

**Retaining Volunteers**

Once you have recruited the perfect volunteers for your organisation, you will want to keep them around! Here are some ideas on how to retain volunteers:

**Meeting volunteer expectations -** One of the first thing to ask a volunteer when they make contact with your organisation is why they wish to volunteer. That way, from the outset, you can make sure you are offering them an opportunity which links to their motivations, and lives up to their expectations. Recognising their motivations means that you will have an insight into how to retain them; if you are helping them to achieve the motivators, they are much more likely to stay.

**Training -** Offering volunteers training which will improve their skills is a great way of keeping volunteers fresh and interested. The training does need to be appropriate for their role (so it is not seen by the HMRC as a form of payment), but it can be a great way to reward volunteers and help them develop.

**Support and Supervision -** Offering support and supervision for volunteers will make sure that you are aware of any changing motivations they have. Also it will make them feel valued and listened to, and have time alone to discuss any issues. It is also great to involve volunteers in organisational decisions and give them the opportunity to reflect on any changes that may affect their role or the organisation. And also remember to offer volunteer out of pocket expenses and let them know how to claim them.

**Role development -** Sometimes volunteers get bored of a certain role, but not of the organisation. So it may be worth thinking about how you can help volunteers to develop into different roles in your organisation. A change is as good as a rest!

**Saying Thank You -** It is probably the most obvious thing, but sometimes forgotten; make sure that you say thank you to your volunteers! Being recognised for the energy and time you put into something makes it worthwhile. You can also show appreciation with references and Linked’In recommendations for volunteers.

However, the job of the Volunteer Manager is also to recognise that there is a life cycle to volunteering. Volunteers situations change, they have different priorities and different interests over time. It is inevitable that volunteers at some point will feel that their time at the organisation is finished and they wish to move on. If a volunteer if going on to paid employment or bigger opportunities, then that is a real compliment of their time with you. Remember to thank the volunteer for their time, maybe buy them a small gift or take them out for lunch budget allowing, and offer references and other accolades as appropriate.

**If you would like more information regarding volunteer retention, get in touch with Voluntary Norfolk at volunteercentre@voluntarynorfolk.org.uk**