



Lessons learned from accelerated volunteer recruitment in an emergency

June 2022

Context

In March 2021, West Glamorgan Regional Partnership commissioned some feasibility work on volunteer passports being used across the region.

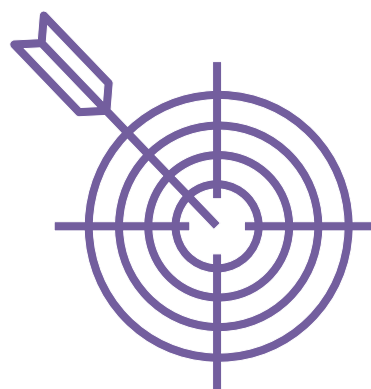
This work was undertaken as part of the Coronavirus Recovery Grant for Volunteering (CRGV) from Welsh Government. The research helped show there was an appetite to develop a volunteering passport but making it happen could quickly become bogged down in practicalities.

The particularly difficult issues identified through the research centred on training and insurance.



“As ever, they have been wonderful and we would have been lost without them, especially at times of high throughput.”

Clinical Lead, Covid-19 Immunisation,
Swansea Bay University Health Board





However, the research helped illustrate:

A volunteer passport scheme is essentially, a level of introduction between two parties. It isn't more complicated than that, although many will try to make it so. For the scheme to be successful overall, this is the message you will need to convey, accepting that it isn't a one size fits all solution to an organisation's volunteer recruitment situation.

In December 2021, the Omicron wave of Covid-19 hit the community and a push for booster vaccinations was needed throughout December. Mass vaccination centres needed to be staffed and volunteers had a key role in this.

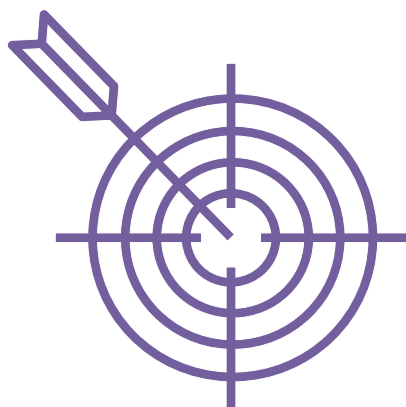
Partnership working around volunteering had been a strength prior to the regional work that was undertaken by the CRGV. However, the work helped to accelerate relationships, and more people were more connected to each other.

“It was a good experience and I enjoyed it in fact. There was a great sense of camaraderie there too”.

Volunteer

All partners involved in this accelerated recruitment process had also been involved in the research into Volunteer Passports so were aware of the potential pitfalls they may encounter and the specific considerations that needed to be in place.





A volunteer's perspective:

"A" had previously volunteered as a Swansea Council for Voluntary Service meet and greet volunteer at GP vaccination clinic. She received information about the accelerated recruitment she was eligible for from her SCVS volunteer co-ordinator.

"I had seen the national advert about the need over Christmas for mass vaccination centre volunteers, so I'd already thought about finding out how to apply. So when the call came from SCVS I was happy to try something different for another organisation. I received an email (from the Health Board) about the mass vaccination centre rota- can you do these 3 shifts.

I was emailed more information after agreeing to the shifts. I undertook 2 x 4hrs shifts and 1 x 3 hrs. There were staff in the centre doing the same meet and greet role, keeping an eye.

The fact that someone was there on my first shift to show me was very important."



Would you do it again?

"Yes - if I can do it I will"



Do you think there should be a list of people on an emergency bank?

"Good idea - I would like to be on it"





Making it happen

An initial meeting took place between the partners where an agreement was made about the checks and risk assessments that would be undertaken. They also agreed the recruitment would be for a Meet and Greet volunteer at the Mass Vaccination centres.

A light touch agreement was put in place between NPTCVS, SCVS and the Health Board that all volunteers put forward for the role would have the following elements in place:

- Appropriate recruitment checks to have taken place - application form, interview, two satisfactory references, completion of own organisation induction
- Expectation that a standard induction would have taken place to include information on: GDPR/Data Protection /Confidentiality, Health and Safety, Fire Safety, Safeguarding, Infection Control/ Covid mitigation measures, Equality and Diversity (ideally they may also have some manual handling, violence and aggression, dementia awareness)
- Volunteers/Staff would wear their own organisational photo ID badge on shift- if they do not have one then as a minimum they would need them to bring photo ID with them when they turn up for their shift to checked by a staff member before they begin

“The volunteers at Princess Royal Theatre were incredibly helpful and a real asset during busy periods. Their job was to meet and greet and then to allocate people to the next available vaccinator. I saw no difference between our volunteers there and those who have been fulfilling the role for a longer period of time. As ever, they have been wonderful and we would have been lost without them, especially at times of high throughput.”

Clinical Lead, Covid-19 Immunisation,
Swansea Bay University Health Board





“The recruitment of “borrowed” volunteers worked well in this instance due to the relationship in place with the Regional Partnership Board partners and a mutual trust that the temporary volunteers joining were able to step in to support the centres, having a certain level of training and appropriate checks already in place, and they had experience of volunteering in similar settings.

“The support we received from our partners was fantastic, we would not have been able to cover the volunteer role at the one Mass Vaccination Centre over the two-week accelerated roll out without them.”

“This working arrangement has shown us how this could be replicated or built upon in the future to support our activities or in an emergency response.”

Swansea Bay University Health Board, Volunteer Services Manager





The Health Board did not undertake any checks to make sure this had happened, they devolved this responsibility to the CVCs.

The CVCs recognised their obligations as part of this agreement and did a targeted reach out to their volunteers. The short time-frame for recruiting the volunteers, and getting them into post, meant the volunteer managers needed to be confident the volunteers they were putting forward to the Health Board were up to date with all appropriate training, and could readily step into the role.



Once the volunteers were identified for the Meet and Greet role, they were sent additional information about the opportunity that included:

- Role Description for the Meet and Greet Volunteer
- Guide for the role
- Covid-19 Volunteer handbook
- Covid-19 guidance for volunteers

The volunteers involved in the opportunity all had prior experience of volunteering with the CVC, some had been involved in the GP Vaccination centres. The Health Board could be confident the volunteers would be joining them with the ability to step in and support the centres.





Key Learning

The barriers the Volunteer Passport work identified remain.

However, the accelerated recruitment process supporting the mass vaccination centres highlights the key points that could make something practical work across the region:

- **The agreement between the organisations acted as an introduction** – once a volunteer had agreed to take on the role they were provided with a handbook, information about the role and specific requirements to fulfil the role for the Health Board. Some of the checks were removed but the Health Board took responsibility for making sure the volunteers had the specific information they needed for the role
- **The agreement thought about the practicalities** – discussions took place around insurance and management to think through who was responsible for what for the duration of the placement. For this arrangement it was agreed the volunteers were under the remit of the health board and their insurance and management covered them for the duration of the role
- **There was specific targeting to reach suitable volunteers** – to ensure the Health Board was receiving volunteers that would fulfil the requirements of the agreement, the CVCs made sure they reached out to a relatively small pool of volunteers they knew had the right training, and had undertaken the appropriate checks for this type of role
- **The role was time limited and targeted** – the role being recruited for was well understood and had a very specific function that would be in place for a specific period of time. This meant there were no concerns about which partner was responsible for ensuring training was in place, or if the person being put forward was suitable for the role





This example of accelerated volunteer recruitment helps show the potential for making volunteering easier in the future.

Covid-19 introduced a new range of people to volunteering, but many of the barriers and challenges they faced prior to the pandemic, most notably, time and other commitments, have returned - but they still have an appetite to get involved in short term or one off volunteer placements.

This example helps show how a simple agreement between organisations can help make this happen quickly. The experience also shows the value of maintaining a pool of volunteers, with appropriate basic training, who could be called on in future situations. If an ongoing regional agreement was developed, this would further accelerate the recruitment of volunteers in the future.

For more information about Volunteer Recruitment in Swansea Bay, contact:

NPTCVS (Neath Port Talbot)
info@nptcvs.org.uk or
SCVS (Swansea):
scvs@scvs.org.uk

Read a blog written by employer supported volunteer/volunteer/principal officer for volunteering at NPTCVS Gemma Richards at

www.nptcvs.wales/making-volunteering-accessible

Volunteers who supported the mass vaccination centre as a result of the agreement, who were employed by NPTCVS:

“It was a good experience and I enjoyed it in fact. There was a great sense of comradery there too”.

“It was good to be able to help out and they really seemed to appreciate it”.



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**