

Retaining Volunteers

The Volunteering Together 4 Health service is delivered by a partnership team of volunteering experts across the five boroughs of North Central London. Whether looking for volunteering advice and guidance at a system-wide or local level, you will find dedicated and expert support.

Think of volunteer retention not as a chore, but as a sign that your partnership is working. Sometimes volunteers leave because they've found a job or their life has changed, and that's a success story we should celebrate. However, if people are leaving because they are bored, feel underappreciated, or find the role isn't what they expected, there are simple steps you can take to keep them engaged.

Start with the Right Match

Retention begins the moment someone shows interest. Make sure the role description they shown interest in is accurate. Be very clear about what the role involves and the time commitment you're looking for – perhaps suggesting a trial period of three or six months rather than an indefinite 'forever'. Understanding why they want to help – whether it's to give back to their community or gain new skills – helps you ensure the role stays meaningful for them.

Make Everyone Feel at Home

A volunteer who feels like part of the family is much more likely to stay. This means introducing them to the whole team, ensuring staff respect their contribution, and holding low-pressure social events like coffee mornings or festive season parties. For volunteers from harder to reach and **Core20PLUS5** populations, it is vital to remove 'unnecessary barriers' by ensuring your systems are inclusive and easy to navigate. If a process feels too corporate or inaccessible, it might put off the very people we want to reach.

Show the Love

Hold regular check-ins with volunteers and make sure that they have space to raise any concerns and hear about the impact of their volunteering time. A simple 'thank you' goes a long way but so does showing volunteers the real-world impact they are making. Make sure your recognition isn't just a certificate; it could be offering some volunteer credits scheme or professional development opportunities for those who want more responsibility.

Crucially, ensure that no one is ever 'out of pocket' by keeping expense claims simple and fast, which is a key part of making volunteering accessible to everyone.

Be Flexible and Keep Talking

Life happens. A volunteer might move house, start university, or face new family responsibilities. Instead of saying goodbye, ask if they'd like to switch to a fortnightly schedule, try a remote role over the phone, or take on a one-off task. Regularly check in to see how they are doing, as many volunteers are too polite to mention minor issues until they've already decided to leave. Even if they do move on, keep the door open – they'll always be 'part of the family' and might return when their circumstances change.

Top Equality, Diversity and Inclusion TIPS

- To support volunteers from harder to reach and Core20PLUS communities, prioritise removing practical barriers by offering and ensuring expense processes are simple so no one is out of pocket.
- Focus on creating an inclusive environment where roles are flexible enough to adapt to changing life circumstances, ensuring everyone feels welcome to 'be themselves' while contributing.

For further support contact your local volunteering experts:

Bridge Renewal Trust (Haringey)

CBPlus (Barnet)

Enfield Voluntary Action

Haringey Community Collaborative (Public Voice)

London Plus (Lead Partner)

Voluntary Action Islington

Volunteer Centre Camden (Operational Lead)

Volunteering Barnet (Groundwork London)

