

# Volunteering Guidance

Human Resources Toolkit

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# Introduction

Welcome to the Blackburn Diocese Human Resources Toolkit. This guidance should be used in conjunction with the downloadable templates which you can request for free from the diocesan HR team.

This section covers **volunteering**. Volunteers bring many benefits to the running of parishes and we have an obligation to take care of them. This guidance will cover the recruitment, induction and management of volunteers.

*If you need further assistance with the management of volunteers, please contact the diocesan HR team.*

# Key Information

Volunteers are unpaid individuals that may perform a variety of roles that support the running of the Church. For example, helping with general administration, finances, youth work and music.

Volunteers are **not** the same as employees and therefore the terminology around the recruitment process and documentation are slightly different and less structured. However, Church of England Safeguarding and Safer Recruitment principles **must** still be followed.

Volunteers are not subject to all the same policies and procedures as employees. For example, we do not use the disciplinary and grievance process with volunteers if certain issues arise.

PCC's are liable for their volunteers. This means you are responsible for ensuring you have the correct insurance in place (public liability, employers liability, personal accident) as well as having a Health & Safety policy that makes reference to volunteers.

*A Volunteering Policy template is available for you to download, to gain access please contact the Diocesan HR team.*

# Recruitment of Volunteers

**Role description:** it can be beneficial for a parish to create a role description to determine exactly where and what voluntary work is needed. This can also help potential volunteers decide if the role would be suitable and manageable for them. The duties will then form part of the volunteer agreement.

**Advertising:** often, volunteers are already connected to the parish in some way. Therefore, it is recommended that the role is advertised locally. Making use of notice boards and ensuring to announce the role in the Church. Posting the voluntary role on your website may also gain some attraction.

**Application:** it is important that there is an application process to ensure that you select an appropriate person and to maintain the highest standards of safeguarding. Volunteers should be asked to complete an application form and provide the contact details of two references. It is important to be clear that if the applicant is going to be working with children/young people and/or vulnerable adults then a DBS check will also be required before the volunteer begins their role.

*A Volunteering Application Form template is available for you to download, to gain access please contact the Diocesan HR team.*



# Recruitment of Volunteers

**Selection:** When selecting a volunteer, it is important to determine their suitability. This does not need to be in the same form as an employee interview.

However, a conversation with at least two people present and the potential volunteer must be had to find out:

- why they have applied to undertake the voluntary work
- any past voluntary experience and why their skillset is suitable
- their understanding of safeguarding
- their availability and training needs

## **Pre-appointment checks:**

**References** - two suitable references must be sought. One must be from outside the church body. One must comment on the ability to undertake the duties and if the applicant is currently working with children/vulnerable adults then that organisation must be one of the references. If the applicant has come to the Church body from another Church body within the past two years, a reference must be sought from that previous Church body.

**DBS** - where the applicant is going to be working with children/young people and/or vulnerable adults then a DBS check will also be required before the volunteer begins their role. If you are unsure whether a DBS check is needed you should liaise with your Safeguarding Officer or seek advice from the Diocesan safeguarding team.

# Volunteering Agreement

Before the volunteer starts they should enter a volunteering agreement with the PCC. This agreement will identify:

- the volunteer's role
- the training that the volunteer is expected to undertake
- the expenses that the PCC will pay to the volunteer
- the insurance cover that will be provided for the volunteer
- who will supervise the volunteer
- the notice that will be given to a volunteer if his/her role is to come to an end

Volunteer agreements are **not** legally binding and a volunteer may stop performing duties at any time.

## Induction

A volunteer should be provided with an induction to support them in their role. This will likely include an introduction to the team and a tour of the building, an overview of the main aims of the church, an explanation of how things work e.g equipment, where to find key documents e.g policies and the accident report book and finally the expectations of the voluntary role and any necessary training.

*A Volunteering Agreement template is available for you to download, to gain access please contact the Diocesan HR team.*

# Support and Supervision

Whilst volunteers are not subject to the same performance appraisals and probationary review meetings as employees, it is still important to meet with them to offer support and feedback. It is recommended that the supervisor meets with the volunteer regularly to check in with how things are going.

If you have a number of volunteers, it may be a good idea to occasionally meet with them altogether to encourage them in supporting each other too.

Make sure to regularly show appreciation and thank your volunteers for the work that they do.

If you find yourself to be having problems with a volunteer, it is important to be aware that the employee disciplinary, grievance and capability policies cannot be used with volunteers. Where possible, problems are best dealt with informally but if this is not possible, then a formal complaints process should be followed. If a complaint is made about a volunteer then the supervisor will decide if any action will be taken.



# Managing Volunteer/Employee Relations

Striking the right balance between volunteers and employees can be a difficult task to manage. In many cases, volunteers undertake the majority of work within a Church to support the incumbent. For example, assisting with general administration, production of service sheets, performing treasurer duties, youth work or playing the organ.

Sometimes, relying solely on volunteers for support can be challenging, especially if there are not many available. Therefore, if a Church has enough funds, the next step could be to employ somebody. When it is established that the PCC and incumbent would like to employ somebody, care should be taken when creating a role description for a future employee, especially if there could be an overlap with an already established volunteer. An assessment of future implications is important here.

For example, if you would like to hire a part-time employee to undertake administrative duties, it is recommended that if you already have volunteers to establish what it is that they currently do, if they are in a position to continue their duties and how they see themselves supporting a new employee. This approach can help foster a positive relationship between a volunteer and an employee. Likewise, be mindful that depending on the role of the employee, it may be difficult to fill a gap with a volunteer again should you be in a position where the employee leaves.

*For extra support with managing volunteer/employee relations, please contact the Diocesan HR team.  
For specific guidance on recruiting an employee, please see: [Recruitment Guidance](#)*

## Additional Links:

**Church of England; Managing volunteers:** <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/community-action/managing-volunteers>

**Church of England; Safer Recruitment:** <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-e-manual/safer-recruitment-and-people-management-guidance/section-8-pre-appointment-checks>

**HSE Volunteering How to manage the risks:** <https://www.hse.gov.uk/voluntary/index.htm>

**Managing volunteers: Health and Safety:** <https://www.ecclesiastical.com/risk-management/volunteer-guidance/>