



Volunteer Inclusion Partnership Toolkit



This toolkit has been put together by

Tony, Anthony, Domingo, Amanda and Kate....and with input from lots of other Volunteers at the Centre.
We hope you find it useful.

Good luck with developing your Volunteer Inclusion Partnership project, from all of us at the Booth Centre!



Andy

hey.

Anthony



Tony



Amanda



Kate

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1. Introduction

The Booth Centre has been running an inclusive Volunteering programme for over 25 years. Over that time the programme has developed and adapted to changes in the service and has continued to be improved through Volunteers and staff working together in partnership.

This toolkit has been designed in partnership with Volunteers and staff, to provide an easy step-by-step guide to the different elements which make up a successful inclusive Volunteering programme. It outlines the different elements of our Volunteering programme, why these things are important, how we do them and some of the thinking behind each element, which other organisations may want to consider when developing their own programme.

As part of the toolkit, we also provide a series of documents, which can be modified and adapted by any service. This toolkit may not provide everything you need, but will hopefully provide a sound framework on which to build your programme. The aim is that we will continue to update and develop the toolkit with the input of all partners, making it a dynamic, 'live' document. We will learn from each other along the way.

As part of the VIP programme, visit days across partner sites are recommended as a further means of learning, with opportunities to shadow Volunteers, and staff and to ask lots of questions.

So, let's start our VIP journey together!

2. How we do it:

The starting point, as with most things, is a conversation. We (staff & Volunteers) make sure that we talk to people who access the Centre about the Volunteering programme every day. Talking about the programme and the opportunities it offers promotes inclusion. Offering a flexible approach, with degrees of commitment and involvement allows the individual to opt-in at varying levels to suit where they are on their journey. They may want to start as helpers or by doing one trial session to see how they feel about Volunteering. If a person feels it is not for them right now, that is fine too.

What we do: we carry out an induction with new Volunteers; we provide on-the-job training and a separate training programme, which is open to Volunteers and staff; we offer co-production opportunities both internally and externally on a strategic level, amongst other things. We provide PPE, insurance, move-on plans, awards, socials, certificates, badges, expenses, and DBS checks (if appropriate to the role). We have regular, monthly Volunteer meetings to ensure there is a forum for more formal discussion and changes to be made. We also assign a staff member to each Volunteer, to make sure close, partnership work takes place routinely and to ensure any support needs a person may have, can be addressed. We offer an approach where a person can simply help out around the Centre from time to time, or if the person feels ready and able to join the programme fully, they will be supported to do this too. Along the way, if an individual needs to have some time out, to take a break, this can be accommodated too. There isn't a way to 'fail' the programme. It is about the programme meeting the needs of the individual as well as the person challenging themselves and developing skills and self-esteem.

Things to consider: What does the Volunteer want to achieve from their journey? Is it the right time and environment for this individual to Volunteer and thrive? Are they clear on what is expected from them and what they can expect from the programme? Do they understand what you are trying to achieve as an organisation? Are they aware of your values – a non-judgemental, asset-based, inclusive approach? What training are you providing? Is there sufficient support in place? Are we working in partnership?

3. Volunteer Policy

“Everyone has to follow some rules to make it run smoothly and then you get a good team that works together” Anthony

“You need to know the limit of what you can do and understand rules about confidentiality and things” Andy

What we do: Volunteers and staff work closely day to day with one another. To ensure a fully immersive Volunteering experience, we provide everyone with a copy of our Volunteer policy, which was compiled by Volunteers and staff and is reviewed every two years, or sooner if necessary.

Things to consider: Do you have a policy? How do you write your policy in partnership? Are the values of the service reflected in the policy? Does everyone have a copy of the policy? How is the policy put into practice?

Attached documents:

Volunteer Policy:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1M1ZBO8pM_025nNQyomseepaTQaGq1XiG9Y0H_a_MCTQ/edit?usp=sharing

4. Policy Development

“We don’t just come to make brews; we can influence the organisation’s policies by giving our ideas in meetings” Tony

What we do: Volunteers and staff work in partnership to identify what meetings to attend and what we want to affect by attending. This applies internally and externally. Booth Centre Volunteers are supported to attend Manchester Homelessness Partnership meetings, to ensure an authentic voice of experience is represented. We train people on how to get the most out of meetings if this is identified as a need for the individual. Volunteers and staff work together to design and review policies, guides and handbooks in the Centre, shaping how we operate and interact, from the CEO to the Welcomers, to the Café Volunteers and across the whole team.

Things to consider: Not setting people up to fail by sending someone to a meeting unprepared – one-to-one mentoring works well to make sure a person is ready for what to expect, feels supported, feels they have every right to be there, that they know what they want to achieve, etc. This one-to-one work can be with a fellow Volunteer or a staff member. Explaining what the room may look like, how many people will be there, and who they are is helpful too. Going through minutes of meetings together can demystify what has been said and make the idea of attending a potentially high-level meeting less daunting. The use of plain English is something that we advocate; no jargon. Providing feedback promptly helps people to see the impact and the point of their involvement, for example, our AIMS booklet was put together with Volunteers and staff and is something those involved can hold in their hands as evidence of the impact of their work.

Attached documents:

External strategic meetings – how to involve Volunteers in a meaningful way:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xVZE43eGMeHBy6u-IQpJHsDP8SknRwRG1Q1B0o0fI6M/edit?usp=sharing>

5. Respect Agenda

“It’s not just do as I say, it’s us all doing things together and us all treating people with respect and not judging” Tony

What we do: We live our values and follow our agreed Respect Agenda. We make sure everyone is welcomed; everyone is enabled to feel a part of the Centre, part of our community. We take time to speak to everyone and greet everyone. We have Welcomers to show people around. We show that we are LGBTQIA+ friendly, that people from all ethnicities and cultures are welcome and that we want to work with, represent and grow from the experiences of our whole community. We have meetings, committees, suggestion boxes, and an open-door policy for offices, all with respect for one another in mind. Everyone’s opinion is sought and valued. The Booth Centre is a safe place for everyone. We celebrate diversity and promote inclusion.

People who access the Centre talk about ‘the Booth Centre family’. This is exactly the culture and mindset we want to engender and build on. At the Booth Centre, the consensus is ‘people’. Just people. Not service user, not client, not customer, just people. This way we avoid labels and inadvertently underpinning any disparity in power which may exist.

Things to consider: Clear, robust and respectful challenging of judgemental, negative language or behaviour from anyone. Think about an agreed way of referring to people who access the service – have the conversation. Create environments in which people can make themselves heard and mechanisms for feeding back responses and actions. Celebrate diversity and promote inclusion through policies, guides, training, practice, events, artwork performance, etc.

Attached documents:

Volunteer Respect Agenda: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uwcikmEV_vUWnPDzI8Yvn-WOaL0gl0eUbawY0R-kuCE/edit?usp=sharing

People are People language policy:

https://www.boothcentre.org.uk/uploads/4/6/1/8/4618939/bc_language_policy.pdf

6. Role Descriptions

What we do:

Volunteers and staff have put together role descriptions of each Volunteering role so that new people know what to do and so that staff know what tasks Volunteers have to carry out and can assist in any way necessary. People say they want to be busy, so it's important that a good role description exists and that tasks are varied and enjoyable, where possible. We make sure people have regular breaks, and that they are provided with food and the opportunity to eat whilst on shift. We make sure that the person understands what is expected of them, providing them with a clear structure of the day and a contact person for the first shift, so they feel supported. We make sure each Volunteer knows who their staff support person is, and with whom they will have weekly one-to-ones. We make sure that they have a locker, a badge, that their expenses are reimbursed, etc. We discuss with every Volunteer what days they wish to Volunteer and the times. We also build in a support package, so that we are helping Volunteers to address any issues they may feel they need support with, in their own lives or development.

Things to consider:

- a. We advise that you call it a “role description” rather than a “job description” otherwise you can get into legal issues and it is important to be clear from the outset.
- b. Design the role descriptions through co-production so that people are invested, feel a part of the process and can give the perspective of the person doing the role.
- c. You may wish to build in some flexibility to ensure roles are inclusive, enabling people to be involved and feel they are making a valuable contribution.
- d. Ensure that Volunteers understand that this is time measured, that there is a journey, a process, and an end date.

Attached documents:

Building Volunteer Role Description: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Q7_c-oj8pUZuKYBjSrK2KSD6B0EVmxw9Cfj0Fu8N38E/edit?usp=sharing

Gardening Volunteer Role

Description: https://docs.google.com/document/d/18h6JoZYy5sR5_cUvBW_xfwcEEqM8vIMDVuyaGRFwZXE/edit?usp=sharing

Volunteer Reception & Welcome Guide:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/19IMk1538fVKZGSHdykYkirC3XUwbEBL2kb35qzVLMdY/edit?usp=sharing>

Activity Sessions & Group Work guide for Volunteers: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-D9WKHGyoUg5to7LiQB0ivlw5zsOkOqF1I8FI7wO7xM/edit?usp=sharing> -

Reception Task List for Volunteers:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oMphkLAZj5cZi6v8cTanBWSyb8S-ILQUcSmtHeNtWK0/edit?usp=sharing>

Café Volunteer Role Description:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/19jh0elt11Xz0QJCIQywVoDqwXtAL5YAO1XDxY7ufHUU/edit?usp=sharing>

Kitchen Volunteer Role Description:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/13rJ7cFPIU3_Cd4ilTSprfelPBOAANTtxpYj_3tqVrLs/edit?usp=sharing -

Volunteer Welcomer Role Description:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kSE8sOjh4qd3M8RVFY7XRZaXBzhk-As7fXwDfmj3GFU/edit?usp=sharing>

7. Recruitment

What we do: We recruit Volunteers from the cohort of people accessing the service. This is the most effective way to have a service run by and with the people who are accessing it and to affect co-production. It is also the best way to create a real sense of community, of 'ownership' or 'membership' and a good way to ensure you can adopt a whole-person approach to supporting the Volunteer.

Things to consider: Be clear that this is a time-measured, Volunteer role – not a job of any kind. Have a clear Volunteering pathway, roles defined, tasks outlined, provide an induction, on-the-job training and speak with the person about what is involved in detail, so they have a good understanding before considering attending the induction or taking on the role. It's useful to have an illustrated outline or visual minutes to show the journey/timeline. Ensure you make it clear about DBS checks (if applicable) and about how this process works, and how a history of offences does not mean automatic exclusion. A willingness to recruit people with offending issues is preferable – you will find this rarely affects anything negatively in the running of the service and the role of the individual Volunteer.

Set out the steps for your clarity too, for example:

- 1) Promotion of the programme
- 2) Conversations with individuals
- 3) Induction
- 4) One-to-ones
- 5) Allocation of Volunteer role and allocation of staff support person – introduction if necessary
- 6) Plan for weekly shifts, provision of a badge, locker, etc.
- 7) DBS check (if applicable)

Though this is more than just recruitment we've laid out here, we feel it is important that you have all these steps and processes in place before you begin recruiting, so that everyone can see what is involved.

8. Various Housekeeping Items:

- References + DBS Checks

What we do: We speak to the individual about this. If they don't have any referees they can use, this shouldn't automatically exclude them. Your service may be their first opportunity to gain a reference, and being inclusive means that you may need to be flexible on this. If references are not a problem for the person, one is sufficient. You can provide them with a template reference request form if you wish or you can just ask them to provide a letter or email vouching for the person. It is also an option to allow the individual to provide a family or friend as a referee if that's all they have access to.

Things to consider: Remember, if things aren't working out, you can try to address it, or you can end the Volunteering if that's the best thing to do at the time – just make sure this is done sensitively and in a manner which allows the individual to avoid embarrassment, if possible.

- **Badges and T-shirts**

“Wearing a badge or a t-shirt shows who is Volunteering so people know who to go to for help”

Andy

“It makes you feel part of the team and a bit important, like you have a role”

What we do: We provide Volunteer badges and t-shirts, though wearing the t-shirts is optional.

Things to consider: It may be best not to put your logo on the badges or t-shirts, as this could risk reputational damage in the community. Our t-shirts and badges just say, Volunteer. If you give t-shirts, does everyone have a way of cleaning them? Can you help with this if they don't?

- **Lockers**

“If you can lock your bag up it's one less thing to worry about” Antony

What we do: We provide every Volunteer with their own locker for the shift, where they can keep their personal items securely.

Things to consider: Having secure lockers or a secure area available to all Volunteers. Managing this with a simple, recording system each day, so it's easy to see whose locker is where.

- Volunteer expenses

“The bus ticket is just a bonus, it isn’t the reason I do it but it just helps me out” Tony

“It’s hard to afford the travel sometimes but if you get expenses you’re not out of pocket and so you can keep coming” Antony

“It’s important because it’s a pain walking in the rain” Andy

What we do: We ensure that it doesn’t cost Volunteers to give us their time for free. We provide a bus or tram fare on a daily or weekly basis, whatever the individual prefers.

Things to consider: Does the person qualify for a mobility pass – can we support with this? Would giving cash be appropriate or a risk? We rarely give cash, as it may place people in a difficult situation.

9. Induction

“The induction tells you what you need to know to Volunteer and it’s an ice breaker – you get to know the staff and other Volunteers” Tony

“It makes you feel like your worthy and worth something” Tony

What we do: We hold a group induction, usually no more than 3 or 4 attendees, followed by one-to-one sessions. We go through all aspects of Volunteering, what is involved practically, what will a day look like, what is provided on shift (such as breakfast and lunch) and what are the other benefits, both ‘hard’ (training, certificates, new skills, experience) and ‘soft’ outcomes (sense of purpose, feeling valued, part of something, etc.) We go through overviews of relevant policies such as customer service, professional boundaries, confidentiality, safeguarding, following staff guidance and responding appropriately to any requests for help from another staff member. There is an abridged version of all of these policies in the Centre Volunteer Booklet, which we give to each new Volunteer for reference.

Things to consider: Your audience – how are people feeling? This may feel a little daunting for some; try to recognise this and put people at their ease – make it fun and informal, but with a process behind it. Try to match people to roles where they show some interest, for example, if they want to learn to cook, the kitchen would be a good match. It is also important to clearly outline the Volunteer programme journey, so that each Volunteer can see how many weeks they have in which department, when they will meet with their staff support person when they will earn their first award or certificate, etc.

Attached documents:

Centre Volunteer Handbook:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ldjRC7Tg5zn_vLsfPXLGjV3W6TaJrttslsuNycXxE5I/edit?usp=sharing -

10. Training

“Training means you’re not just thrown in at the deep end” Antony

What we do: We provide on-the-job training in all roles. Added to this, we provide a Volunteer Training Programme which runs every quarter. Each session is stand-alone, so Volunteers can drop in and out of it, but we do encourage attendance at all 10 sessions. We work closely with the Volunteers day in and day out, so there is always a lot of support and opportunities for people to learn. This also provides many opportunities for informal feedback from Volunteers, so we can keep developing our training programme in partnership and filling any gaps there may be.

We also support Volunteers to complete nationally recognised training such as CSCS cards (construction work), H&S, First Aid, Manual Handling, Fire Safety, etc. Any specific training the Volunteer identifies as of interest to them, we would support them to access elsewhere if we cannot facilitate it.

Peer support provides training too: a more experienced Volunteer will often be the best-placed person to support a new Volunteer in a role.

Where there is an opportunity to deliver a training session in partnership with staff and Volunteers, this is ideal, but this may be something to consider further down the line, once the programme is established and once you have run the training.

Things to consider: Support the Volunteer on their training path, and be mindful not to put too much expectation on the person. Equally, try to support the Volunteer not to put too much expectation on themselves: sometimes when a person starts to see themselves succeeding and progressing, they want to do as much as possible very quickly. This may be fine for some, but others may still be struggling with dependency issues, mental health concerns or may just need to proceed more steadily. It’s important for the Volunteer and the staff support person to know as early as possible, what the person wants to achieve as regards training, so a plan can be made and hopefully, completed. Remember, this should be led by the individual, and if they aren’t interested or aren’t ready to take on much training, then they should be fine too.

11. One-to-ones

“The one-to-ones helped me to realise what I was achieving and what I was good at and it got me on to doing other things” Tony

What we do:

- Every Volunteer is matched with a member of staff and is told at their induction that this is the person who they should talk to if they are having any problems, want to develop their role etc.
- Staff agree on a time with the Volunteer to meet regularly for a one-to-one – this is usually once a week. These don’t need to be formal meetings – it can just be a sitting in the café and having a brew and a chat together.
- There is an agreed framework for this meeting but this is just a guide and the format of this meeting is adapted to what suits and is most useful for the individual.
- These sessions are underpinned by the principles of a “Strengths-based” approach – which means looking first at what people can do with their skills and their resources and the networks and relationships around them and in their community. There is a focus on what people can do, their interests, skills, talents, aspirations, knowledge and resilience, rather than the deficits, problems or weaknesses that the “system” often uses to define people.
- Together they look at things that they may want to do in the future and how to get there. There may be things that the person needs help with like a problem with their housing or benefits and then they will make a plan for what they can do to resolve this: which may mean seeing one of the support workers at the Centre or doing a referral to another service. The member of staff doesn’t need to have expert knowledge, they just need an enabling, positive approach.

- The staff member is also the person who will ensure that achievements and milestones are celebrated – including completing Volunteer programmes, birthdays, getting work etc. They will send congratulation cards, complete Awards forms (see the section on Awards), present certificates etc.
- The member of staff will also contact the person if we don't see them and check if there are any problems and act on these if needed. Sometimes people will have a bad day and then will feel that they can't come back – often they just need a reassuring phone call to say it's fine to come back, that the person has been missed and is needed on the team.
- One-to-ones are also an opportunity to be able to address any work-related issues in private and in a supportive set-up and can be used to reinforce useful things that the Volunteer is doing and ask or encourage them not to do things which are less useful or problematic.
- The benefits of having a one-to-one system are:
 - The Volunteer gets more from their Volunteering
 - The organisation will retain Volunteers and will get more out of their Volunteers.

Things to consider:

- Are you able to have a one-to-one system? Do you have the staff time and resources to be able to do this? If not could it be an experienced Volunteer who does this with support and training and if so who would provide this?

12. Planning/Evaluation Meetings

"The Volunteer meetings meant we knew what was coming up and about plans in the pipeline and put in our ideas. It was a chance to offload and get any stress off my chest. It was just good to be listened to" Antony

"It makes me buzz when I'm not ignored, people listen and things can change" Andy

What we do: We hold regular meetings to ensure we are working in partnership, that we are preparing people for the day, so that people are involved in planning an event, or a programme of activities, or to review a service, or planning for a strategic meeting, etc. - this list is not exhaustive. It can be useful to agree on some ground rules: let's listen to one another and not talk over anyone, let's stay on point, phones on silent, etc.

Things to consider: Lots of meetings take time and planning and staff input, but they ensure we are all invested and are clear on what the service is trying to achieve, what the people accessing the service want and that we are responding to evidenced need. It's important to provide, clear and prompt feedback and to provide ongoing updates on progress so that people see it is worth taking the time and that their voices are heard.

Remember, not everyone can or will talk in an open meeting. Try to balance the meeting so that everyone who wants to be heard in this forum, can be. Try to assign roles: minute taker, chair, etc. This takes time again and works best when you know your Volunteers well, so may be a longer-term plan. Provide other forums in which people can get their opinions heard (one-to-ones, chatting over a brew, suggestion box, email, etc.) Keep in mind not putting too much on one Volunteer just because they seem very interested and together; involve others and don't ask the same person to all meetings.

13. Socials, Awards and Recognition

“It’s nice to get together as friends and talk together” Antony

“You all gather together and you get to meet Volunteers who do different days to you and you feel part of the bigger picture” Tony

Socials

What we do: We plan monthly socials together, usually doing a bit of research on a few options and then bringing it to the team to choose. We have oversight of a small budget, the spending of which the Volunteers get to plan for the year. We try to mix them up between physically active and fun but less physically demanding events. We promote them in the Centre across the team and we put up posters and notices. We remind people. We arrange transport or travel costs, refreshments, etc.

Things to consider: Making the activities accessible, trying to offer a range of different things, and involving Volunteers throughout; hopefully a Volunteer or two will work together and lead on it. Consider venues: pubs and bars can be challenging for some; some people struggle with crowds; others may struggle to concentrate. It may be useful to agree on some ground rules: let’s remember to look out for each other, stay together, let someone know if you’re leaving, no disagreements, etc.

“It’s a certificate you can keep and show people, the certificate is more important than the £10” Antony M

“It helps with job interviews to have certificates” Andy

“It shows you’re doing something good with your time” Tony

Awards, Recognition & Socials

What we do: We have an awards programme built into our Volunteering programme. This is written in the outline of the Volunteering journey so people know when to expect it and we set it up on our internal recording system so that the staff member responsible gets prompts and notifications. It is really important to check with the individual as to whether they are happy for announcements to be made about their achievements; if they are, then announce it at lunchtime, followed by a round of applause, or similar. The idea is, that the person feels recognised for their time, commitment and contribution and they feel valued. If they don’t like public praise, make sure staff know what award they have been given, then they can personally recognise the achievement of the individual. We offer to laminate the certificates we give to people. This may be for attendance at a certain event, for completing a stage of Volunteering, for completing a training course, etc. Our awards sheets provide feedback on how we’re doing, what we need to improve, etc.

Award Ceremonies

“At the award ceremony everyone came together and cheered each other on + it was a sense of achievement” Antony

“It’s like the Oscars getting a certificate from a celebrity” Tony

Things to consider: Does the person want this to be a one-to-one experience with their staff support person? Does the person not want their full name said out loud in front of others.?

We hope this guidance is helpful and has inspired you to increase coproduction and opportunities for volunteering in your organisation. If you need anything else, please just reach out.

Thank you for coming on the VIP journey with us!