

# Volunteers – ‘bringing light to life!’

The vast majority of those that pop in from time to time as ‘Care Home Friends and Neighbours’ will not be classed as ‘volunteers’. However if they become a regular visitor working unsupervised with your residents, then this guidance may help.

Good volunteers are like gold-dust! They can bring new energy and enthusiasm into the home. They can help deliver some of the little things that bring light to life that staff simply do not have time to do. They are also a representative of your home in the community. They could even act as a broker, connecting your home and your residents to others in the community. Treat them well and they will make a real difference to your residents, staff and your reputation.

*Be as clear as you can about:*

- 1. Roles** what you are asking volunteers to do
- 2. Motives** what your volunteers are hoping to gain
- 3. Communication** who your volunteers can ask about what

## 1. Be clear about roles for volunteers

It’s important for staff, volunteers, residents and relatives to know what the volunteer’s role is. How does it add value to what staff do and what are the differences? Staff should never feel replaced and volunteers must always understand what they can and cannot do.

Having a clear role is motivating for volunteers, it helps them to see what their time can bring to the residents and your home. Make sure everyone involved knows what your Friends and Neighbours objectives are and how they can help you to achieve them.

### **ACTION**

Take time to develop good role descriptions with clear information on the setting and activities your volunteers can expect to be involved with. It’s also good to have a clear volunteer agreement outlining what you expect from them and what support you will offer.

## 2. Be clear about motives – know what your volunteers are hoping to achieve.

Volunteering is a two-way relationship; people are giving their time to you, but often want something in return. Knowing what that is (and helping it to happen) will keep people involved.

Find out if volunteers are interested in developing particular skills or want to do something specific. Help them to select tasks/goals that will keep them interested.

### **ACTION**

Creating a person-centred profile for each volunteer can help staff and residents get to know them: their background, interests and skills etc. NCVO have developed a ‘gifts and goals’ template that you can use (details at the end of this briefing).

### 3. Be clear about communication – who to talk to about what.

Make sure that your volunteers know who to talk to about:

- + any problems they have
- + their role and current tasks
- + their skills and understanding

Every volunteer will need to be supported and supervised. How much and how often will vary according to the role and the individual volunteer. Giving regular feedback will help volunteers feel valued, it's also a chance to find out what is and isn't working for them. Trust your volunteers, delegate to them, listen to what they want and do as much as you can to make it happen.

#### **ACTION**

Ensure every volunteer knows which member of staff is their main contact, allocate them as their staff buddy and support that relationship to help communication flow.

### **Everyone is busy! - trends in volunteering**

**Volunteers increasingly value:**

- + Flexibility – can you offer more than “please turn up at the same time every week”?
- + New ways of doing things – think outside the box
- + Making a difference rather than a contribution – understand results and impact

**And need:**

- + well-defined roles that are designed to succeed
- + Personal achievements/contribution recognised
- + To understand their impact and the bigger picture

How could you offer one-off or short-term opportunities for people to help out?

### **Big picture: under 25s and over 65s are most likely to volunteer**

Generally speaking younger volunteers are looking to build up skills and experience for their CVs while many older volunteers are keen to contribute their established skills to a good cause.

Care Home Friends and Neighbours could be a great opportunity to offer motivated volunteers of any age a chance to shape their own projects and opportunities. Don't be afraid to delegate.

## Working with local businesses - employer supported volunteering

Businesses can gain from giving employees time to volunteer.

For example a supermarket that encouraged two employees to visit a local care home to play board games with residents for a couple of hours every week (in work time) gained:

- + new skills and knowledge – their employees were trained as Dementia Friends and were then able to use their new skills to help customers in store, as well as passing on suggestions
- + insight into their staff's abilities – carrying out an ambassador role revealed whether staff had team leading potential
- + a boost to its local reputation.

### ACTION

Talk to local businesses to find out how you could help each other.

### RESOURCES

you can download a guide to ESV from Volunteer Now <http://www.volunteernow.co.uk/>  
There are free detailed factsheets at [www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/strategy/volunteering/employer-supported-factsheet](http://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/strategy/volunteering/employer-supported-factsheet) you will have to register with the site to read them.

## Background checks for volunteers

- + Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- + Disclosure Scotland (PVGs) in Scotland.

Volunteers only need a criminal records check if their role involves regular unsupervised contact with children or vulnerable adults. It's not a good idea or even lawful to take a blanket approach to such checks.

Checks are generally unnecessary for an informal or one-off activity. It's important to take a rounded view of safeguarding. Background checks are just one element, others include assessment of the individual at recruitment stage, good volunteer management, training, monitoring and supervision.

It is as important to assess the volunteers safety as it is your residents, relatives and staff.

If you are unsure of what to do it's always a good idea to talk things through with someone from your local safeguarding board.

Volunteers cannot apply for background checks themselves, an organisation must apply on their behalf. Checks are free for most volunteer roles, although administrative charges apply.



## Online information on managing volunteers

Managing volunteers is a huge subject and there is lots of information about it online. Here is a quick guide to some helpful resources:

### Lead organisations by nation

#### **NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations)**

Representing charities and community organisations in England. Very informative website helpful for organisations in all four nations.

#### **Volunteer Scotland**

Runs a Disclosure Service to process PVG applications for volunteers and paid staff

#### **Volunteer Now – Northern Ireland**

<http://www.volunteernow.co.uk/>

#### **Volunteering Wales**

<http://www.volunteering-wales.net/landing/>

### General information on managing volunteers

#### **www.knowhownonprofit.org** (provided by NCVO)

Detailed sections on recruiting, managing and training volunteers. Sections on, supervising, safeguarding, volunteer expenses, insurance, problem solving procedures etc.

**Volunteering in Care Homes** – a wide range of resources produced by a three year project (funded by the Department of Health). Focuses on volunteers coming into care homes.

[www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/volunteering-in-care-homes](http://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/volunteering-in-care-homes)

Resources include a Volunteering in Care Homes Toolkit, this includes the ‘gifts and goals’ template at appendix c.

Specific guidance:

Creating a clear role description	<a href="https://www.volunteerscotland.net/media/242005/Creating%20Volunteer%20Role%20Descriptions.pdf">https://www.volunteerscotland.net/media/242005/Creating%20Volunteer%20Role%20Descriptions.pdf</a>
What a volunteer agreement might include	<a href="http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/people/volunteers/keeping/volunteer-agreements">www.knowhownonprofit.org/people/volunteers/keeping/volunteer-agreements</a>
An induction handbook, presentation and trainers guide (NB focus is on roles inside care homes)	<a href="http://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/volunteering-in-care-homes">www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/volunteering-in-care-homes</a>