



Developing Flexible Volunteering Opportunities

Making volunteering more flexible benefits volunteers and the voluntary sector.

Here's how...



What is flexible volunteering?

Flexible volunteering involves tailoring the volunteer role to fit around an individual's motivations, skills, interests and time commitment. Not every role can be fully flexible and tailor-made to an individual, however even when a role requires specific skills or a commitment of time, slight adjustments can be made to make the role less prescriptive.



Why develop flexible volunteering opportunities?

- **Remove barriers to volunteering**
 - research shows that competing priorities are cited as the biggest barriers to volunteering. Whether it is work, childcare commitments, or time spent taking part in other hobbies and interests - people these days lead busy lives. Taking a more flexible approach will enable more people to get involved in volunteering.
- **Change the perception of volunteering**
 - a common reason why people interested in volunteering do not take it up, is that they believe it will be too time-consuming and not flexible enough. Taking a more personal and flexible approach to volunteer management can shatter this perception.
- **Make volunteering more inclusive**
 - developing flexible opportunities can make volunteering more accessible. A fixed and rigidly defined role can be a barrier to participation, particularly for people with disabilities and health conditions. Everyone should have the opportunity to experience the benefits of being able to make a meaningful contribution to others.





- **Increase diversity amongst your volunteer base** – making sure your volunteering opportunities are flexible and therefore more inclusive will increase the diversity of your volunteers. As well as having a volunteer base which is more representative of the community it supports, your organisation will benefit from a broader range of skills, different outlooks, life experiences and fresh ideas. It will also help you to better understand and respond to the needs of the community.
- **Improve volunteer retention** – flexible volunteering can lessen the demands on volunteers and improve motivation. If a role isn't enjoyable and rewarding, volunteers will leave.
- **Enable volunteers to use their skills to maximum effect** – rather than fitting the volunteer into an existing role, flexible volunteering tailors the role to fit the individual, allowing their knowledge, skills and life experiences to have more impact.





How to develop flexible volunteering opportunities

Begin by asking the potential volunteer the following, to help develop a role which fits their lifestyle:



What are their motivations for volunteering – what do they hope to get out of the role?



What are their skills, abilities, experiences and interests (life-experiences are equally important)?



What is their availability – can they volunteer during the week, at weekends, during the evening, on a regular or ad-hoc basis, in small chunks or as a one-off?



What would make the role more accessible e.g. physical spaces, how out of pocket expenses are reimbursed, the way information is provided, how training is delivered?



What would they like to do?





Ways of making volunteering more flexible

- Develop a varied selection of volunteer roles to suit a range of lifestyles and skill sets.
 - Offer the volunteer the opportunity to role share.
 - Provide home based or remote volunteering opportunities – there are many ways volunteers can support your organisation from home, e.g. fundraising, carrying out social media activity, promoting your organisation and projects, administrative tasks, telephone roles, creating marketing materials, writing blogs, articles and case studies.
 - Try and make your volunteer recruitment process less time-consuming and onerous.
 - Consider how to make training more flexible, for example can it be broken in to segments if it is lengthy, can you offer it online as well as in person.
 - Create one-off opportunities to enable volunteers with little spare time or those who are put off from the commitment of volunteering to participate.
- Think creatively about how the volunteer can use their talent to best effect within your organisation.
 - Develop roles which can be undertaken in the school holidays or outside of usual hours to enable young people and those in education to volunteer.
 - Offer family volunteering opportunities to enable parents to volunteer.
 - Review the requirements of your volunteer roles – are all of the requirements necessary or can there be some flexibility, do these requirements exclude certain people from volunteering.

Developing flexible volunteering opportunities goes hand in hand with making volunteering more inclusive and improving the positive impact that volunteering has on both volunteers and the lives of those whom they support.



West Glamorgan Volunteering Support is a multi-agency project creating shared resources to develop the knowledge, management and coordination of volunteers and volunteer involving organisations across the Swansea and Neath Port Talbot areas. It has been funded through the Welsh Government Volunteering Recovery Fund.

The project partners are:

Neath Port Talbot Council, Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service, Swansea Bay University Health Board, Swansea Council, Swansea Council for Voluntary Service and West Glamorgan Regional Partnership.

For more information visit:

www.westglamorgan.org.uk/wgvs