

Is it a Volunteer Role?

Best Practice for Volunteering, Paid Roles and Minimum Wage

Our service helps volunteer-involving organisations in a range of settings: from small volunteer-led groups, to larger charities, the NHS and other public sector organisations. We believe the unique value volunteers add to community projects and organisations could not be matched by employees.

However, volunteer roles [should never substitute paid staff](#). Volunteering is something people do because they want to, not for financial reward. They will want their contribution to be clearly defined and valued and they will need support.

See below for Best Practice we expect organisations to strive for, to ensure your roles are authentic volunteer roles. These are not legal requirements, and there may be exceptions.

Signs that a role is an authentic volunteering opportunity

- ✓ The role makes a **meaningful impact** to the community or environment.
- ✓ **Your service is improved** by the role, but it isn't essential.
- ✓ The role is **flexible**, can be delivered according to the post-holder's schedule, and doesn't ask for more than a few hours a week commitment.
- ✓ The post-holder **can leave** the role at any time.
- ✓ The role is open to various skills and is **inclusive** to all walks of life.
- ✓ The volunteer has **support** from the organisation and the role gives the volunteer opportunity to develop and learn.

For more details of the support we believe volunteers should be given, please see the Basic and Best Practice in Volunteer Management, outlined in the [London Volunteer Management Charter](#).

Signs that a role is not suitable for a volunteer

- You **cannot** deliver your core service(s) without this role.
- The role has responsibilities **equal to or beyond that of paid staff**.
- The role is **20 hours a week** or over.
- There is a "**contract**" which requires the volunteer to complete a certain number of hours.
- Volunteers are subject to **disciplinary** action.
- The role requires skills it would not realistically be possible to acquire without the post-holder having previously been in paid employment, and/or further or higher education. There is no flexibility, training or support available for those who do not have this specific experience.
- The role exists in isolation from other members of staff and teams.

Tips and Further Information

In order to avoid confusion and develop meaningful, authentic volunteer roles, consider the following:

1. If you have a large number of tasks or responsibilities which you think volunteers could support with, consider dividing this up into several volunteer roles.
2. Volunteer role descriptions should not include **terminology** related to paid work. Replace words such as “work” with “volunteer”, “job” with “volunteer role”.
3. **Volunteer role titles and job titles are not interchangeable.** For example, a “Support Worker” is a professional job which should be paid. However, a befriender or mentor might be more suitable as a volunteer role.
4. If the “volunteer” considers the role to be a paid job, [you may be challenged to pay minimum wage.](#)

For guidance on the nuances of voluntary internships [see here](#).

For guidance on trustees [see here](#).

And remember- volunteers add huge value to organisations but volunteers [are not free](#).