

You could also give them a scenario which they might come up against and ask them to comment, or suggest what they might do in the circumstances.

After the interview

You could then take them on a tour of the building, show them where they'll be working, if you feel they could be right for you.

Decision time - things to consider.... Have they given you the impression that they:

Could do the job? Will be flexible? Would fit into the current team? Appeared keen on the position? Gave the impression that they had good listening skills? Had they done their own research prior to the interview? Might they find the role too challenging or not challenging enough? What did their body language say about them?

If you decide to take them on and they agree, you need to organise the relevant checks and references. As far as references go, you could approach:

Current or previous employer or voluntary organisation, social or support worker, probation officer, tutor, day centre staff, religious leader, personal friend, (excluding family member), chair or committee member of a professional/special interest club the volunteer belongs to such as Rotary or the Lions.

In the case of:

younger volunteers – school, college or Saturday job employer, scouts, guides etc.

older people - hairdresser, chiropodist, lunch club organiser, etc.

Further reading:

The Volunteering England website includes a recruitment process flowchart and interviewing guide. See www.volunteeringengland.org.uk/goodpractice and then click on recruitment.

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This snapshot on Interviewing your Volunteers was kindly written by
Monique Munroe on behalf of Poole & Bournemouth Volunteer Centres.

How to.....interview volunteers

01202 466130

Interview your Volunteers

“So you want to be a volunteer driver? Great. How about starting on Monday about 9? It’s all straight forward. When you get here, take the mini bus key which is by the sink. Go for a spin. Try it out. As long as you’re back by 9.45 ready to pick up the clients. Oh yes, you’d better get a spot of petrol too. I’ll give you the money back as long as you bring me a receipt. Now I think that just about wraps it up. Everything clear um.... sorry, head like a sieve today, what was your name again?”

The scenario above of course is exaggerated. You wouldn’t interview a prospective volunteer like that. So what is the best way to interview? Here’s a run through on the procedure. We’ll assume you’ve made an appointment.

PRIOR TO INTERVIEW

Look at where you will be interviewing the

Volunteer: Could the room be made to look less intimidating? Could you sit in front of the desk, rather than behind? Is it accessible? Will it be warm or cool enough depending on time of year? Is it so small that it could be claustrophobic?

List the questions you want to ask (see suggested questions overleaf)

If you want to bring in another member of staff or volunteer, agree a time and then remind them the day before. If they aren’t able to attend, ask if they have any specific questions they would like you to ask on their behalf.

If you have a receptionist, tell them too.

If you plan to show a short video/DVD, organise for a player to be available

Suggestions to take into interview

Questions

Notebook and pens (you could also have one available for the volunteer in case they want to make notes and have forgotten to bring a notebook)

Volunteer’s application form

Role description

Person specification

Newsletters, publicity material

Promotional video/DVD

Water and other refreshments

Tissues (hopefully they won’t cry or have a sneezing fit but you never know)

If paying for their interview travelling expenses, have some petty cash available if they want to accept it.

AT INTERVIEW

Ensure that you won’t be disturbed. If possible switch any landline phones to silent and turn off your mobile.

If you work in a very busy place, with people popping in and out of rooms all day, you could put a notice on the door ‘Interview in progress’.

Take with you all the necessary paperwork.

After a friendly smile and welcoming handshake, offer refreshments. Then...

Explain to the volunteer why you are having the interview.

Tell them that what they say will be treated in confidence and that the information will only be seen by you, plus the manager (if applicable).

Let them know that, if you are interviewing a lot of people for a position, that you will be making a selection and that they might not be chosen.

Tell them that you are there for them to ask you questions. The volunteer needs to know that your organisation is right for them too.

Give them more information about your organisation and about the role itself. You could also add:

Who your clients are, Training and support that volunteers receive, time commitment, resources available, What you are expecting from volunteers. Mention health and safety, equal opps and general conduct.

Run through the application form they complete and pick out relevant experience that they’ll be able to use in the role.

Tell them when you will be getting back to them with a decision.

Suggested questions (pick and mix):

“Tell me why you have applied for this position?”

“What is it that attracted you to the role?”

“Why do you want to do voluntary work?”

“I’ve told you about the role, so do you think you have any particular skills or interests that you would like to use?”

“What hours are you hoping to volunteer?”

“Would you need any support?” (You can mention reimbursement of care costs, induction loop etc)

“Have you worked with this client group before?”

“The role can be quite stressful/challenging, how do you think you would cope?”

“The role can be quite repetitive, how do you think you would cope?”

“Why are you leaving the charity you currently work for?”

“Do you see yourself as a team player?”

“Do you prefer working alone or with others?”

“Does taking a relevant qualification to assist you with your volunteering appeal to you?”