



Volunteer management

A quick guide to help you get to grips with recruiting and managing volunteers for your care home

Alive's aims

Alive is the UK's leading charity enriching the lives of older people in care and training their carers.

Alive:

- Engage older people creatively through meaningful activity sessions
- Train and support care staff to enhance older people's well-being and deliver outstanding care at every opportunity
- Reduce older people's social isolation by connecting them to their local communities
- Speak up for the rights of older people in care to those with the power to improve their lives
- Depend on charitable donations to deliver our work.

Alive's Vision

Our vision is a world where older people live lives full of joy, meaning and opportunity.

Alive's Mission

Our mission is to put older people's mental health and wellbeing at the heart of care across the UK.

Alive's Ambition

Our ambition is to provide meaningful engagement for older people, and inspirational training for those who support them, in care settings right across the UK.

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About this guide

This guide has been put together to help assist you in recruiting volunteers by giving you step-by-step information, hints and tips.

By taking you through the volunteer recruitment and management process in task order, this guide should give you all the logistical information you need to get started.

Some parts of the guide are worksheets that are designed to be photocopied. You can use them again and again as resources to support you while recruiting and managing your volunteers.

To accompany this guide we have produced two other booklets:

Volunteering in Care Homes – this guide takes a volunteer through the basics of what to expect when beginning a volunteer role in a care home. It covers:

- How care homes are run
- Person-centred care
- Communicating with people living with dementia and sensory impairments
- Frailty
- Safeguarding

The Volunteer Handbook – helps both care homes and volunteers know what they need to do when a volunteer starts their role in a care home.

‘Managing Care Home Volunteers’ and ‘Volunteering in Care Homes’ are both available as face-to-face training courses. The information in this guide supports our ‘Managing Care Home Volunteers’ training. This training lasts approximately three hours and can be delivered to up to 12 people within your home. To find out more about face-to-face training options please contact info@aliveactivities.org.

Why use volunteers to supplement your activity provision?

Volunteers can be an invaluable resource for care homes. We hear time and time again from care homes that “when we’re busy, activities are the first thing to go” or that “no one is going to hire extra staff just for activities”.

Volunteers can provide some much-needed support to a care home activity programme, whether it’s spending one-to-one time chatting with residents or supporting a member of care staff to deliver a group activity. Volunteers bring specialist skills and interests into the home and add richness, variety and a connection to the community for residents.

In addition to this, volunteers can provide much-needed help with supporting trips out of the care home and if appropriate, driving your residents to places they want to visit.

Before you start

It is important to make sure managing your volunteer is done correctly in order to protect your residents, staff and the volunteer. However, too much safeguarding, bureaucracy or training can be a huge barrier to volunteers.

Before you start, think about what level of checks and training is proportional to the volunteer’s role. You don’t want to discourage anyone before they start.



Volunteer roles

A volunteer role should:

- Be fun, varied and enjoyable
- Be meaningful and rewarding for staff, residents and volunteers
- Be clearly defined from the beginning
- Involve set tasks
- Be supported by a volunteer agreement
- Allow volunteers to grow and develop
- Provide regular support and guidance
- Recognise and celebrate the volunteer's value and contribution
- Be tailored to a volunteer's skills and interests
- Fit around a volunteer's lifestyle.

A volunteer role shouldn't:

- Substitute or replace the work of a paid member of staff
- Put the volunteer in challenging or unsupportive situations
- Require a volunteer to physically move or support residents
- Expect the volunteer to make any financial contribution or incur any expenses whilst performing their role
- Violate or jeopardise the safeguarding process or procedures
- Only be recognised and supported by one member of staff; all staff must be aware of their contribution and why they are present in the care home.

Creating volunteer roles

This following template is designed to help you create meaningful and enjoyable volunteer roles that will benefit the care home staff, residents and the volunteers themselves.

Things to consider:

- What is the role, what tasks does it involve?
- How much time commitment does the role require from volunteers?
- Is the role enjoyable and varied?
- What skills or qualities should a volunteer possess to perform this role well?
- What capacity and budget does the care home have to support the volunteer?

Role description template



What is the role?

What tasks would this role involve?

What skills or qualities would a volunteer need to have to perform this role well?

How much time commitment is needed to perform this role?

One-off task or regular commitment?

Flexible timings or set timings?

How many hours a week?

Budget required? Y/N

Who will support the volunteer?

How will this role benefit staff, residents and the volunteer?

Staff:

Residents:

Volunteers:

Finding volunteers

It can be difficult to find volunteers who would like to spend time in care homes; this is why it is important to have a well-written role description ready to go.

The role you are advertising for will influence where you advertise for your volunteer. Below are some tips on where and how to advertise for your volunteers:

Look for local volunteer centres – volunteer centres can be a great way to advertise volunteer roles over a long period, especially if you are looking for a very specific type of person. You will be able to send them your volunteer role description and they will notify you if they find someone suitable. They will often have spent some time checking and training the volunteer as well.

If your role is hobby-based, look for local groups – if you have someone who wants to chat about or participate in a particular hobby or interest, e.g. boxing, approach a local group to see if someone would like to come in and help you out. People are much more likely to get involved if the role fits with their interests.

Contact community centres – work with local community centres to find groups and individuals that might be able to help. If using posters or flyers this can be a great place to display them.

Utilise colleges and universities – a local college or university can be a great place to find students who need to complete time in the community for their course. This can work well for one-to-one time with residents. Alternatively, you can contact a particular course if you have a resident with a specific interest, such as photography or geology.

Go online – look for online volunteering sites, local and national. In the Bristol area VOSCUR and Can-do Bristol are good places to advertise. Use Facebook, look for any local volunteering groups or any groups for people who live in your local area. Use a colourful image to get your post noticed.

Go offline – use posters, newspapers, magazine flyers and word of mouth to reach people who may not be online. Doctors surgeries, community centres, notice boards, pubs, corner shops, churches and cafés are all great places to advertise.

Selecting volunteers

The interview template overleaf will help you recruit an appropriate volunteer to fill the role(s) you have available. You can use this table to guide you when you are conducting informal interviews with any potential volunteers.

Only take on a volunteer if they are appropriate for the position you are advertising for, not just because they are enthusiastic and interested in the role. Below are some questions you might want to consider during an informal interview:

- Why are you interested in this role?
- Why do you want to volunteer here?
- Have you done a role like this before? Tell me about it.
- What motivates and inspires you?
- What skills and experience do you have that you can bring to this role?
- Can you tell me something you have done that you are proud of?
- Which of your past roles – paid or volunteer – have interested you the most? Why?
- What two or three things are most important to you in a volunteering role?
- How will you get to the care home? Do you live nearby/ have your own transport?

Recruitment interview template



Applicant:

Time available:

Skills required:

Skills offered:

Evidence and examples that demonstrate capability:

Motivation for applying:

Where do they live? Will travel ever be a problem?

Additional notes:

Trial shifts

Before you commit to taking on a volunteer, we recommend you have them along for a trial shift. This means you can see if the volunteer is right for the role before you spend time DBS checking them and inducting them. It also means the volunteer can see if volunteering in a care home is right for them.

We recommend they spend 1–2 hours in the home with the residents, chatting and observing. If they are carrying out a particular task as part of their role, get them to try it out during this time. After they are finished, have a chat with them about how they think it went and if they would like to continue to volunteer with you.

DBS checks

DBS checks are a great way to feel more confident that the person who is offering to volunteer is trustworthy. However, it can be a big barrier for people.

If the volunteer will only be assisting in a group setting, then they don't legally need a DBS check. It can be difficult for some people to find the necessary documentation for the check, especially if they:

- Have moved to England from another country
- Have spent any time with no fixed address or homeless
- Have unspent minor convictions.

The decision will be down to the policy of your home, but these groups of people may be well placed to offer you long term and committed support.

If a person is to spend any time alone with a resident, then they must be DBS checked.



Volunteer inductions

It is important that your volunteer is shown around the home and introduced to the people that live and work there before they start.

Below are a few basic things that all volunteers should be shown when they begin:

- Introduction to key staff
- Introduction to the resident(s)
- Familiarisation with any current activities being run
- Tour of the care home and its facilities
- Security, pass-codes
- Fire procedures

Depending on your home and the volunteer's role there may be extra things that would be beneficial for them to know:

- Any residents with challenging behaviour or additional needs (sensory impairment of any kind for example).
- Residents' dietary requirements.
- Tour of the garden and grounds if they will be doing outdoor activities.
- Familiarisation with the minibus or transport procedures if they are helping with day trips.
- Familiarisation with activity resources and equipment.
- Introduction to the resident's family.
- Your care home's social media and photography procedures.

Complaints

Complaints made either by or against your volunteer should be handled according to your home's policy. The volunteer should be treated the same as a member of staff. A volunteer should be made to feel comfortable enough to speak out if they have cause for concern and know that it will be taken seriously.

It is important for all members of staff to know the volunteer and their role, so they are aware of what the volunteer should or should not be doing.

If you have a set process for lodging complaints or concerns, familiarise your volunteers with this early on in their volunteer journey.

Safeguarding your volunteers

Although the safety of residents and volunteers must remain the highest priority, we would encourage you to be risk-aware rather than risk-averse. Here are some simple things to do to ensure that everyone is always comfortable and protected:

- Ensure that volunteers are not left alone with residents unless they have agreed to do so and are covered by an-up-to date DBS.
- Volunteers should be familiar with the health and safety procedures and regulations within the care home, including the whereabouts of fire exits, panic buttons and alarms systems.
- Volunteer activities should be in-line with each home's health and safety, lone working and insurance policies.
- Before asking a volunteer to handle money on behalf of the staff and residents, check that they are comfortable in doing so.
- Each volunteer should have clear points of contact to report any concerns or complaints.
- Volunteers should be familiar with how to report a safeguarding concern both internally and externally.
- Volunteers should not be expected to provide physical care or assistance to residents.
- Volunteers should be covered by a health and safety assessment when running activities or attending events. It is the care home's responsibility to conduct this.
- Volunteers must not perform any duties over and above what was agreed in volunteer contract and agreement.
- Volunteers must not be put in stressful or demanding situations either physically or emotionally.
- Volunteers should be briefed not to use mobile phones in the home and should be made aware that taking photos of residents is not allowed.

Supporting your volunteer

After your volunteer has been selected and inducted into their role, that doesn't mean your job is over. It is important that you check-in regularly with your volunteer to make sure they are still happy in their role.

Well supported volunteers are likely to stay in their role much longer. So a little time and effort checking in with them can save you a lot of time in recruiting another volunteer.

We recommend that the following measures are put in place to ensure your volunteer is properly supported:

The volunteer has a 'settling in' meeting after their first shift volunteering. This will help you understand if they have any initial concerns and determine if the role is right for them.

The volunteer has one main contact that they have regular one-to-one check-ins with. How regular will depend on them and the role they are performing. We recommend this should be a minimum of every three months. If they are volunteering more than once a month, catchups should be at least monthly.

The volunteer should be given the names of two other members of staff that have been briefed to support them. This is due to shift patterns. If possible these people's shifts should be scheduled so that there is always someone working that the volunteer can talk to.

Everyone in the home should be briefed to help. Supporting volunteers is the job of the whole home. Everyone should know who they are, what their role is and should be polite, friendly and offer support when necessary.



Volunteer expenses

Although a volunteer is unpaid, they will accumulate expenses. It is best practice to reimburse any costs a volunteer has acquired in the correct manner and to keep a record of any purchases or transactions volunteers are reimbursed for.

What sort of expenses might a volunteer accrue?

This is an important factor to consider during the pre-recruitment stage of the volunteer journey. A budget should be allocated before you ask individuals to come on board with your organisation.

Below are a few examples of the sorts of expenses volunteers might accrue:

- Travel to and from the place of volunteering (and any travel whilst volunteering).
- Meals whilst out volunteering (generally if the volunteer works more than 4 hours in one day). If the volunteer is present at the care home when meals are served, it is polite but not obligatory to offer them lunch.
- The cost of any resources purchased to carry out their volunteering duties.
- The cost of any food or purchases made on behalf of care staff or residents when volunteering.

How to manage volunteer expenses

- Pay volunteer expenses on the day if possible and have facilities for cash payments as not everyone has a bank account.
- Discuss what expenses a volunteer might require and what they are likely to accrue (if any) during their initial informal chat/interview. This must happen before they accept the role.
- Always keep a record of the expenses. This should include the name of the claimant, the type of expense and the amount paid. Ask the volunteer to sign and date to say they received the expense. If there is a physical travel ticket or receipt take a photocopy or a photo and attach to the record of expenses.
- If a volunteer would prefer to pay for themselves and not to accept expenses, please ask them to verify this in an email so that you have a record of this.

Awards, rewards and praise

Volunteer contributions make a world of difference to staff and residents in care homes. They are the often unsung heroes of the care sector. Celebrating the success and contributions of volunteers not only makes them feel valued, but is a respectful way to say a huge thank you for their time and effort.

Recognising the individual and collective achievement of volunteers also helps them to feel more connected and integrated into your organisation. Thanking them doesn't have to cost money or take up much time; it can be as simple as a smile and acknowledgement from all staff that they are doing a great job.

Here are some ways you might think about thanking volunteers who give time to your organisation:

- Offer volunteers the same benefits you would offer your staff, e.g. invites to socials and team building days.
- Celebrating birthdays by sending a card in the mail or presenting them with a cake.
- Celebrating length of service or milestones with mini awards ceremonies or with a certificate.
- List volunteers in external and internal communications, e.g. newsletters, annual reports, on the website.
- Thank volunteers in speeches.
- Invite volunteers to your organisation's events.
- Hold a special volunteer recognition day during National Volunteer Week.
- Offer to write a personal reference – if part of their volunteering is a means of achieving professional growth and development.



Making
Pals

 **alive**
Lighting up later life

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