within most CVCs, contact your local Volunteer Centre for details.

[Find your local Volunteer Centre](#)

## Further Information

### **Additional Information Sheets Third Sector Support Wales**

- 4.3 Creating a volunteer policy
- 4.4 Recruiting, selecting and inducting volunteers
- 4.8 Keeping volunteers safe
- 4.13 Volunteer expenses



Cefnogi Trydydd  
Sector **Cymru**

Third Sector  
Support **Wales**

Third Sector Support Wales is a network of support organisations for the whole of the third sector in Wales.

It consists of the 19 local and regional support bodies across Wales, the County Voluntary Councils (CVCs) and the national support body, Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA).

For further information contact  
<https://thirdsectorsupport.wales/contact/>

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### Disclaimer

The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.