

How will you support volunteers once they are in post?

- Assign a buddy/mentor to help them settle in.
- Use a probationary or trial period.
- Give full training and inductions.
- Have a named support person for volunteers.
- Offer regular performance assessments/supervision.
- Have clear procedures for when things go wrong (problem solving procedures).
- Include a 'code of conduct' within your volunteer handbook and give examples of what you expect of volunteers; appropriate conduct, language, dress-code etc.
- Conduct exit interviews when people leave.

Other considerations for current offenders:

- Tagged people may have curfews/be unable to volunteer in evenings for example.
- You may need to allow time out for checking in with probation for people with recent convictions.

Further reading & references used:

Clinks: www.clinks.org
Volunteering England: www.volunteering.org.uk
Nacro: www.nacro.org.uk
CRB: www.crb.homeoffice.gov.uk
Mentoring & Befriending Foundation: www.mandbf.org.uk
Data Protection: www.ico.gov.uk

This information was used in this guide was taken from the above organisations, for full guidance, please use their full resources.

Contact us

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CLINKS

supporting voluntary organisations that work with offenders and their families



Good practice guides for

volunteer-involving

organisations.

How to...support volunteers with convictions

Involving offenders

Did you think twice about picking up this leaflet? Did you think, "That doesn't apply to our organisation"? Almost 1 in 4 of the working population has a conviction, so the likelihood is that some of your staff and volunteers may have previous convictions too.

Are you entitled to ask about convictions and is it relevant for your role/s? If you are considering using Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks as part of your recruitment process, first check whether you are *entitled* to ask about spent convictions by checking on the **CRB website** (details overleaf) or check with your Volunteer Centre who will be able to advise you.

Data protection/confidentiality:

You will also need to consider how you will keep such information safe, who will have access to it and for how long you can keep that information. The CRB and 'umbrella bodies' have strict guidelines. You may also like to consider general data protection guidelines see overleaf.

Assuming you are entitled to ask, think about how you will ask volunteers about previous convictions, we suggest;

- On application forms and during selection interviews.

Supporting people with convictions to apply:

In your application packs explain why you need to ask about spent convictions and include references to your commitment to equal opportunities and why certain posts are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Also include this within your information packs so as to not discourage people from applying. The majority

of people with offences have the same reasons as non-offenders for looking for volunteer work. They may experience embarrassment or shame in having to disclose convictions and fear rejection. As they are applying to you, you need to sensitively manage their expectations of volunteering and what can/can't be fulfilled.

Foster open discussion. You are not there to judge people personally so be honest/frank about what is/is not appropriate for them to do. Think about having generic examples to hand of what offences may prevent a volunteer with a conviction from volunteering with *your* organisation and *why*. For example; a person with recent convictions for burglary may not be suitable for home-visiting/befriending roles but may be suitable for supervised charity shop work.

Nacro's tips for making decisions on volunteers with convictions...(considering the risk)

- Can the person undertake the task required of them?
- Does the person have the essential skills or experience or an ability to develop them?

Then take into account any convictions.

- Is the conviction **relevant** to the opportunity?
- How **serious** was the offence?
- How long ago was it? How old were they?
- Consider the **circumstances** & explanations given.
- Is the behaviour still a **cause for concern**?
- Is the **context** still a concern?
- Is there a **pattern**?
- Have their circumstances **changed**?

- What is their **attitude** to the offence? Do they show remorse/ accept responsibility?

Further good practice hints and tips -

- Do not rely on gut instinct.
- Ensure recruitment policies and procedures are in place and are followed!
- Talk to the volunteer if there are any concerns or discrepancies on a CRB check.
- Where required seek advice from advisory or regulatory bodies such as NACRO or CRB.
- If in doubt reconsider the risk assessment for the project or role and where practicable adapt the role/involvement to suitable levels.
- If you cannot use the volunteer explain why with honesty and sensitivity. Think about how you will tell them and be prepared to give the reasons.
- Suggest alternative roles or refer back to the Volunteer Centre.

Good practice checklist (for use with ALL of your volunteers)

- Establish clear criteria about what skills/qualities you are looking for in volunteers.
- Prepare clear role descriptions.
- Implement effective application forms that ask relevant questions.
- Outline your selection criteria/processes.
- Use selection interviews.
- Ask for references and/or CRB checks.
- Have practices to ensure the fair and consistent management of all volunteers
- Match people carefully to role/s