

# Don't Forget To Say Thanks

A guide to rewarding and  
recognising your volunteers



# Introduction

Your volunteers are worth their weight in gold, sharing their time and skills with little or no compensation.

WCVA encourages all volunteer involving organisations to recognise the contributions that volunteers make to their organisation and to the wider community.

This guide will help you to get it right and includes a range of downloads and ideas designed to help you say thanks effectively and sincerely.

# Why?

Recognising and rewarding your volunteers is one of the cornerstones of volunteer management good practice.

When your volunteers feel appreciated they are more likely to feel a connection with your organisation and continue to donate their time and skills. Retaining your volunteers will enable your volunteer programme to flourish and develop, ensuring that it continually meets the changing needs and demands of your organisation.



- Increases retention.
- Volunteers feel valued.
- Volunteers feel supported.
- Volunteers feel a part of your organisation.
- Can meet the needs of your organisation.

# Get it Right

There are many different ways to recognise and reward volunteers but it is important that your plans match the resources available to you such as time, capacity and budget. If resources are limited get creative!

Whatever your plans make sure they complement the mission of your organisation. Is it in keeping with your core values and reason for being?

One size does not fit all. Not all volunteers want grand gestures or public thanks so it is essential that you get to know your volunteers and their motivation for volunteering.



- Be aware of your resources.
- Is it appropriate?
- Know your volunteers.
- Be creative.

# The Basics

If you are continually demonstrating good practice in volunteer management you will naturally be rewarding and recognising your volunteers' involvement. Anything in addition to this will be a bonus and enhance the experience of your volunteers.

Simple actions such as a warm welcome, being prepared for a volunteers arrival by having tasks ready, keeping them informed, reimbursement of out of pocket expenses, and demonstrating trust are all simple yet effective ways of letting your volunteers feel respected and valued.



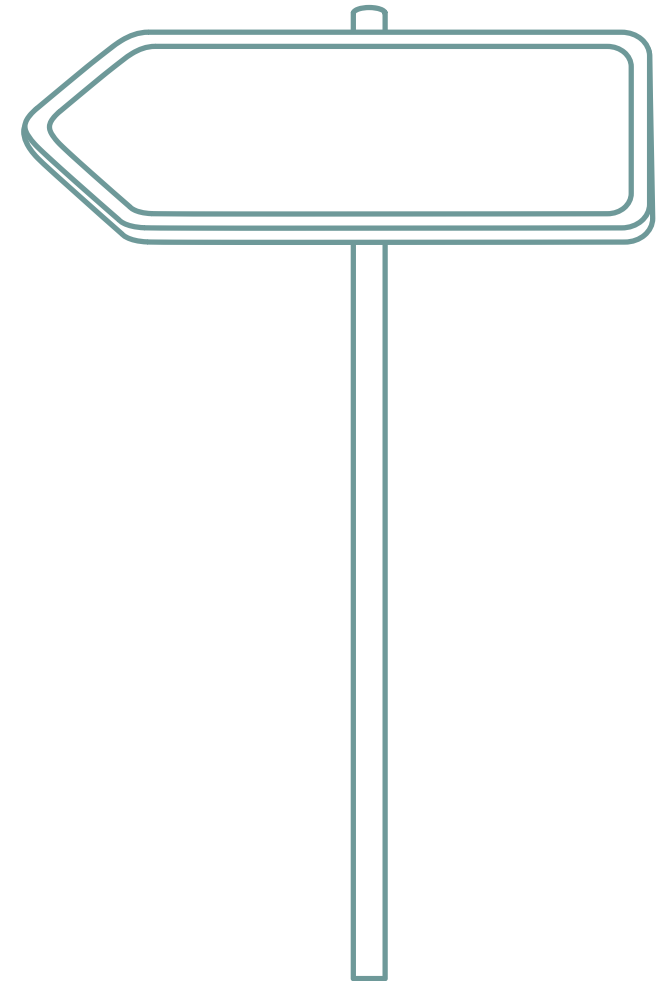
- Good practice.
- Always offer a warm welcome.
- Be prepared.
- Communication is key.
- Do you cover expenses?
- Develop trust.

# Go the Extra Mile

Once you've mastered the basics through your good practice in volunteer management it's a great time to consider what else can you offer your volunteers?

The next few pages highlight a wide range of innovative, practical and creative examples of what you and your organisation can do to demonstrate your commitment to rewarding your volunteers.

Always remember the resources you have to hand to ensure that your offer is meaningful and authentic.



# Thank you

Two simple words that can make all the difference. A simple thanks should be offered every time an individual volunteers. However there are numerous ways in which to say thanks.

Always remember the resources you have to hand and your volunteers' wishes as this will help you decide what is possible and appropriate.

These bullet points offer you a few ideas to get started, click on the bullet points to download sample letters, press releases and cards for you to add a personal message.



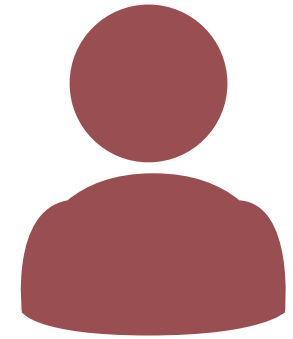
- [Thank you letter](#)
- [Birthday cards](#)
- A thank you section on your website
- Make the most of social media
- [Press release](#)
- Thank you video
- Thanks from Chief Exec & trustees

# Create an Identity

This is a great way of letting volunteers know the organisation appreciates their involvement and that they are valued members of the team.

This can be achieved by issuing an official name badge or if resources allow the offer of branded clothing. Creating a volunteer identity helps your service users, members and public to appreciate the important role volunteers play in your organisation and develops respect.

Ensure that role descriptions are appropriate and regularly reviewed



- Team members.
- Identifiable to others.
- Promotes respect.
- Affordable.
- Review your role descriptions.



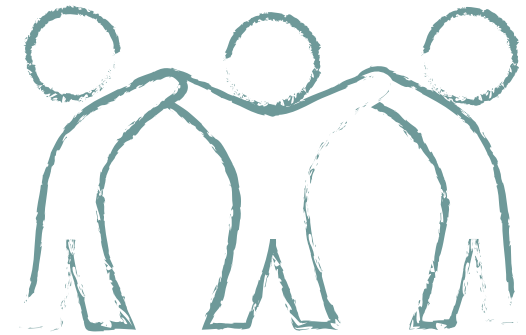
# Involve

Involving volunteers in meetings and away days is a great way of making them feel part of the team and helps break down any barriers between paid staff and volunteers.

A more effective volunteering strategy can be developed when there has been input from your volunteers.

Is your volunteer team large? Have you considered volunteer representation at board level?

Develop some of your volunteer's leadership skills by enabling them to induct a cohort of new volunteers.



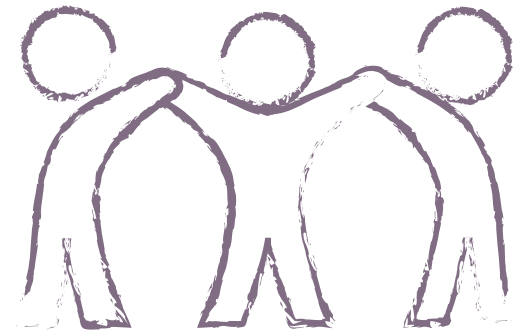
- Attend team meetings
- Away days
- Volunteering Strategy
- Board representation
- Develop leadership skills

# Support

Another basic, yet highly effective, element of good practice in volunteer management is regular support and supervision.

This benefits both your volunteers and organisation. Taking the time to get to know your volunteers develops mutual trust and respect, provides an opportunity to ensure they are happy, feel valued and remain motivated to their role and your cause.

Be creative; develop peer to peer support, offer individual and group supervision, embrace technology by using WhatsApp, Yammer or Slack.



- Regular support and supervision
- Peer to Peer.
- Embrace technology (click below icons).
- Keep in touch.



# Training

Offering training to your volunteers benefits both the individual and the organisation. Volunteers feel valued, supported and recognised whilst your organisation benefits from skilled, engaged and effective individuals to enhance your offer.

Training may be essential for some volunteers roles however ongoing training demonstrates your commitment and thanks to the individual.

Depending on your resources training could be in-house, external and in some situations accredited. All are excellent for career development and CV building.

- Benefits volunteers & your organisation.
- About volunteer training.
- Develop in-house training.
- Research free online training.
- Work with local training providers.
- Be aware of costs.

# Celebrate

The above sections all highlight the importance of getting your volunteer programme right throughout the year to ensure that your volunteers feel valued and are recognised for their contribution.

If you have additional resources and time you may want to look at celebrating your volunteers achievements. This could be achieved through a small scale event right through to an awards ceremony. Just consider what is best for you and your volunteers?

The following section focuses on celebrations and awards.



# Award

Awards schemes are a great way of gaining wider recognition for both your organisation and volunteers. The benefits to your organisation include; increased awareness, fundraising and supporting volunteer recruitment.

Do your research! There are a range of awards schemes that you can apply to for both individuals and as an organisation.

[Follow this link to see in more detail what is available.](#)

Before forging ahead ask yourself the questions listed right.



- Wider recognition.
- Benefits the whole organisation.
- Range of awards.
- Do your research.
- Do you have the time?
- Are there any costs?
- How to choose?

# Volunteers' Week

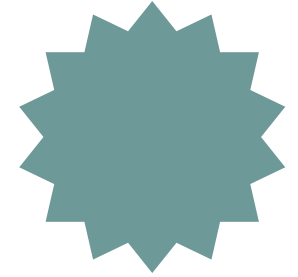
Volunteers' Week is national campaign led by NCVO held on 1-7 June every year, it provides the platform to celebrate volunteering in all its diversity.

A national campaign is a great way in which to get publicity so be prepared with press releases, sections on your website and posts on social media

Their website offers a range of free resources and ideas to help support your organisation to host its own event.



- Widely recognised national campaign.
- Free online resources.
- Can be used as a foundation for your own celebration.
- Have your publicity in place before the date.



## In House Awards

You may want to consider developing your own awards scheme. This will be led by the resources available to you and should be tied into your volunteering strategy to ensure that you are planning and capturing necessary information as to which of your volunteers are nominated and awarded.

Award schemes can be as simple or as elaborate as you choose just remember what resources you have to hand whilst planning. You could offer awards associated with the hours volunteered or break them down into categories. Here are a few ideas.

- 20, 50 or 100 Hour Award.
- Volunteer of the Year Awards could include:
  - Young Volunteer
  - Older Volunteer
  - Service User Volunteer
  - Trustee of the Year
  - Long Service
  - Inspirational
  - Certificate template

# Time Credits

The Time Credit model is simple: volunteers earn Time Credits for the time they have contributed to your organisation. Volunteers can spend their credits in various locations.

Time Credits can help you to recruit new volunteers, to retain existing volunteers and to ensure that the community is engaged in both the delivery and access of your services and activities.

To develop your own Time Credit programme and see the additional value it can bring contact Tempo directly.



- National Initiative.
- Volunteers earn their rewards.
- Supports volunteer recruitment & retention.
- Tempo reports an increased sense of community & well-being in recipients.

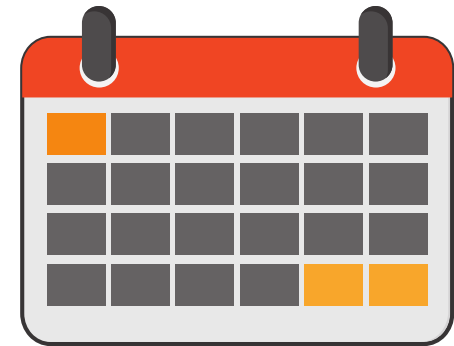


# National Days

National initiatives, awareness and celebration days are a great way to tie in your volunteer celebrations. You can hook into existing social media hashtags, press coverage and resources too.

There are generic national days which offer a blank canvas such as National Thank You Day, Giving Tuesday, International Volunteer Day. More specific days include Trustees Week, International Youth Day, Older Persons Day.

[Check out the Awareness Days website for more inspiration](#)



- Widely recognised.
- Existing social media presence.
- A hook for your celebration.

# Special Events

Hosting your own social event is a great way of thanking all of your volunteers at the same time. Such activities may include; a meal, fun days, afternoon tea, BBQs...the list is endless.

Planning is essential to ensure you have the time and resources. You may want to consider involving your volunteers in the planning process too.

Funding events should be included in the budget of your volunteering programme. If there is no budget be creative! You could have a picnic in the park, arrange a bring and share meal, plan a fundraising activity to pay for your special event.



- Host a social event.
- Be SMART with your planning.
- Be aware of your budget.
- Engage volunteers in the planning.
- Get creative.

# Special Events

If you do plan on hosting an event you may want to consider contacting your local newspaper, invite a dignitary such as the Mayor or MP. You could also invite your funders to shine a spotlight on both your valued volunteers and the excellent work of your organisation.

Press coverage and photo opportunities are valuable marketing tools for your organisation as a whole, to encourage donations or to recruit more volunteers. A cautionary note - always check first if your volunteers are happy to be included in any media coverage.



- Special guests?
- Invite your funders.
- Ideal press opportunity.
- Use as a marketing tool for donations, volunteers.
- Seek permission.

# Additional Help?

We know that the role of volunteer manager can be overwhelming so to make this aspect of your job a little easier why not tap into the help that is available externally.

CWVA are always on hand to help you in all aspect of your role so please get in touch.

The bullet points to the right will lead you to additional resources where you can gain support in ensuring that you are effectively rewarding and recognising your volunteers.



- Contact CWVA.
- NCVO.
- Running an Event.
- Association of Volunteer Managers.
- Resource Centre.

produced by



supported by

