

OVERVIEW

Recruitment of volunteers provides a key opportunity to ensure that your organisation's commitment to dignity is embedded right from the start with the people who help design and deliver your work. Volunteers in community food initiatives are often recruited from existing participants, though more formal routes also exist. No matter how you recruit volunteers, this guide offers suggestions of things to think about to ensure that you are setting the tone with prospective volunteers from the beginning.

INVOLVING PARTICIPANTS AS VOLUNTEERS

The Dignity Principles highlight the importance of involving people with lived experience in decision making and providing opportunities to contribute. Establishing ways for participants to become involved as volunteers is a key way of implementing the Dignity Principles in practice.

Creating opportunities for participants to become regular volunteers in community food settings supports a culture of dignity. Here are some simple ways in which this can be done.

Things to remember when recruiting from existing participants:

Welcome everyone

First impressions go a long way to encouraging new participants to develop into regular volunteers. Make the space as welcoming as possible so new people feel comfortable, connected and want to return.

Show your values

Consider exhibiting a poster outlining the Dignity Principles in Practice to show new arrivals that the project is committed to supporting dignity for all.

Communicate with participants

Update people about the project and find out their views about issues that matter.

People like to be included, and this might lead someone to ask about how they could get more involved as a volunteer.

Make time to get to know people

Ask how people are, how their week has been, learn their likes and dislikes, hobbies and interests. As well as showing that you care about them and value their participation, this approach can also lead to finding particular skills people are happy to share.

Look for small steps

People who attend as participants can often contribute / help out / give back in small ways, and that might lead to a big jump in confidence to do more and volunteer more regularly.

Develop confidence through courses and workshops

Cooking courses and other workshops for local people can be an important first step for new volunteers. Many participants in courses and workshops join as volunteers - they have come to enjoy the social aspect and might want to practice and share the new skills they have learned.

Think about a gradual transition

Be aware of 'spooking' people with inductions and procedures that are too formal before they are ready. Find easy and friendly ways to keep volunteers safe and informed. Allow time for people to ease into their role, not setting high expectations too quickly.

Provide support and encouragement

Being available for support and finding suitable training outside your organisation can help develop people's confidence when transitioning from a participant to a volunteer.

Say thank you

Always show that you value and appreciate the time and effort people give.



Volunteer from Govan Community Project

"I used this service before. It helped me a lot, to improve, to maybe get out of what I was going through and it's a time for me to help other people and I feel very valued and I feel happy to do that and to contribute to do that."

Volunteer from Woodlands Community Café

"My journey with Woodlands Community Cafe has transformed my life forever. It has been the steppingstone to a better useful life. The cafe gave me the opportunity to volunteer for them and be part of a transformative community. The positive friendly atmosphere around good food and friendship, the support from staff to get me into training, starting a CV, gaining new skills I never knew I had, or I was capable of. The confidence, encouragement and trust people showed me gave me back my self-esteem/worth I was so looking for. I am now working, getting paid for something that doesn't even feel like work because I love what I do and I am really good at. Being part of Woodlands cafe has given me that confidence and belief and I hope their projects continue to support many other people the way they have supported me and helped me to help myself."

Moray Foodplus

"This project uses the personal touch, actually be involved in something we use ourselves, give us something to do, a bit of pride."

RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS EXTERNALLY, THROUGH MORE FORMAL ROUTES

Formal options for recruiting volunteers include advertising via local volunteer agencies, social media, posters / leaflets / flyers, your own website, etc. Formal recruitment can be useful to identify and source specific skills for a particular role.

Things to remember when recruiting from outside your group

First impression

Recruitment adverts and posters will likely to be the first impression a potential volunteer will have of your organisation, so including the language of dignity and adopting a respectful tone helps new volunteers to understand your organisation's approach and ethos from the outset.

Explaining your commitment to dignity or the Dignity Principles in volunteer role descriptions and adverts might help to attract new volunteers who share the same values. Images or artwork on posters or information materials should also reflect the principles of dignity – these are an important way of signalling to prospective volunteers how their role will contribute to promoting dignity.

First meeting

Meeting new prospective volunteers for the first time should mirror the tone and language of advert. The potential volunteer may feel nervous coming to meet you for the first time - the unknown can be intimidating.

The first meeting can set the tone of what is important in your organisation. Small details such as welcoming people with a warm smile, making them feel comfortable, offering them a cup of tea, showing that you are grateful for their time and providing a relaxed atmosphere can positively show them the way people are treated in the organisation. Acting by example delivers a powerful message.

Be positively curious about the reason they would like to volunteer. Identify any particular goals they would like to achieve by volunteering and concentrate

on skills and specific abilities they may be able to offer as well as any support they may need.

First introduction materials

Some organisations may have a booklet, or information about the organisation/project for volunteers to take away with them or formal volunteers agreement forms. Incorporating the language of dignity in the design of the organisation materials can help present a culture of dignity and allow new volunteers to understand its relevance within the project.