

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

LSE VOLUNTEER
CENTRE



Contact:
volunteer@lse.ac.uk



THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

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FOREWORD

The information provided in this guide seeks to support charities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) across the UK in recruiting, managing, and retaining volunteers effectively. Drawing on the LSE Volunteer Centre's experience of working with a diverse range of charities and NGOs, as well as supporting students throughout their volunteering journeys, we have developed this guide to support our voluntary sector partners in creating high-quality, inclusive, and meaningful volunteering opportunities that benefit both volunteers and the communities they serve. We recognise, however, that every organisation, volunteer programme, and community is unique. As such, this guide is not intended to provide a one-size-fits-all approach, but rather to serve as a practical resource that organisations can adapt to their own context. We hope it offers useful guidance, prompts reflection, and supports organisations in strengthening their volunteer practices.

INTENDED OUTCOMES

This Best Practice Guide aims to:

- Improve the quality, safety, and inclusivity of volunteering opportunities across UK charities.
- Increase organisational confidence in recruiting and managing volunteers.
- Reduce confusion between volunteering, unpaid employment, and paid employment.
- Support compliance with safeguarding, data protection, and employment-related requirements.
- Enable charities to get the most value out of working with volunteers.
- Enhance volunteer satisfaction, development, and retention.

In the longer term, this guide aims to contribute to a more equitable, accessible, and sustainable volunteering culture across the UK, strengthening both organisations and the communities they serve, as well as improving volunteers' experiences.



WHAT IS VOLUNTEERING?

We define volunteering as any activity where individuals freely contribute their time, skills, and knowledge to benefit others, their communities, or the wider environment, without receiving financial compensation or academic credit. It involves a deliberate commitment to supporting communities, causes, or organisations beyond one's immediate personal relationships.

Volunteering can take many forms. It may be structured through charities, public bodies, or social enterprises, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. It may also emerge more organically through grassroots initiatives, collective community action, or self-directed forms of civic engagement, such as campaigning, mutual aid, community organising, peer support, or leading student societies and community initiatives. Regardless of context, volunteering should complement, not replace, paid employment.



WHY WORK WITH VOLUNTEERS?

Involving volunteers brings substantial value to an organisation, often strengthening both its capacity and overall impact. Volunteers contribute a wide range of skills, knowledge, and experiences that support existing processes and resources, helping to achieve organisational goals more effectively. Volunteers can also broaden an organisation's reach, as they are often embedded within local networks and can help organisations connect with a wider range of communities and service users.

Beyond practical support, volunteers offer fresh perspectives and ideas that can help organisations remain responsive, relevant, and innovative, ensuring that programmes and services continue to meet the evolving needs of communities and service users.

“We see volunteering as a mutually beneficial experience. Having volunteers in the office is always a joy for the whole team. They bring fresh energy, new perspectives, and different ways of thinking that continually enrich our work.”

**– WONDER
Foundation**

WHAT ACTIVITIES CAN VOLUNTEERS DO?

Volunteers can contribute to an organisation in many diverse ways, depending on their skills and interests, as well as the needs of the organisation. They may:

- Support administrative tasks, such as organising documents, managing communications, or assisting with event coordination.
- Play an active role in community engagement by helping to facilitate workshops, outreach activities, or awareness-raising initiatives.
- Support fundraising initiatives by helping organise fundraising campaigns, participating in street collections, or engaging with local communities.
- Provide direct support to beneficiaries; for example, by mentoring young people, assisting with educational activities, or offering emotional support and a listening ear.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS FOR VOLUNTEERS?

“A positive volunteering experience allows volunteers to feel like they have made a tangible impact, where they are appreciated and acknowledged for their contributions, and meaningfully included in the team's wider discussions and activities”

– Esha Toshniwal, BSc in International Relations and History, 2028

Volunteering offers a variety of benefits for individuals. Volunteering can:

- Foster personal growth by giving volunteers a sense of purpose, helping them to explore their passions, and allowing them to get involved in a cause that matters to them.²
- Provide opportunities to develop skills such as leadership, problem-solving, and communication, enhancing both personal and professional capabilities.
- Create opportunities to engage with local communities, collaborate with like-minded people, and build meaningful connections.
- Give individuals the opportunity to apply what they have learnt in the classroom to real-life scenarios.
- Contribute to holistic well-being by improving mental health and enriching overall life satisfaction.³

WRITING A VOLUNTEER POLICY

A volunteer policy outlines your organisation's approach to volunteering and clearly explains the role volunteers will play, what volunteers should expect, as well as where volunteers can turn if things go wrong. This policy should be shared, in writing or another more accessible format, with your organisation's staff, trustees, and volunteers.⁴

Your volunteer policy should include:

- The process for recruiting and onboarding volunteers.
- How your organisation will promote fair treatment and equity.
- How your organisation will adapt to ensure that volunteering opportunities are inclusive.
- The procedures for reimbursing volunteers for agreed expenses.
- The systems in place for volunteer supervision, guidance, and ongoing support.
- Health, safety, and well-being responsibilities relating to volunteer roles.
- Expectations around confidentiality, safeguarding, and data protection.
- Clear procedures for raising concerns, resolving issues, and handling complaints.

A clear and well-developed volunteer policy helps create a positive, consistent, and supportive volunteering experience. The policy should be reviewed regularly and updated where necessary to reflect changes in legislation, organisational practice, and the needs of volunteers.

“Our biggest lesson has been to treat volunteers as valued members of the team. Good volunteering does not happen by chance. It requires planning, support, and mutual respect.”

– WONDER Foundation



WHY EDI MATTERS IN VOLUNTEERING

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination due to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, ethnicity, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.⁵ While volunteers do not have the same legal protections under the Equality Act as employees, discrimination should still not occur, except in specific circumstances where differential treatment is necessary for legitimate purposes, such as safeguarding or the provision of women-only services.

Promoting Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) not only ensures that volunteers feel safe, respected, and valued, but it also creates a diverse volunteer group that brings significant benefits to both the organisation and the communities it serves.⁶ These benefits include:

- Bringing together people with different skills, experiences, and perspectives to spark innovative thinking and fresh ideas.
- Giving everyone equal opportunities to develop their personal and professional skills.
- Fostering collaboration among people from different backgrounds and, in turn, strengthening communities and promoting mutual understanding.
- Making organisations more representative of the communities they work with, allowing programmes to better reflect the views and experiences of the people they serve.

INCLUSIVE VOLUNTEERING AND REMOVING BARRIERS

Many potential volunteers, particularly those who require additional support, can be excluded from participating in volunteering due to a range of barriers. These include:

- Lack of awareness about what volunteering is and what positions are available.
- Fear of not being welcomed due to anticipated prejudice or low confidence.
- Time commitments, especially in relation to fluctuating health conditions, work commitments, care commitments, and childcare.
- The perception of volunteering as an activity for certain groups of people only.
- Misconceptions about volunteering, welfare benefits, or immigration status.
- Deterred by a long or inaccessible recruitment process; such as application forms, references, or Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) checks.
- Lack of understanding or concern around reimbursement of expenses.
- Volunteer roles advertised exclusively online, excluding individuals with limited digital skills or online access.⁷

By removing the barriers mentioned above, your organisation will be able to work towards creating a more inclusive volunteer programme, making volunteering opportunities accessible to a broader range of people. **Potential approaches to addressing these barriers are discussed throughout this document.**

EXPENSES

Although volunteering is without financial reward, it should not leave volunteers out-of-pocket as this can create barriers to participation. For this reason, it is considered good practice for organisations to reimburse volunteers for any reasonable expenses they incur when carrying out their role.

While reimbursing volunteer expenses should be relatively straightforward, there are several legal considerations to be aware of, including ensuring that volunteers are not inadvertently granted employment rights. Organisations should therefore reimburse only genuine out-of-pocket expenses. Flat-rate payments, or any amount exceeding actual expenses, may be regarded as income for tax or benefits purposes and could potentially alter the legal status of volunteers, reclassifying them as employees.

“**Inclusive volunteering means creating opportunities that are accessible, flexible, and centred on people's strengths. Inclusive volunteering has strengthened our services by bringing diverse perspectives, while giving volunteers opportunities to build confidence, develop new skills, and form meaningful connections.**”

— RAID
(Richmond Aid)

VOLUNTEER DRIVERS

It is good practice for drivers' expenses to be reimbursed. To avoid confusion with commercial use of the vehicle, it should be made clear that volunteers will only receive out-of-pocket expenses. Drivers using their own vehicles should inform their insurers of their voluntary activities. Volunteer drivers should not accept an increase in premium and may wish to change insurer if their current one insists on an extra charge.

Organisations should check that volunteers have informed their insurers of their volunteer driving. A simple way to do this would be to provide a standard letter for volunteers with a return slip for the insurance company to complete. Contingent motor liability insurance may be available to cover organisations if an accident occurs and there is a problem with the volunteer's insurance.

LEGAL COMPLIANCE, INSURANCE, AND LIABILITY

Regardless of an organisation's legal structure, it is important that volunteers are properly insured. This involves ensuring that existing policies explicitly cover volunteers. Two of the most important types of insurance are employers' liability and public liability. While the law does not require organisations to include volunteers under employers' liability insurance, it is strongly recommended as failing to do so could leave the organisation exposed to negligence claims from volunteers.

RISK

Organisations have a legal duty to carry out risk assessments, and failing to consider potential hazards for volunteers undermines the organisation's duty of care. It is advisable to have an overall risk assessment for the volunteer programme, complemented by separate, more focused risk assessments for individual volunteer roles.

DBS CHECKS

The DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) helps organisations make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups, including children. If you are unsure about whether a volunteer should have a DBS check for an opportunity you should refer to [guidance from the government](#).

DBS checks can be issued for international students; however, only the period during which the student has lived in the UK will be checked. It is recommended that a student who has lived outside the UK for a continuous period of six months or more within the past five years should obtain a 'Certificate of Good Conduct' from their embassy. Please refer to [government advice](#) for further information on this.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places a duty on employers to take reasonable steps to protect the health and safety of non-employees who may be affected by their activities. This includes providing relevant information about any aspects of their activities that could affect health or safety.⁸ Organisations without employers/employees should similarly take reasonable steps to protect the health and safety of volunteers and others who may be affected by their activities.

It is, therefore, advisable for your organisation to:

- Carry out risk assessments.
- Include volunteers in your Health and Safety policy.
- Provide a volunteer handbook and an induction process to ensure that volunteers are aware of the Health and Safety policy.

SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding is about fostering a space where everyone—volunteers, staff, participants, and donors—is safe. It requires organisations to take proactive steps to prevent harm, abuse, bullying, harassment, or neglect. It also involves having clear procedures in place to respond appropriately if concerns arise. Safeguarding is not the responsibility of a single person; it is a collective commitment that should be integrated into everyday activities and decision-making.

Organisations have a legal and ethical obligation to protect all those involved and ensure their wellbeing is a priority. As such, safeguarding should be considered at every stage of the volunteering process. You should:

- Develop and implement policies that protect volunteers and others.
- Apply appropriate safeguarding measures during volunteer recruitment and induction.
- Integrate safeguarding into ongoing volunteer support, such as supervision and mentoring.
- Consider safeguarding responsibilities when a volunteer leaves the organisation.

WORKING WITH VULNERABLE CLIENTS



Organisations that work with vulnerable clients have an enhanced duty of care and should implement a child protection policy or a vulnerable adult protection policy. Typical safeguarding measures include:

- Obtaining adequate references for all volunteers.
- Providing thorough training and induction sessions.
- Ensuring volunteers receive adequate supervision.
- Establishing clear and accessible channels for volunteers and others to raise concerns.

DATA PROTECTION AND COPYRIGHT

If information kept on volunteers qualifies as 'personal data' under the [Data Protection Act 2018](#), the organisation has legal duties concerning the collection, storage, use of, and disclosure of such information.

Under the law, personal data must be:

- Fairly and lawfully processed.
- Obtained only for specified and lawful purposes.
- Adequate, relevant, and not excessive for the purposes for which it is processed.
- Accurate and up to date.
- Not kept longer than necessary.
- Processed in accordance with the rights of individuals.
- Kept secure.
- Not transferred to countries where data protection legislation is inadequate.

No clear guidelines exist for the retention of volunteer records. However, organisations should adhere to data protection principles, ensuring that data is not kept longer than necessary for the purpose for which it was collected.

Copyright generally belongs to the person who created the work. While the law specifies that material produced by employees belongs to their employer, it does not explicitly address work created by volunteers. Therefore, organisations should ask volunteers to transfer copyright to them or agree a licence whereby the organisation can use the work within agreed limits.

For more information on data protection and copyright, please see [here](#).

HOW TO WRITE AN EFFECTIVE ROLE DESCRIPTION

A [role description](#) outlines what a volunteering opportunity involves, what skills volunteers need, and what the volunteer will get out of it. A role description should include:

- The title of the role.
- Who the volunteer is responsible to.
- The location and hours.
- A brief description of your organisation.
- How the role fits in with your organisation's work.
- The aims and expectations of the role.
- The volunteer's tasks and responsibilities.
- Essential and desirable skills and qualifications, including if the volunteer requires specific training or a DBS check.
- The benefits of volunteering with your organisation; for example, opportunities for training, personal and professional development, or meeting new people.
- Expectations of behaviour and dress (if appropriate).
- Whether the volunteer must adhere to certain policies or procedures; for example, Health and Safety or Equity, Diversity and Inclusion policies.
- How you will pay volunteer expenses and what these will cover.⁹

“
Inclusive and flexible volunteering unlocks power and potential no salary could buy.
 ”
 – Spring ACT

Note: It is important to ensure that a role description is different from a job description. Make sure you avoid wording that implies a volunteer is contractually required to complete specific duties. If the role appears too much like paid employment, you could unintentionally create entitlement to employment rights and find your organisation in breach of employment law.



You can create more inclusive volunteering roles by:

- Ensuring that roles are as flexible as possible; for example, by discussing what works with potential volunteers, allowing potential volunteers to choose their own hours, or spreading a role across two shorter days rather than one full day to make it easier for individuals with other commitments.
- Clearly highlighting that volunteers from different backgrounds are welcome to apply.
- Opening the volunteering role to service users or individuals with lived experience (if appropriate).
- Reviewing the role requirements to determine whether DBS checks are genuinely necessary and removing them from the requirements where they are not.
- Making sure that the premises and location are accessible.
- Reimbursing expenses to volunteers.

ADVERTISING & OUTREACH

When advertising the role, it is important to keep your opportunity description concise, clear, and exciting to keep the reader's attention. When writing the [role advertisement](#), try to answer the following questions:

- What does the role involve?
- Who will the volunteer be working with?
- What skills do they need?
- What skills will they develop?
- What benefit will the volunteer bring to the organisation and the beneficiaries?
- When and where will the opportunity be taking place?

“The best volunteering experiences come from having a well-structured event outline and clear purpose.”

– Kim Usman, BSc in Management, 2026

Do	Don't
Keep the advertisement short, snappy, and friendly	Use generic titles like 'Admin Assistant' or 'General Helper'
Include the important information clearly at the beginning	Outline an opportunity in a boring way (make sure it is exciting and inspiring!)
Avoid jargon and acronyms	Be vague about the volunteer's role or responsibilities

You can advertise your role:

- On your own website.
- Through external websites, such as CharityJob, Reach Volunteering, and Do-it.
- Through volunteer centres and councils for voluntary services
- Leaflets, press, and radio adverts.
- Social media platforms, such as LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter.
- University student unions.
- Community and faith centres
- Local cafes and park notice boards.¹⁰

You can advertise in a more inclusive way by:

- Ensuring that clear language is used rather than overly technical language in all communications.
- Making sure that your marketing materials, such as your website and leaflets, use images that represent a variety of demographics to reflect the diversity of communities.
- Checking that all documents (such as the role description and application form) are accessible, with provisions in place to offer audio, braille, or large-print formats for individuals with visual, hearing, or learning disabilities.

APPLICATION & SELECTION

There are different ways to collect applications for your volunteering role. Common applications methods are:

- Asking applicants to complete an application form.
- Asking applicants to write a cover letter and/or send their CV.
- Asking applicants to record a short video.

Remember to write down your contact information so any applicants can contact you regarding the role and any questions they may have.

If you decide to conduct interviews after shortlisting applicants, tips for conducting successful interviews can be found [here](#) and sample questions [here](#).

You can make the application and selection process more inclusive by:

- *Offering appropriate support to applicants who may need assistance completing the application form.*
- *Offering candidates a choice regarding how they can apply for a role.*
- *Beginning with an informal chat to gather key information, rather than relying solely on formal interviews or written applications.*
- *Engaging in an open and respectful conversation to understand individual support needs, enabling you to plan reasonable adjustments in advance.*

REFERENCES

References can help provide a fuller picture of a potential volunteer, offering insight into their strengths and areas for development, as well as occasionally highlighting potential concerns. They also help to confirm the volunteer is who they say they are. However, you should bear in mind that some potential volunteers may have limited employment history or may have been out of work for some time.



To avoid creating barriers to participation:

- *If possible, you should be flexible about who can provide a reference and consider accepting references from alternative sources such as educators, community leaders, or previous volunteer coordinators—not just previous employers.*

VOLUNTEER INDUCTIONS

Once a volunteer has been recruited, they should sign a [Volunteer Agreement](#) outlining what your organisation will offer and what it hopes for from them. This should be followed by an induction, which is an important opportunity to help volunteers develop a clear understanding of the organisation, their specific role, and what is expected of them. It is also a chance to get to know the volunteer, including their interests, skills, and goals, so that they can be appropriately supported and make the most of their volunteering.

When explaining what your organisation's goals are, how you go about achieving them, and where the volunteer will fit within your organisation, you may want to include:

- The background and history of your organisation.
- Your mission statement.
- Your organisation chart.
- The services you provide and your clientele.
- Talks from paid staff about their roles in general and in relation to volunteers.
- Talks from established volunteers.



When discussing the volunteer's role, you should mention:

- The purpose and hoped impact of the role, as well as how the volunteer's contribution will support the organisation's wider aims.
- The expected time commitment and flexibility around hours.
- The volunteer's responsibilities within the role, as well as the boundaries.
- Arrangements for support and supervision; this includes, if appropriate, assigning a key member of staff, mentor, or buddy.

It is also important to ensure that volunteers are given site-specific information, such as:

- Health and safety information; for example, your organisation's Health and Safety policy, first aid procedures, accident reporting procedures, the policy on smoking, emergency exits, and evacuation procedures.
- Financial information; for example, which expenses can be claimed and what the procedure is for this.
- Relevant policies; for example, regarding data protection, confidentiality, phone/internet use.
- General location information; for example, where the toilets, kitchen, and tea and coffee facilities are, as well as where to put coats, where they will sit, and what happens during breaks.
- Problem-solving procedures (discipline, grievance, complaints).

SUPPORT, SUPERVISION, AND CHECKING-IN

Volunteer support and supervision are vitally important and can be provided in several ways, both formally and informally. A great way to provide such support is to organise regular check-ins between the volunteer and allocated supervisor. This meeting can provide an opportunity for volunteers to discuss concerns, work, and any questions they may have. It can also help the volunteers to identify the skills they have gained and make them feel proud of the contribution they have made. For these check-ins, you should:

- Always have a pre-identified supervisor and ensure that the volunteer knows who this is.
- Ensure that the meeting time is exclusively given to the volunteer with no distractions.
- Create a safe and comfortable environment so that the volunteer feels able to raise any confidential issues or concerns.
- Use the time to give helpful feedback and praise the volunteer where applicable; you may also want to take notes during the meeting to keep track of your conversations.

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From my experience, what makes a volunteering experience truly excellent comes down to the people. Working alongside individuals from different ages and backgrounds is something you rarely get in other settings: it pushes you to adapt how you communicate, to read situations differently, and to connect in ways that feel genuinely meaningful. Those unexpected connections, and the flexibility you build in the process, are what I think elevate a good volunteering experience into a great one.

—
—”
— Zoé Baroud,
BSc in International Relations,
2027



WELL-BEING AND TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE WITHIN VOLUNTEERING

Supporting volunteer well-being means recognising the emotional impact some roles may have, particularly those involving sensitive issues or relating to lived experience. Organisations should provide clear role expectations, relevant training, regular check-ins, and opportunities to debrief, as well as aim to create a culture where volunteers feel comfortable communicating their needs, setting boundaries, and stepping back when necessary.

Trauma-informed practice recognises that volunteers may have diverse lived experiences of trauma, whether disclosed or undisclosed. Creating a trauma-informed volunteering environment does not require organisations to know volunteers' personal histories; instead, it involves understanding how trauma can affect people's experiences, behaviours, and engagement, and embedding practices that promote safety, dignity, and inclusion. By adopting a trauma-informed approach, organisations can create volunteering spaces where individuals feel respected, supported, and able to participate in ways that work for them.

The key principles of trauma-informed practice:

- **Safety** – Creating physical and emotional environments where volunteers feel secure, respected, and supported.
- **Trust and transparency** – Communicating clearly about roles, expectations, processes, and available support.
- **Choice** – Providing volunteers with opportunities to make informed decisions about their involvement and participation.
- **Collaboration** – Building relationships with volunteers based on mutual respect and shared responsibility.
- **Empowerment and voice** – Valuing volunteer perspectives and ensuring they feel listened to and able to contribute.
- **Cultural consideration** – Recognising the impact of identity, background and social context on individuals' experiences and ensuring volunteering spaces are inclusive and responsive.

For more information on trauma-informed practice, explore advice from the [Office for Health, Improvement and Disparities](#) or visit www.InclusiveVolunteering.co.uk to access training, workshops, and further support. For additional insights into well-being and mental health within volunteering, you can also read our [blog](#).

WHY RECOGNITION MATTERS

Recognising and valuing volunteers is essential in creating a positive and supportive volunteering environment. Regular recognition helps build a sense of belonging, strengthens relationships, and demonstrates that volunteers' time, skills, and contributions are genuinely valued. Volunteers who feel appreciated are also more likely to remain engaged, motivated, and committed to the organisation.

WAYS TO RECOGNISE VOLUNTEERS

There are various ways to show appreciation for volunteers in your organisation, including:

- **Saying 'thank you'** – Sometimes a simple 'thank you' is the best way to show gratitude; this could be in-person, by email, in a card, or during a team meeting.
- **Letting volunteers know their work makes a difference** – Giving volunteers positive feedback allows volunteers to understand the impact they are making.
- **Highlighting volunteers' work on social media, in your newsletter, or on your website** – Giving a special shout-out to volunteers on public channels is a great way to showcase a volunteer's hard work (however, it is important to do this in a consistent and fair manner).
- **Trusting volunteers** – Trusting volunteers with more responsibility is a good way to show that you value and recognise their contribution.
- **Keeping volunteers informed** – Making sure that volunteers are up to date about what is happening in your organisation (via meetings, emails, newsletters, or blogs) allows volunteers to feel part of your organisation.
- **Holding social events** – Providing the opportunity for volunteers to get together socially is a good way for volunteers to bond, feel part of a team, and celebrate their hard work.
- **Taking into account volunteer feedback** – It is important to ensure that volunteers feel that they can vocalise both the positive and negative aspects of their volunteering experience, as well as feel that their feedback is considered.
- **Holding volunteer awards** – Some organisations nominate volunteers for their in-house award ceremonies; for example, the nomination could be for team effort, length of time in service, hard work, or a positive attitude. Alternatively, you can nominate volunteers in the awards ceremonies of external partner organisations. However, it is important to find ways to recognise those that do not win an award.¹¹

FEEDBACK AND EXIT MEETINGS

Tips for ending volunteering well:

- Thank the volunteer for their hard work and recognise the contribution they have made.
- Ask the volunteer for feedback through an exit interview, an informal chat, or a [feedback form](#)—this is a good way of finding out how volunteering at your organisation has worked for them and how you can develop your services.
- If necessary, plan with the volunteer to hand over their ongoing activities to others.
- Check if the volunteer would like to stay in touch or receive updates about your organisation's work.
- Ask them to return any data or equipment, such as laptops or building passes. After they have left, you will also need to remove their access to any internal systems.¹²

Some volunteers may also ask for a reference if they are moving into paid work, education, or another volunteering role—this is a great way to recognise their contribution and support them in their next steps.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE FOR ORGANISATIONS

Reflective practice is essential to effective volunteer-involving organisations given that it embeds learning, accountability, and care into everyday work. More than a debrief, it is an ongoing process of examining decisions, volunteers' experiences, and how organisational values are put into practice. By creating regular opportunities to reflect on what is working, and what is not, organisations can respond more effectively to the complex environments in which volunteers operate and ensure their programmes remain responsive and mission-aligned.

Key elements of reflective practice:

- **Creating regular, facilitated reflective spaces** – monthly sessions, end-of-project reviews, or peer learning circles where volunteers and staff can openly share insights, challenges, and emerging needs.
- **Prioritising psychological safety** – make it clear that reflection is about learning, not blame, so individuals feel able to speak candidly.
- **Feed learning back into decision-making** – use insights to update policies, strengthen training, refine role descriptions, and adjust resource allocation.
- **Treat reflection as a continuous cycle** – embed reflection into organisational rhythms so learning becomes iterative, adaptive, and part of everyday practice rather than a one-off exercise.

HIDDEN STUDENTS

Not all students have equal access to opportunities or feel a strong sense of belonging at university. 'Hidden students' are students who may feel overlooked, marginalised, or peripheral within university spaces due to factors such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability. Research conducted by the LSE Volunteer Centre highlights that these students can face difficulties accessing volunteering opportunities due to issues including financial pressure, lack of representation, limited networks, or uncertainty about whether they belong in certain spaces.

Organisations should therefore think critically about how volunteering opportunities are communicated, structured, and supported to ensure that they are genuinely inclusive, accessible, and welcoming. As previously discussed in this document, this may include offering flexible opportunities, being transparent about expectations and time commitments, creating supportive environments, and actively listening to volunteers' experiences and feedback.

It is important to note that the category of 'hidden students' is not fixed: being a "hidden student" is fundamentally about how an institution makes a student feel—something that only they can decide.

For further insights into hidden students and volunteering, read our [blog](#).

“

It has been brilliant to work with LSE students, particularly through our (voluntary) internship programmes, when they are assigned to real projects. Being flexible and mindful of their academic commitments and support needs has been key, allowing them to contribute meaningfully while balancing their studies. The outcomes have been excellent!

”

– The Baytree Centre



THE MENU OF ADJUSTMENTS

Volunteers may have different needs, preferences, or ways of working, and creating space for open conversations about support and accessibility can help make volunteering a more positive and inclusive experience for everyone. The LSE Volunteer Centre's '[Menu of Adjustments](#)' provides examples of practical adjustments that organisations may wish to consider, including flexible working arrangements, communication preferences, accessibility needs, and different approaches to supervision and support.

These adjustments are intended as a starting point for discussion rather than an exhaustive list, and organisations should work collaboratively with volunteers to understand and respond to their individual needs.

THE LSE VOLUNTEER CENTRE EVENTS PAGE

The LSE Volunteer Centre runs a wide range of events throughout the year, offering students opportunities to learn new skills, connect with charities and community organisations, and explore different ways to get involved in volunteering. Events include volunteering fairs, skills workshops, charity talks, panel discussions, and 'one off' volunteering opportunities. Attending events can be a great way for students to discover volunteering opportunities, meet like-minded people, and gain a deeper understanding of the causes and communities they are interested in supporting.

For more information on the LSE Volunteer Centre's volunteering events, please click [here](#).

Disclaimer

We have made every effort to ensure that this information was correct at the time of publication. It is intended as a summary of relevant information to help you plan or develop your work with volunteers. The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) is unable to accept liability for any loss, damage, or inconvenience arising as a consequence of the use of this information.

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Appendices

- Sample [Role Description](#)
 - Sample [Role Advertisement](#)
 - Sample [Interview Questions](#)
 - Sample [Volunteer Agreement](#)
 - Sample [Volunteer Feedback Form](#)
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