National Trust

Leadership in Volunteering

A short guide for regional leadership teams and General Managers

Plan

- Recognise that volunteering is not a free activity and budget accordingly. Consider the resources, work space, time and skills required to involve volunteers effectively.

- Support teams to understand the full costs and benefits of investing in volunteering. Calculate the value of gifted time as well as the cost of expenses etc.

- Make the most of existing resources. Encourage your teams to talk to other properties, find out what existing resources are available and seek current good practice. Your VCI Consultant can help with this.

Role Model

- When making plans and decisions, ask "What are the opportunities and implications for volunteer involvement?"

- Praise great volunteer contribution and challenge practice that doesn't meet our values and behaviours.

- Support your teams when they are finding volunteer management a challenge. Signpost training and support options to up skill volunteer managers.

Champion

- Actively challenge assumptions that volunteering only takes place at properties or in low skilled activities.

- Understand the key drivers of a good volunteer management experience and what your volunteer managers have in place to deliver these *(see pages 2-3)*

- Understand the 2020 ambition for volunteering in the Trust and actively talk about the opportunities and implications for your teams *(see VCI pages on the Intranet)*.

'Volunteers need leadership, someone who inspires them and ensures that they are focussed on the vision and values that brought them together. Management is not the same as leadership.'

Wally Harbert, Author of Baby Boomers and Big Society.

5 Factors that drive up volunteer recommendation

What to ask and what to look out for...

1 Be organised

Are the day to day basics in place?

Ask about
- How well do we process enquiries from potential volunteers?
- Are volunteers clear when they are required?
- What is the feedback from new volunteers on their welcome and induction?
- Is there a consistent approach across all departments?

Top tips
- Agree a common property approach to recruiting, selecting & inducting volunteers and train all volunteer managers in using it
- Monitor processes to check if they are working efficiently and ensure feedback loops are in place so volunteers feel that they are being listened to
- Have sufficient resource to be able to respond quickly to volunteer enquiries. The volunteers can be this resource! There is increasing competition for volunteers, so it's easy for them to lose interest and go elsewhere. Survey results show even volunteers who go on to get involved with us remember these delays and it effects their likelihood to recommend

What do volunteers say?

'We need a better organised system for managing rotas and duties in Visitor Services. With three part-time members of staff and several different methods of offering help, (lists in the Bothy and the office, e mails and phone calls), it sometimes seems the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. It can be frustrating to volunteer in response to an emergency appeal for help and find there are far too many people, who end up standing around doing nothing.'

Volunteer Survey respondent 2013

Properties that met or exceeded the KPI scored an average of 47% for this driver.

High scoring properties for this driver: North Devon Countryside, Lacock, Carlyle's House, Wallington, Felbrigg Hall.

2 Communicate

What is in place to enable volunteers to access information and feel their voices is heard?

Ask about
- How are volunteers involved in property communications?
- How do you ensure feedback from volunteers is acted on and they receive a response?
- What communication channels do your volunteers prefer?

Top tips
- Circulate regular bulletins to all staff and volunteers with key messages and 'upcoming' events. Use email, noticeboards and on sign-in sheets and encourage use of My Volunteering for info on the wider Trust
- Create a weekly list of what's happening (group visits, functions, deliveries, contractors on site etc.) so all staff and volunteers know what is happening. This also helps with VE scores as there are fewer surprises!
- Consider quarterly coffee mornings with the GM so volunteers can hear about future developments, ask questions and feed in their ideas

What do volunteers say?

'Have more follow through on items like management/ business plan, interpretation plan. We all contributed then heard nothing more.'

Volunteer Survey respondent 2013

Properties that met or exceeded the KPI scored an average of 43% for this driver.

High scoring properties for this driver: Knole, Quarry Bank Mill, Hanbury Hall, Carlyle's House, Fyne Court.

3 Culture and values

Do volunteers feel part of the team?

Ask about
- How would you describe the relationship between staff and volunteers?
- How is the volunteer contribution recognised at the property?
- What is in place to help create a culture of one team?
- Are things different in different departments and how are you managing that?

HoD meeting to vote on special achievements, going above & beyond etc. These would be open to staff and volunteers, with a small prize awarded

What do volunteers say?

'I can't get this down to one specific thing but it would nice to be treated as a person and not a resource to be managed.'

Volunteer Survey respondent 2013

Top tips
- Consider creating a 'sounding board' where volunteers can contribute to property plans. These could be fixed term opportunities for volunteer representatives from all departments to comment on plans for development
- Think about creating review meetings for new volunteering roles where staff and volunteers jointly evaluate how things are going and agree improvements
- Try a 'Success of the month' session at each

Properties that met or exceeded the KPI scored an average of 45% for this driver.

High scoring properties for this driver: North Devon Countryside, Mottisfont, Felbrigg, Oxburgh Hall, Lacock.

4 Empowerment

Where are the opportunities for volunteers to make best use of their skills?

Ask about
- How volunteers can help plug gaps in skills, knowledge or capacity?
- What skills and experiences do you have in your volunteer team and are you making best use of them?
- Are you highlighting current good practice at the property?

Top tips
- Challenge teams on whether they are involving volunteers in a new project or piece of work
- Celebrate successful examples where volunteers have used their skills in new ways. This can give staff confidence to try things and encourage volunteers to come forward
- Appeal for volunteer help with particular projects and being very clear about the skills required and time commitment involved

What do volunteers say?

'Be aware of opportunities for my particular (specialist) skills to be applied at other NT properties in the regional group, not only at my regular property. This would increase my sense of value to the NT, and give opportunity to appreciate volunteering with other teams.'

Volunteer Survey respondent 2013

Properties that met or exceeded the KPI scored an average of 30% for this driver.

High scoring properties for this driver: Carlyle's House, Overbecks, Hanbury Hall, Mottisfont Abbey, The Workhouse.

5 Leadership

Do volunteers understand the direction of the Trust and changes taking place at the property?

Ask about
- How volunteers are kept informed about what is happening in the Trust?
- How do volunteers feed in to developments at the property?
- How do volunteers feel about what's happening overall at the property? How do you know?

Top tips
- Involve volunteers in business planning sessions and reviews, don't assume they won't be interested or have the skills to make a meaningful contribution
- Make sure volunteers have easy access to Business Plans and information on major projects or plans affecting the property
- Use regular communications channels to share information and invite comment and questions
- Encourage volunteers to use My Volunteering as a way of finding out about developments in the wider Trust

What do volunteers say?

'We need a greater understanding of the long term aims of the Trust and where my property fits in.'

Volunteer Survey respondent 2013

Properties that met or exceeded the KPI scored an average of 40% for this driver.

High scoring properties for this driver: Carlyle's House, Gunby Hall, Sunnycroft, Dunster Castle, Quarry Bank Mill.

5 Unhelpful KPI myths for leaders to bust

Myth: Volunteers just aren't the kind of people to tick strongly agree so we'll never reach the target.

Busted: 94 properties met the target this year and some properties had a score of 100% strongly agree. Those properties meeting the target were a range of sizes and a mix of outdoor and indoor sites. sites. It *is* possible to reach the target and volunteers *will* tick strongly agree.

Myth: There's no point in tackling the VR KPI this year as with the volunteering systems and processes project coming along things will get worse for volunteers and volunteer managers, before they get better.

Busted: Over 50% of GM portfolios will not have implemented the new system by the time the 2014 survey comes around. In addition the systems and processes changes are designed to tackle two of the main blockers of the KPI i.e. poor organisation and management of volunteers. The preparation for implementation also gives properties a great opportunity to improve communications with volunteers, share more about the direction the property and Trust are moving in and to make good use of volunteer skills. These things are also drivers of the KPI.

Myth: The drivers of the KPI are going up at the property so it either doesn't matter if the KPI score isn't moving, or the drivers aren't accurate and we're focussing on the wrong things.

Busted: Properties that are meeting or exceeding the target consistently score higher against the five drivers. These are the right things to focus on and if those scores continue to increase the KPI will follow in time. This is similar to the situation with VE where the consistent focus on a small number of key areas paid off, but it took some time.

Myth: If the VR KPI score at the property isn't that good it doesn't really matter because I know there is good overall leadership at the property. The GM is known to be leading well and that's what really matters.

Busted: Properties that score well have good alignment between overall leadership and day to day volunteer management, the work usually done by more junior members of staff. Don't just look at the leadership, think about whether the day to day experience of the volunteers, usually delivered by those more junior members of staff, is really as it should be across all departments.

Myth: Volunteers in the outdoors/indoors *(delete as appropriate)* are much less likely to strongly agreed so as I have more of them my score is bound to be lower.

Busted: The statistically significant difference between volunteers in the outdoors and the indoors is just 1% and among the 94 properties who met the target in 2013 there was a good mix of indoor and outdoor volunteers.

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