

Welcome to the Volunteer Centre and thank you for registering your organisation on our dedicated volunteer platform 'Volunteer Plus'. This guide is for newly registered organisations and anyone in your team with access to your account. It will help you to:

- understand the Volunteer Centre and the support we offer
- get started using our 'Volunteer Plus' platform
- understand what to expect from us and what we expect from you
- follow our policy for advertising your opportunities

### **About the Volunteer Centre**

The Volunteer Centre is a [Community Works](#) service supporting charities, non-profits and community groups to deliver social action across Adur, Worthing, Brighton and Hove. We connect volunteers with local organisations and offer support to create positive, impactful volunteering experiences.

- We promote around 450 opportunities each year
- Over 200 local organisations are active on our platform at any time
- We save you time, enhance volunteer outcomes and promote the benefits of volunteering in the local community

We work with voluntary, public and private sector organisations involved in volunteering. Our mission is to promote best practice in all areas of volunteer management, ensure choice and help volunteering thrive.

Our free 'Volunteer Plus' platform allows you to advertise volunteer roles and receive applications from potential volunteers all in one place. We also offer:

**Best practice guidance:** guidance on recruiting, managing and supporting volunteers including help with role descriptions and advert wording.

**VCF (Volunteer Coordinators Forum):** peer support for volunteer managers/coordinators (paid and unpaid) through sharing knowledge, best practice and answering questions via email and quarterly meetings.

**Matching and Guidance Service:** one-to-one support for people looking to volunteer who might not be able to access or feel confident using the platform, aren't sure what they want to do or need extra help finding the right opportunity.

*Note: we don't vet or assess potential volunteers, but we wouldn't suggest an opportunity to someone if they did not meet your advertised criteria.*

**Contact us:** email [volunteercentre@communityworks.org.uk](mailto:volunteercentre@communityworks.org.uk) or phone 01273 234826

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### **Getting started with Volunteer Plus**

#### **1. Advertising a new opportunity**

Before you upload an opportunity please see the policy section on page 3 for details on what we can and can't accept and what your organisation needs to have in place.

Allow adequate lead-in time for uploading your opportunities; we can't guarantee making opportunities live at short notice or on the same day you upload.

*The steps:*

- [Log into your organisation's account](#)
- Click on 'add opportunity' and complete an opportunity registration form (one form for each distinct role). Weblinks to your website or your own application forms can't be included. *Note: the form must be completed in one go (not left to return to) as it doesn't save until submitted and you will not be able to return to it to continue.*
- Click on 'register the opportunity' - it will go into "draft" and come directly to us to check, approve and then make live on Volunteer Plus. If there are no issues or clarifications we aim to make it live within 7 working days (longer over Christmas/New Year). If clarification is required, issues are identified or there are missing details we will contact you before making any decisions on processing the opportunity.
- Your opportunity is posted on our social media and listed in our fortnightly new volunteer opportunities newsletter. Our Matching and Guidance service will also signpost volunteers to suitable opportunities.
- Opportunities are live for six months, unless you give us an earlier date. We'll contact you at six months to see if you want to continue or close the opportunity.
- **Forgotten password:** You can reset by clicking [here](#) (this takes you to the login page). Please note: the reset link expires after an hour, if this happens you will need to request a new reset through the login page.

If your opportunity is not attracting the volunteers you hoped for, we will offer you support with involving volunteers and good practice in recruitment.

## **2. Receiving registrations of interest**

- Volunteers will register their interest via their own Volunteer Plus account
- Registrations of interest are emailed directly to you including name and contact details
- You reply to them directly, following your own recruitment process. We ask that you get in touch with them within two weeks, even if it's a short thank you or holding message. We receive feedback if you've not communicated following their interest.

## **3. Managing your opportunities**

**Editing an opportunity:** If you make changes to your opportunity, it will return to "draft" and will no longer be live. We receive a notification and will re-publish it after review. If you need it live sooner, get in touch.

**Ending or pausing a live opportunity:** You're not able to remove or pause an opportunity yourself. Please email us, and we'll make it "inactive". It will disappear from the website but stay on your account in case you want to update and re-post it later.

**Note:** Let us know as soon as possible if you're no longer recruiting or wish to pause the opportunity. Otherwise, it's still live on the platform with people still applying, potentially wondering why they haven't heard back and leading to follow up queries to us. If this happens, we'll ask you to follow up with those enquiries/interest directly.

**Keeping information up to date:** Please help us to keep your account information accurate, by updating changes in your organisation yourself through your account or by emailing us.

#### **4. Not accepting an opportunity**

If you don't confirm that you have the appropriate insurance (Employers Liability) we will not be able to make your opportunity live and will get in contact with you.

If we have any concerns or need to make further decisions about your opportunity it will be referred to the Volunteer Centre Coordinator. If your opportunity is declined, we'll explain why and refer you to this guide and policy.

#### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

We'll occasionally ask you for feedback as this helps us to keep providing the best service we can. If possible, it would be great if you could keep a record of how many volunteers came via us and how it worked out; this is really helpful and appreciated.

#### **Complaints**

We value your feedback and are committed to providing a high quality, accessible service. If you are unhappy with any part of it, please let us know; your feedback helps us to improve. To feedback in the first instance please email [mel@communityworks.org.uk](mailto:mel@communityworks.org.uk) or call us on 01273 234680.

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#### **Opportunities Policy**

The following outlines the key factors upon which the Volunteer Centre approves volunteer opportunities - what can or can't be advertised and promoted through our network. It helps us assess the suitability of opportunities prior to sharing them.

We reserve the right to not list volunteering opportunities where we feel this is appropriate.

#### **Key principles underlining decision-making:**

- We believe in creating and not stifling opportunity and recognise that volunteer involvement takes place in a variety of ways and across different sectors and within a multitude of structures.
- Community Works is committed to the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion in the way it provides its services and expects others accessing our services to share our approach. We challenge oppression and prejudice and promote equality, inclusion and diversity. We ask that organisations do not use language which is discriminatory, offensive and could cause harm to others and treat others with dignity and respect.
- The Volunteer Centre does not undertake a 'policing' role. We're here to support you in the good management of volunteers, and this may be relative to your organisation's structure/context, and the way volunteers are involved.
- Quality of information is key in enabling volunteers to make discerning choices as to the roles they undertake.

#### **We do not:**

- Screen/vet volunteers and are not responsible for assessing their suitability for a role.
- Do the recruitment process for you – it's your responsibility to follow your own.
- Advertise volunteer opportunities which have previously been paid roles (see 'job substitution' on page 4) or are still being carried out by paid staff.
- Promote unpaid internships or 'help to work' placements.

**As part of volunteer management good practice, we ask of the following from organisations wishing to advertise on our platform:**

## **Insurance**

We want to make sure your organisation and volunteers are protected so we ask that any opportunities on our platform are covered by Employers Liability insurance. This includes organisations that have staff and/or volunteers under their supervision and/or direct control. It is different to Public Liability insurance.

It protects your organisation if a volunteer (or staff member) has an injury or experiences harm caused by volunteering, and it's found the organisation was at fault. It can help cover legal or compensation costs. Without it, trustees, committee members or the organisation itself could be personally liable in the event of a claim.

We understand insurance costs can feel challenging for small organisations. If you need any further guidance or are looking for low-cost providers just get in touch with us.

While having this insurance cover is recommended, we recognise that after due consideration of this guidance and assessment of the risks, an organisation may choose not to get this insurance. You will not be able to advertise on our platform but doesn't mean you can't involve volunteers, and if appropriate we can still offer guidance on recruiting volunteers.

## **Commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion**

We ask that your organisation has an Equal Opportunities/Equity, Diversity and Inclusion policy or statement demonstrating a clear, written commitment to fairness, equity and respectful behaviour, as well as outlining how issues are handled.

We understand smaller groups may not have this in writing yet. If this is the case, we expect you to be actively fostering a culture of equity, diversity and inclusion where everyone is treated fairly, with respect and where volunteers are well-supported and well-managed.

If your organisation is advertising on our platform and is found not to be demonstrating this commitment, we reserve the right to no longer list your volunteering opportunities.

If you would like any guidance on an EDI policy or statement, just get in touch. We're here to help.

## **Good practice**

The opportunity registration form requests good practice details. This relates to how your organisation will manage volunteers and how we will assess the opportunity against good volunteer management practice before approving. Our decisions consider the structure of your organisation, context and the volunteer role. For example, a small volunteer-led organisation that does not cover travel expenses might prompt a different action to a large charity demonstrating the same practice.

It's our role to 'advise' on good practice and does not necessarily mean the opportunity isn't approved. However, where volunteer management poses a risk to the volunteer (physical and/or financial) or does not provide a positive volunteering experience we will not accept the opportunity.

## Job substitution/creating a contract

Volunteering roles are not contractual and by their very nature should not 'create' a contract imposing obligations on volunteers as opposed to 'reasonable expectations'.

We will not accept a role if it creates ‘unpaid’ workers or where organisations are using volunteers as a means to bypass their legal obligations with regards to employment law, e.g. a volunteering role is being used as an ‘unpaid’ probationary period.

#### Volunteers having to pay – hidden costs

Volunteers shouldn’t incur any financial costs such as charges, and opportunities shouldn’t be used as a way of gaining new donors. In this case the opportunity won’t be approved.

#### Health and Safety

Volunteering should take place in a safe environment and in a safe manner for everyone. Volunteers should be covered by a health and safety policy and you should have appropriate insurance to cover their activities.

Opportunities relating to driving should show explicit detail about the legal responsibilities and requirements of both the volunteer and your organisation.

[See The HSE \(Health and Safety Executive\) for further information about volunteers](#)

#### Overseas Volunteering

- 1. Overseas opportunities where the opportunity provider is located overseas:** we don’t advertise opportunities located overseas.
- 2. The provider is located in the UK:** if you have UK based opportunities in addition to overseas opportunities only **the UK based opportunities** may be registered.

#### Cause-based volunteering

##### *Faith-based organisations:*

Volunteering within faith-based communities is supported by the Volunteer Centre. We hold a neutral position in relation to the faiths held by volunteers and organisations that might involve them. Decisions to register volunteering opportunities within faith-based organisations will be made on the principle that they support an ethos of equality, diversity and inclusion and do not promote beliefs that discriminate against or exclude people on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital status, pregnancy, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.

Specifically, the Volunteer Centre will not promote volunteering opportunities where the sole aim of the organisation is to further its own belief system or use volunteering as a ‘recruitment’ mechanism.

##### *Political*

The Volunteer Centre does not generally accept volunteering opportunities from political parties (and affiliated lobbying or pressure groups) where the mainstay of the role is to further their party-political aims or beliefs. Consideration may be given where the cause can be seen to be discrete from political motivations, in which case both the organisation’s purpose and the volunteer role should clearly reflect this.

