

NORTH OF TYNE VOLUNTEERING AREA OF EXCELLENCE

SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING GUIDE

Supported volunteering is designed to help people facing barriers and challenges in their life to get into volunteering with the support of a Buddy or Mentor. Buddies or Mentors are volunteers who volunteer to give their time in this supporting role. Its purpose is to support potential volunteers to access and sustain a volunteer placement, enjoy the benefits of volunteering activities and get the most out of their volunteering opportunity. At the heart of Supported Volunteering is 1:1 partnering, involving a Buddy working together with the volunteer, to assist them in achieving a valuable, fulfilling and enjoyable volunteering experience. Supported volunteering can apply to anyone who faces challenges in their life, dependent on the criteria of the Supported Volunteering project, and wishes to volunteer in their local community.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE HEALTH CHECK FOR VOLUNTEER-INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS

The Health Check for Volunteer-Involving Organisations considers the support your organisation has in place for volunteers.

WHAT IS SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING?

Supported Volunteering is a bespoke form of volunteering for adults, providing the 1:1 support of a partner (known as a Buddy or Mentor), with the aim of making volunteering accessible for everyone. It supports people who want to volunteer in their local community but who might need extra support to enable them to do so. It helps people to access and sustain a volunteering placement and enjoy the benefits.

People with barriers to overcome may include:

- People on low incomes
- People with mental health conditions
- People with additional support needs
- People with long term medical conditions
- Carers
- People affected by abuse
- Lesbian, Gay Bisexual, Transgender people or people with Intersex backgrounds
- Young people at risk of offending
- People affected by homelessness
- People from minority ethnic backgrounds
- People with other disadvantages not listed here

Benefits to the individual:

- A sense of greater wellbeing
- Improved physical and emotional health
- Making new friends and building positive relationships
- Reducing social isolation and increasing social interaction



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- An inclusive volunteering environment, enabling people to gain confidence leading to positive changes in their lives
- Adding routine and structure to the day
- Increasing self-confidence, self-worth and self-esteem
- Gaining, improving and highlighting skill sets
- Opportunity to attend training and gain qualifications
- One to one mentoring
- Support to move on to other volunteering opportunities
- Improving motivation
- Personal development
- Having fun and doing something different
- Increasing experience, job and career prospects
- Improving CV, application form and interview skills
- Addressing anxieties about travelling to new places
- A sense of belonging, teamwork and pride

Supported Volunteering projects may have differing criteria and should be clear at the point of enquiry who is eligible to access their project. The organisation will be able to provide details of how to access the project as a Volunteer or a Buddy/Mentor.

It is good practice for the Supported Volunteering Project to follow these approaches:

- ensure individuals are supported throughout the whole process and that they are comfortable at every stage
- ensure continuous, supportive two-way communication between all parties
- be clear about the role of the volunteer and the Buddy from the outset
- manage the ongoing expectations of the volunteer and the Buddy
- identify, recognise and acknowledge the different abilities of the volunteer
- respect the volunteer's needs
- give careful consideration to initial matching with a suitable Buddy, as the volunteer will be working together with the Buddy during every session
- support the volunteer/Buddy relationship as it develops
- ensure the buddy has completed an Enhanced DBS check, with the cost covered by the project, before commencing work with their volunteer partner



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- provide bespoke training and all information needed for the Buddy before pairing with their volunteer partner
- talk to the volunteer to find out what they'd like to do and what support they need
- provide any training needed to prepare the volunteer for their role
- provide all of the information the volunteer might need and be available to help them choose a placement with a volunteer-involving organisation
- offer support to visit potential volunteering opportunities
- assist the volunteer to complete any forms and administrative requirements relating to the volunteering opportunity
- ensure support is available to familiarise the volunteer with travelling to the volunteering opportunity
- offer support to the volunteer-involving organisation to enable them to know the best way to work with the volunteer
- keep in touch with all parties to ensure everything is going well and address any issues without delay
- involve the volunteer in decisions relating to their volunteer placement
- work together with the volunteer until such time they feel ready, able and confident to volunteer independently

Benefits to the volunteer-involving organisation:

- Supported volunteers provide valuable insight and knowledge that can enhance the quality of the organisation's services and reputation
- They are an additional resource for the organisation
- They provide another communication channel between the organisation and its beneficiaries
- Supported volunteering promotes equality and positive working relationships within an organisation
- Roles developed for the supported volunteer are meaningful and add value to the organisation
- Supported volunteers add capacity to the organisation

If you would like to discuss the content of this guide please contact the volunteer centre or Council for Voluntary Service supporting your area who will be able to advise you on supported volunteering.

