

A good practice guide for supported volunteering



boothcentre.org.uk
Registered Charity No. 1062674

1. Introduction

Coproduction has been central to our values since we opened in 1995, involving people who access the service with the design and day to day running of the centre has always been important to us. A formalised supported volunteering programme first received funding in 2002 and it continues to be a successful programme that enables us to provide high quality support for more people. Over X people have trained and volunteered with us whilst also receiving support for their personal situation.



We believe everyone who comes to the Booth Centre for support can also make a valuable contribution to the planning, delivery and/or evaluation of the service. We actively encourage people who are homeless, have mental health or drug and alcohol problems or face multiple disadvantage to get involved as we now how beneficial the stability and sense of accomplishment can have for people.

Volunteers are integral to the running of the Booth Centre by undertaking day to day tasks, providing a communication channel and being the welcoming face of the centre. This good practice guidance will outline how supported volunteering works at the Booth Centre and offer advice that can be used in a range of contexts.



"We're all one big unit,
that's what I enjoy
about volunteering at
the Booth Centre.
It's not just the sta , it's
also the volunteers,
it's the people that are
visiting.
We all work as one."

2. Why supported volunteering?

This holistic approach of offering stability and routine alongside individual mentoring has proven benefits for the individual and the service. The initial time and resource cost and ongoing time commitment is offset by providing an improved service delivering outcomes.

Benefits for the individual

- Inclusive working environment where people gain confidence to enable them to make positive changes in their lives.
- Work experience from a number of different areas such as catering and hospitality, customer service, logistics and advice work.
- Opportunity to gain new skills, build on existing ones, attend training and gain qualifications.
- Can be a diversion from drugs and alcohol and offer stability.
- One to one mentoring including move on support to other volunteering opportunities, employment and education.
- Enables positive relationships and improves mental health and wellbeing.
- Provides a sense of belonging, and pride.





Benefits for the service

- Promotes equality and positive working relationships which enable workers to provide high quality support and intervention.
- Supported volunteers provide valuable insight and knowledge that promotes a reactive and high quality service.
- Provides another communication channel between the service and people who are accessing support.
- Additional resource to welcome people, run sessions and look after the centre.
- Providing additional time for workers to offer support.

Case study: Sarah

Sarah fled domestic violence to the streets of Manchester. She first visited the Booth Centre for a brew and a shower, from there was supported with her mental health and spice use. During this period Sarah started volunteering as a cafe assistant and weekly visits to the Centre became a daily routine. Her compassionate nature was valued in the cafe, spending her time speaking to people that were by themselves or new. The Booth Centre team worked with partners to secure Sarah accommodation but her personal goal was to be with her children again. In time she re-established contact and after a lot of hard work she was supported into suitable accommodation with her children. After completing placements in the cafe and with the activity team Sarah was invited to the peer mentor training. A talent for speaking up for peers led Sarah to be involved in city wide strategic work, advocating for women in temporary accommodation.

3. The supported volunteering process



1. All **recruitment** for supported volunteers is internal, this can be with posters advertising the next induction session or via word of mouth. Supported volunteers will actively talk to people about joining the team and staff may target individuals they feel could benefit from the programme. For example inviting people who may have challenging behaviour can lead to great improvements in cooperation.

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2. The informal **induction** sessions are held regularly, led by the project worker responsible for the programme and are tailored to the individuals in the room. They inform people on the training and support available as well as the roles that can be undertaken and the expectations on both sides, this is also written in the handbook. Booth Centre's mission, values and policies are all discussed. Following the group time each individual will have 1-1 mentoring where they can outline their medium and long term goals, the project worker will discuss how the centre can support with those goals. The practicalities of volunteering is also agreed – when people will start volunteering and what roles people are interested in. This information will then inform who from the staff team is assigned as mentor.
 3. Ongoing **support and training** is essential for any successful volunteering, regardless of a person's situation. Morning meetings are designed to get everyone ready for the day – work plans for the day are discussed to ensure everyone knows what they are doing and any irregularities such as visitors are communicated and planned for. Additional meetings are held within the areas of the centre (sports, arts, kitchen, building, employment) which look at the design and evaluation of the service – these are attended by volunteers and participants. Each Friday there is a training session which offer nationally recognised qualifications in areas such as first aid, food safety and manual handling. Volunteers organise a social activity once a month on an agreed budget such as a trip to the cinema or a game of rounders in the park. This is both an extra benefit and an opportunity to socialise.
 4. Supported volunteers undertake three **placements** each lasting ten weeks before graduating. The three placements will focus on different roles equipping the individual with a range of skills and experience. The roles developed are meaningful and add value to the centre and avoid focusing on the menial tasks people don't want to do – just like in any volunteer team.
 5. Following the thirty week programme people **graduate** – this built in end point is communicated from the start and support given to find suitable move on options. This prevents reliance on the centre and unhelpful relationships from forming. As the programme is resourced the built in end point gives more people the opportunity to volunteer. Quarterly awards ceremonies are held where people receive a certificate after each volunteer placement and graduation.

4. Inclusive volunteering

Flexibility

Working with people who may lead chaotic lives means building in flexibility. The work plans for each day are decided once it is clear who is available to volunteer – set job roles have been developed so this process is quick and happens during the morning meeting. People are trained on the different job roles that are essential to daily running of the centre and the staff member responsible for the area is also trained on what roles are available and the tasks that should be completed. There are also additional job roles developed, these are tasks that need to happen on a less regular basis and are filled on days when we have a surplus of volunteers. Buddying a reliable supported volunteer can help with the issue of capacity as does having a flexible wider volunteer team who are able to step into different roles as required. Volunteer job roles are also flexible and can be developed to suit an individual's skills, interests and level of ability. This allows for a flexible entry point that can be built on. Examples of this type of role include playing the piano or looking after the fish.

Approach to the management of the volunteers also needs to be flexible, some people will take ownership and develop their own routines within the day whereas others may need additional support for the duration of the programme in order to effectively carry out their duties. Supported volunteer roles will also remain open for people during periods of change - this is communicated to the individual so they know they can return at any time. People may take leave from the programme for any reason and return whenever they are ready.

Working with peers

Supported volunteers and those accessing the service may socialise outside of the centre so a robust approach to confidentiality is required. Supported volunteers decided they would not have access to confidential information about individuals, this prevents people from being in uncomfortable situations and eliminates the potential for GDPR risk. This is the only difference between supported volunteers and the wider team.

Favouritism is another potential issue which is mitigated against by having clear guidelines for volunteers to work within to ensure that everyone is treated equally and ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to volunteer.

Recognition and expenses

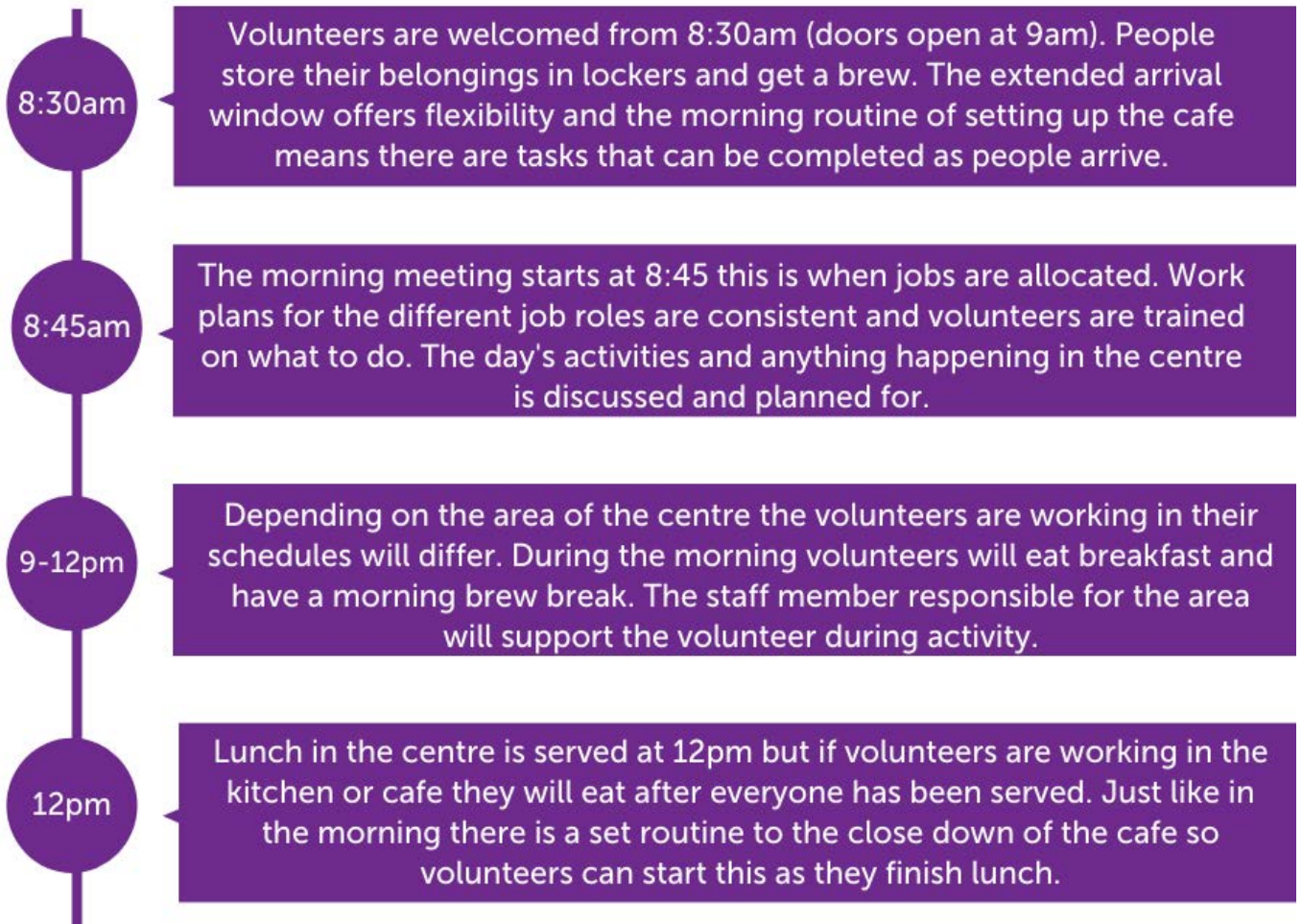
Bus passes are provided for volunteers – either for the day they are volunteering or for the week if they volunteer for three or more days. This policy is made clear to everyone in the centre. Volunteer socials take place every month to reward people for their hard work and provides the opportunity to do something different such as ice skating. Quarterly award ceremonies recognise volunteering milestones – these celebrations involve a special lunch served away from the cafe, certificates, awards and external guests.

Time and resources

More time is required to set up the programme and processes. Once formalised less time is needed and can be built into effective running of service – the staff member responsible for activity or volunteer coordinator can support daily working and they can benefit from having an additional communication channel and practical resource. A project worker needs to be responsible for the recruitment and induction process but then once volunteers are trained on job roles and allocated a mentor the whole staff team can be involved.



5. Day to day organisation



checklist

- Suitable time allocation
- Remain flexible
- Think about confidentiality
- Meaningful job roles
- Ongoing training and support
- Address expenses
- Recognise achievement
- Built in end point



