

Managing Volunteers

Getting the most out of your student volunteers

Students are the lifeblood of students' union and many operate in a voluntary capacity across the vast range of activities that you support. In this guide we touch on some of the key tips you need to be aware of when managing student volunteers

Introduction

The link between successful recruitment and retention of volunteers and good quality volunteer management is well imperative.

Ensuring that your students feel supported but challenged in their role, they know the boundaries within which they operate in and are well trained all comes from having a successful volunteer management programme.

Volunteer management might be the sole focus of your role or part of a wider remit. You might be new to volunteer management or an old hand. This guide aims to highlight key things you need to consider when thinking about managing your student volunteers.

Getting Started

Getting things in place before you start working with volunteers, or reviewing what you've currently got in place is really important. They're the foundations that will set you off on the right footing.

You need to be clear about the role that students will play as volunteers. If you have a set role make sure you develop a role description so that students know what is entailed as part of the post. If you're creating student led volunteering activity think about how you can develop a set of principles which outline how you'll support them, what you expect etc.

Here are links to useful examples of volunteer role descriptions:

- [Knowhow Non-Profit](#)
- [Volunteering England](#) (not nation specific)

As well as knowing what is expected of them it's important that students feel like they know more about the students' union, what they should expect in terms of support and the practicalities of volunteering.

You can deliver this through an effective induction. This doesn't need to be time consuming, you could deliver through online videos, but there are certain things that you should consider.

Here are links to useful examples of induction guides and checklists:

- [Volunteer Development Scotland](#) (not nation specific)
- [NHS](#)

Practicalities

Supporting volunteers can be really rewarding but to get the best out of your volunteers you need to ensure you've got the practicalities sorted.

Ensuring you've got up-to-date policies and procedures that apply to your volunteers is very important. Some of the key elements are covered later in this document.

Here are links to useful examples of policies and procedures for you to think about:

- [WiSCV](#)
- [Welsh Council for Voluntary Action](#) (not nation specific)

One of the main barriers cited by potential volunteers as a barrier as they feel they couldn't afford to volunteer. Coupled with the ever growing pressure on student budget having a robust volunteer expenses policy is really important in ensuring that student volunteers are fully supported.

Here are links to useful documents outlining processes around volunteer expenses

- [NCVO](#)
- [Welsh Council for Voluntary Action](#) (not nation specific)

Volunteers and the Law

In managing volunteers you need to be aware of both the individual students as well as the environment they operate within.

One of the key elements involves safeguarding volunteers and volunteer groups. Guides on individual nation processes can be found using the links below:

- [Wales](#)
- [Scotland](#)
- [England](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)

As well as safeguarding you should also be aware of a few other key elements. These might already be covered by your wider union activities; however it's important to check.

- [Health and safety](#)
- [Insurance](#)
- [Employment contracts](#)
- [Volunteer drivers](#)
- [Data protection](#)

Managing Volunteers

Volunteer management isn't always a stroll in the park. Sometimes dealing with difficult situations can be a hard part of the role.

Dealing with problems as soon as they arise will be much more conducive to solving problems

and maintaining the stability of your volunteering programme.

Here are links to useful examples of problem solving guides to help you:

- [NCVO](#)
- [Volunteer Development Scotland](#) (not nation specific)

Students often have complex needs whilst they're studying and supporting them as volunteers through this time may require a little tact and good will but will undoubtedly pay off.

Here are links to useful examples of pages to help support you with which ever situation you may be dealing with:

- [Stress](#)
- [Bereavement](#)

Managing volunteers is also about retaining your current crop of volunteers. Ensure they feel supported, challenged and inspired in their role. You can read more about why supporting volunteers is important from these sources:

- [Volunteer Development Scotland](#) (not nation specific)
- [Welsh Council for Voluntary Action](#) (not nation specific)

Additional Information

Gaining support to enable you to get buy in from senior managers for volunteer management is important. The guide "[influencing up](#)" is a useful place to start with helping you gain buy in here.

[WiSCV](#) – Workers in Student Community Volunteering is a network of staff and officers working to support student volunteering.

If you have any questions about this guide or would like to suggest any amends please contact rosie.hunnam@nus.org.uk