



Moving on - saying goodbye to volunteers

Despite your best efforts at retention, it is realistic to acknowledge that volunteers will probably move on at some stage. Individuals may stop volunteering with your organisation of their own volition or at your request. Either party may have positive or negative reasons that have contributed to this decision.

Positive - the volunteer may have got a paid job, achieved their personal goals, had a beneficial change in personal circumstances, be moving out of the area etc. The organisation may have been delivering a fixed term project or have achieved short-term goals in some area which has resulted in a change of focus.

Negative - if unsure, try to ascertain why the volunteer is leaving/has left. See if there are any factors you can influence or change e.g. boredom/overload, relationship with other volunteers etc. If you have to ask a volunteer to leave, be positive about them as a person and their contribution, but stress that it is the organisational need that has changed.

Reviewing the relevance of the volunteer position may prevent volunteers from becoming bored, stale or feeling 'taken for granted'. If the position has become redundant or the individual's contribution is no longer relevant, it is only fair to either re-deploy the volunteer within your organisation or, if this is not feasible (or desirable!), thank them and help them to move on. Volunteer Centres may be able to help with this, as may other volunteer-involving organisations.

If volunteers are leaving of their own volition, make use of an **exit interview** or **questionnaire** for valuable feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the volunteering experience within your organisation. If volunteers are leaving because their position has ended or has become obsolete, the exit interview can still be a useful tool, although it may be desirable to tailor the questions accordingly.

The most successful volunteer-involving organisations probably have a balance of short and long-term volunteers, with a good mix of ages, genders, races etc. They will have a reputation of treating volunteers in a positive manner, encouraging personal development without forcing it on individuals.

The overall aim of involving volunteers is to enhance and enrich the work of your organisation. If they are not supported to do so, the principal aims of your organisation are being obstructed.

If you require further information please contact Gill Barham on gill.barham@bef.co.uk