



Recognising and Rewarding Volunteers

Volunteers give their energy, creativity and time unpaid to help others and it is important that groups recognise this and **respect** the contribution they make.

For many volunteering is its own reward, and the sense of having made a difference is what makes it worthwhile. Volunteers may not expect any reward, but the unexpected is often appreciated and stops people feeling like they are being taken for granted.

Volunteering is when someone helps without an expectation of a monetary reward, and it is important that you do not pay volunteers as this has implications for both the volunteer and the organisation. For the volunteer it can affect their benefits and tax status, for the organisation it can create a contact of employment with all the legal and financial responsibilities that brings. Some volunteers will be insulted by the offer of money, as that's not why they do it.

Some Figures

- ★ 95% of volunteers identified “I really enjoy it” as a very important or important personal benefit of volunteering.

Helping Out a National Survey of Charitable Giving - 2007

- ★ 85% of volunteers reported enhanced well being after volunteering.

So we are not giving money look at other ways of saying thank you.

Hackney's Annual Volunteer Achievement Awards

Every year in June, as part of national celebrations of Volunteers Week VCH hosts Hackney's Volunteer Achievement Awards. All groups in Hackney that use volunteers can nominate for the awards, and winners are chosen by an independent panel. We also give appreciation certificates out to volunteers from lots of different groups as part of the celebration. Why not nominate your volunteers for next years award (nomination forms will go on the website in Spring 2011).



Award winners at the 2010 Hackney Volunteer Achievement Awards, held at the Round Chapel.



Some Ways to Say Thank you.

This list is not exhaustive, and how you say thank you should be what is right for your volunteers. And don't worry about the cost, a smile and acknowledgement of a job well done doesn't cost anything.

- ★ **Communication:** Tell them (and show them) the difference they have made.
- ★ Make sure service users know their helpers are volunteers, so they can say thank you too; this is often more meaningful than anything staff say or do.
- ★ **Parties:** invite volunteers to your staff Christmas party or hold a party in Volunteers Week and get staff to act as hosts and waiters for the day.
- ★ **Thank you gifts:** this should be unexpected and appropriate. Any merchandise should be simple and not too expensive; your volunteers, especially if they are involved in fundraising, won't want to see hard earned money spent on them.
- ★ **Training:** this helps people provide a better service **and** shows that you think what they do is important enough to be invested in.
- ★ **Public recognition:** make sure you have a volunteer section on your website or in your newsletter and that this is not just a call for more help but a space to shout about the great things your volunteers achieve.
- ★ **Birthday Cards:** signed by all the staff
- ★ **References:** you should be willing to provide a reference for a volunteer when they apply for a job (even if in some cases this means you might lose your volunteer, be happy about their achievement).
- ★ Most important of all is that you say **THANK YOU** and mean it, an automatic thank will be seen as insincere but genuine recognition for a task well done will always be appreciated.

Merci



A Final Thought: unappreciated volunteers are unhappy volunteers and unhappy volunteers leave. Reward and recognition is not just about making volunteers feel good, it is about making your volunteer programme a success, keeping your volunteers and offering a better service to clients and the community.

For more information about Rewarding Volunteers and the support VCH can offer please contact:

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