



Equality & Diversity

Volunteering Barnet Guidance

Before recruiting volunteers, make sure your organisation is “volunteer-ready” by completing the [Volunteer Management Health Check](#).

Basic Practice	Good Practice	Best Practice
Diversity Statement	Diversity of volunteers in monitored	Diversity Action Plan

The Basics

Anyone can volunteer, regardless of background, nationality, disability, age, class, gender or religion. However, some volunteers find there are barriers to getting involved, and volunteer coordinators play a vital role in removing barriers.

Diversity Statement

Your organisation’s inclusion and diversity statement should commit to inclusive volunteering, and policies and procedures should reflect this commitment.

When promoting volunteer roles, quote your inclusion policy and specify that you accept applications from people of various backgrounds, for example people with disabilities, people who speak English as a second language, and those from different cultural backgrounds and ages.

Making information accessible

When writing volunteer policies and processes, consider how accessible the information is. You may wish to adapt resources to make them suitable:

- Use simple and accessible language
- Produce information in languages other than English
- Provide copies of all information in large print or audio

Expenses

It should not cost somebody money to volunteer. Paying travel and food expenses helps ensure anyone can volunteer with you. Some volunteers may not request expenses if they do not know they are available. If you do offer expenses, explain this in the volunteer advert and during inductions.

Disabled Volunteers

The Social Model of Disability

The **Medical Model of Disability** understands a person’s condition to be their disability. For example, if somebody is blind, their inability to see is understood to be their disability.

Conversely, the **Social Model of Disability** argues that it is society’s inability to consider the needs of people

with impairments, which disables them. People are excluded from participating in mainstream society because of barriers, which deny them equal access. These barriers can be:

- Physical (e.g. the volunteering environment)
- Organisational (e.g. the processes to become a volunteer)
- Attitudinal barriers (e.g. the attitudes of staff or volunteers)

When thinking about inclusion, many people immediately consider adapting the physical environment, for example by installing lifts, which can be very costly. However, removing organisational and attitudinal barriers can have a large impact, and can be done for little cost.

Removing these barriers, and making your volunteer programme inclusive, will ultimately benefit all volunteers. For templates and further guidance refer back to the [Resource Bank](#).

Keeping people safe

Volunteers, staff and clients should all be safe. During the recruitment process, it is appropriate to ask all volunteers if there are particular issues fellow workers or volunteers should know about, to make sure they are safe while volunteering. Give volunteers the opportunity to disclose information in a safe and supportive environment, and reassure volunteer this won't affect their ability to be involved. The Healthy Volunteering Plan is a tool to support this process.

When working with vulnerable people, your organisation should have a safeguarding policy and procedure in place. Make sure volunteers are training on this where appropriate. For more advice, contact your local council.

Monitoring Inclusion

Monitoring the diversity of your volunteers helps you make sure you are not excluding anybody. However, recording information about people should only be done if you will use this data to inform and improve your service. Reviewing data can inform you of the following:

- do your volunteers represent the demographics of your local area, service users or the country?
- are people with a particular protected characteristic less likely to apply to volunteer?
- are people with a particular protected characteristic more likely to leave the organisation?
- Does the data help you identify any potential barriers that may be stopping people becoming volunteers?

You must adhere to data protection law when gathering and handling data, and be especially careful when sharing or publishing it. For more information see the report *Equally Professional: Diversity monitoring in professional bodies*, available on the [Resource Bank: Equality and Diversity](#).

Other guidance

You may wish to develop policies regarding specific groups, and there is a wealth of advice on line. Refer back to the Resource Bank for resources on supporting:

- Young people
- Older people
- People with criminal convictions
- Speakers of other languages
- Disabled people and people with mental or physical health conditions