



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government



# Fusion:

## Tackling Poverty through Culture

**Cultural Volunteering**  
Opportunities for Widening Access and  
Tackling Poverty

This guidance has been developed by the Welsh Government and partners in the culture and voluntary sectors as part of the Fusion: Tackling Poverty through Culture [www.gov.wales/fusion](http://www.gov.wales/fusion) programme.

It supports the Welsh Government's wider volunteering policy Supporting Communities, Changing Lives. ([link to information](#))

It is for cultural organisations of all sizes and types.

The aim is to provide examples of best practice, and signpost resources and additional support.

Cultural organisations are encouraged to adopt its principles, as well as encourage take-up by bodies they fund and provide leadership for.

There is an emphasis on increasing participation of people living in poverty, in order to increase confidence, skills and employability.

## Good practice means

- » Offering engaging and varied volunteering and work placement opportunities that cater for a wide range of interests.
- » Ensuring volunteering roles benefit both the organisation and the participant.
- » Managing volunteers responsibly and effectively.
- » Avoiding using volunteers to replace paid staff.
- » Recognising that recruitment, management and development of volunteers comes at a cost, in terms of both staff time and financial resources.
- » Recognising that recruitment, management and development of volunteers requires commitment and buy-in from all parts of the organisation, from Board and Director level down.
- » Committing to ongoing staff training both in general volunteer management and in working with specific types of volunteers.
- » Promoting opportunities as widely as possible.
- » Ensuring you have a volunteer agreement in place (the term 'contract' should be avoided) setting out what you will provide, and what is expected of the volunteer.
- » Planning volunteer hours around both volunteer and organisational needs.
- » Monitoring participation to establish evidence on take up and diversity.
- » Helping with advice on preparation for work and career development.  
Organisations should be clear from the outset that there is no guarantee of paid positions following a volunteering or unpaid work placement.
- » Ensuring volunteers are treated equally to paid staff and should therefore provide references, training required for the role and any clothing and equipment needed.



## Using volunteering to tackle disadvantage

- » Many organisations recognise the social value of volunteering but don't always know how to attract more diverse volunteers, even where sites are close to disadvantaged areas. Working closely with other agencies helps overcome barriers to participation.
- » Organisations should work closely with their local **Communities First** ([link to information](#)) cluster if applicable, county voluntary councils, job centres, charities and other agencies, many of whom may be seeking appropriate volunteering opportunities for people they work with.
- » Volunteering provides different benefits for people at different stages of life:
  - » For young people it can increase engagement and provide meaningful experiences for those struggling in more formal educational settings;
  - » For adults, it can help develop a CV, gain skills and boost employment prospects;
  - » For older people it can help combat social isolation.
- » Volunteering can be part of a progression route, beginning with informal activity and leading to formal volunteering and work placements, apprenticeships and employment. More formal opportunities may be suitable for some participants and not for others.
- » Organisations should consider their role in moving people along this progression route and tailor events and activities accordingly. Cultural bodies should offer informal, fun taster sessions, working with partners to target particular audiences or groups. This could lead to more formal taster days. Some people may lack confidence to attend sessions alone, but may be more likely to do so as part of a group or with friends.



- » Registering for a more formal volunteering scheme needs to be made as easy as possible and paperwork needs to be carefully designed.
- » One challenge for many potential volunteers is lack of confidence, and it can be daunting to enter a new workplace. There are several ways to help, such as asking more experienced volunteers to mentor or 'buddy' with new volunteers, and holding award ceremonies and recognition schemes. Experienced volunteers can also be powerful and effective ambassadors for their organisation and act as guides to visitors.
- » Many volunteers appreciate the opportunity to gain more formal recognition. Accreditation is a valuable way for people to gain a clear tangible outcome from their role, and will strengthen a CV if they are seeking employment.
- » Organisations can in some cases also offer unpaid work placements as an alternative to or progression from volunteering. These tend to be more formal, part of a scheme or course of study, and last for less than six months.
- » Organisations and volunteers should be aware of the guidance and rules around volunteering and claiming benefits. Claimants can volunteer for as many hours as they wish if they can prove they are actively seeking and available for work. In most cases state benefits are not affected, but volunteers must inform the DWP of any volunteering. [A guide to volunteering and claiming benefits \(link to information\)](#) has been produced.
- » The cost of transport can act as a barrier to some volunteers so organisations could consider subsidising travel, as well as discounts in shops and cafes. [Timebanking \(link to information\)](#) can also be an effective way to incentivise volunteering.

## Further guidance

- » Organisations should be **creative and imaginative** in the types of roles offered. [The Heritage Lottery Fund](#) has produced guidance ([link to information](#)) on volunteering with heritage organisations which suggests a wide range of roles volunteers could become involved in. Virtual or digital volunteering schemes can also be considered.
- » A number of bodies have produced **guidance** for organisations recruiting and managing volunteers including [Wales Council for Voluntary Action \(link to information\)](#), the [National Council for Voluntary Organisations \(link to information\)](#) (England) and [Volunteer Now \(link to information\)](#) (Northern Ireland).
- » More specific guidance on volunteering within the cultural sector is also available from [Society of Chief Librarians \(Wales\) \(link to information\)](#), [Voluntary Arts \(link to information\)](#), [Museums Association \(link to information\)](#), [Archives and Records Association \(link to information\)](#) and others.
- » **GwirVol** is a partnership between the third, public and private sectors, and aims to increase the number and quality of opportunities for **young people** to volunteer. Its grants scheme ([link to information](#)) supports volunteering opportunities for young people in Wales.

- » County voluntary councils all have part-time **Youth Volunteering Advisors** (link to information) (**YVAs**) in Wales. The YVAs aims to help organisations develop more and better quality volunteering opportunities and to place young people into these opportunities.
- » **Investing in Volunteers (IiV)** (link to information) is the UK **quality standard** for good practice in volunteer management and can be an effective way for cultural bodies to embed best practice across the organisation and demonstrate quality to potential partners and participants. It acts as a benchmark that organisations should strive towards. There is a cost to organisations and it may be possible to apply for grants to cover these. In Wales it is possible to undertake an initial '**health check**' (link to information) to identify areas for development, without having to commit to the whole process of assessment. There is a charge for this.
- » **Training and qualifications** for volunteer managers is **signposted by WCVA** (link to information) and events take place across Wales. Organisations can also access external training at a low cost from bodies such as charities that work with specific audiences or groups.
- » In Wales, several bodies can offer **accreditation**, including **Arts Award** (link to information), **Agored Cymru** (link to information) and **ASDAN** (link to information) **The Millennium Volunteers (MV) Award** (link to information) is a recognised award that shows how many hours young people have volunteered, when, and where.
- » Organisations should promote **good relations between paid staff and volunteers**. A **charter** (link to information) has been produced setting out how volunteers and paid staff should complement each other. It is the view of many that volunteers should only be used where they 'add value' to the organisation or service, i.e. not to replace staff or the core functions they perform. This is of particular concern, but not confined to, public libraries in Wales.
- » Cultural organisations should work with partners to **promote, signpost and refer opportunities** as widely as possible. They should work closely with existing partners in their area, including **county voluntary councils** (link to information), Further Education and Higher Education institutions and others, and register opportunities on the **Volunteering Wales** (link to information) website.
- » Some individuals or target groups may have **high support needs**; organisations should identify these from the outset and seek specialist guidance and best practice.