

COMMUNITY ACTION: MK

Best practice in recruiting and retaining volunteers

Recruitment

- Best advertisement is your current team of volunteers - get them to spread the word
- Via do-it.org the national database for volunteering - contact us to get help uploading your opportunities
- Local press/radio - we produce a weekly press article so when you work with us to recruit, this is an opportunity open to you
- Talks and presentations - often local groups are looking for interesting talks, this could be a good place to recruit
- Posters/flyers - libraries and local parish council noticeboards, plus producing images that can be shared on social media helps spread the word
- Volunteer/Career Fairs

Retention

- Make sure to thanks your volunteers regularly - Volunteers Week held every year in June is a great opportunity to piggyback on a national campaign
- Offer a secure and welcoming environment
- Keep the role interesting
- Reimburse out of pocket expenses
- Grow with your volunteers

It may also be worth looking at the recruitment process. Is an application form really needed? It can slow the process down and you might lose volunteers. It may be worth meeting the volunteer and completing the form with them instead.

However, it is best practice for all organisations especially those that work with Children, Young People or Vulnerable adults to have a recruitment process which includes completing an application form, holding an interview process, obtaining references and asking for a DBS check. However, as these can take a while to process it's important that the volunteer is assured that things are progressing and they have not been forgotten.

Local Case Studies

Buckingham Canal Society is a charity founded in 1992 to restore the disused Buckingham Canal. All members are volunteers. They work with unemployed people, local schools taking part in DOF scheme, and outside companies doing 'team building' days and community days. They organise three practical conservation sessions a month and regular promotional activities - attending canal festivals to promote the society and recruit new members. They also run a craft group each month and a canal festival with a craft fair each year.

BCS pride themselves on their communication with their volunteers. When a new volunteer has made contact, they are responded to within the week by a named person who supports all volunteers. Training is offered - volunteers receive training on tools and equipment used during session and accredited training is offered to train volunteers to drive excavators and dumper trucks - and out of pocket expenses are paid.

Athina Beckett who manages volunteers for BCS said; "New volunteers are met and greeted and introduced to all other volunteers present and asked to share any previous skills and if possible given the chance to use them within the society. They are invite to try a variety of tasks that the society can offer to find one they enjoy doing. This helps make sure of a good fit and increases retention."

BCS receives good feedback from their volunteers with particular feedback that the experience helps with employability skills and build CV's. Retired volunteers say they enjoy the company of working with other volunteers and the satisfaction of seeing the work achieved.

Athina also commented that; "Workshops arranged by Community Action: MK have proved very useful and visits to outside companies like Home Retail Group and Network Rail to promote corporate volunteering have been very valuable."



Advantage Africa supports people affected by poverty, disability and HIV to improve their education, health and incomes. Their work helps some of East Africa's most vulnerable people to overcome prejudice, help themselves and build a better future for their families and communities. Up to 90 volunteers are involved each year in a fund raising Christmas wrapping

project in the main shopping centre in Milton Keynes.

As of last year the project is now managed by Sam Crooks under the Christ the Cornerstone banner and involves volunteers from a number of charities. We expect all our volunteers to attend a 2 hour training workshop either as new wrappers or as a refresher. During this session we give information about the work of the charity so the volunteers can give informed answers to questions. We go over all the practical arrangements for their volunteer role and have a hands on practical session wrapping presents of awkward shapes to ensure a consistent standard of quality wrapping.

Once a potential volunteer has contacted us, we respond within 3 days and they are able to talk to a Wrapping Manager. We offer help with transport costs. Following training which covers most of the practical issues we try to match a new wrapper with an experienced one on the stall so they can be mentored until they feel comfortable. We give regular (every 3 or 4 days over the four week period) motivational email updates on amount raised and addressing any issues as they arise. Our database has about 300 names on it gathered from the 6 consecutive years of offering the wrapping service.

Community Action MK's support has always been amazing, helping to publicise our need for volunteers and giving encouraging verbal feedback.



Community Action: MK's Best Practice in Volunteer Management Guide

This information sheet has been produced by Community Action: MK and was last updated in 2015. Community Action: MK has taken all reasonable precautions to ensure that information contained in this document is accurate, but stresses that the content is not intended to be legally comprehensive.