

Creating Inclusive Role Descriptions

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 wider or local level, you will find dedicated and expert support.

This guide is designed to help you write role descriptions that are accessible and effective in reaching diverse audiences.

Understanding Volunteers' Motivations

If you already have volunteers, ask them what motivated them to join your team; their insights can help you highlight the most appealing aspects of the role. It may be also helpful to research similar roles from other organisations to see what focus and tone they use.

The main motivations for people volunteering are:

- To improve things and help others / Importance of the cause
- Meet new people / Make new friends
- Having spare time
- Use existing skills / Learn new skills

To understand what people's motivations are in more detail, consult the [Motivations for first getting involved in volunteering with the organisation graph](#), NCVO Time Well Spent (2023)

Structuring Your Role Description

1. **Role title:** This is the first thing a potential volunteer sees, so make it interesting and appealing. Name the role - don't just put 'volunteer' e.g. Ward Befriender, Mealtime assistant, Administration.
2. **Introduce your organisation:** Briefly explain what you do and try to achieve. Tell the potential volunteers a little bit about your organisation and what you aim to do, tell a story and make it exciting (in a paragraph or two).
3. **The purpose:** Explain why you need volunteers and how their contribution helps the community or health service.
4. **Tasks:** List the specific things the volunteer will be doing.
5. **Location:** Where will the volunteering take place? Will it be in-person, available to do from home, or in multiple locations?

6. **Time commitment:** Do you have specific days? Or are you looking for 3 hours a week?
7. **Skills and requirements:** Be clear about what is needed. For many roles, no specific skills are required. Only include requirements that are genuinely essential and avoid creating unnecessary barriers by listing 'desirable' skills that may discourage otherwise capable volunteers.
8. **Support and supervision:** Reimburse expenses for travel and provide/pay for meals where possible as this may be a factor in whether someone from a lower-income background can afford to volunteer. Give information about induction and training, supervision/line management, insurance cover etc
9. **Benefits:** What benefits will the volunteer get? Meet new people? Learn new skills? Reference after x months?
10. **DBS and age restrictions:** State if a DBS check is required (the organisations should pay for it), and any minimum age requirements.
11. **Application process:** Make it clear if there is an application form, offer support to fill the form, whether you will ask for references, will there be an interview or less formal chat?
12. **Contact details:** Provide contact details for any questions people may have about the role.

Promoting the role through your own comms channels, local volunteer centre, colleagues, existing volunteers or community settings can be good places to start.

Language and Tone

Distinguish volunteering from paid employment to avoid 'job substitution'. This protects the volunteer and ensures they are not treated like an employee, which could lead to legal issues regarding minimum wage legislation.

- **Choose your words:** Use terms like 'Volunteering', 'Role Description', 'Helping', and 'Volunteer Agreement' rather than 'Working', 'Job Description', or 'Contract'.
- **Keep it informal:** Use a warm, chatty, and direct tone. Avoid technical jargon and acronyms – unless they are very common, like 'NHS'.
- **Plain English:** Use everyday language that is easy for everyone to understand.
- **Trauma-Informed Language:** Recruitment processes should be supportive, respectful and non-judgemental as volunteers may have lived experience of trauma, discrimination, ill health or exclusion.

Inclusion and Accessibility

Make your role description as inclusive and accessible as possible for all communities. This includes those who are disabled and are in the Core20PLUS5 population – the most deprived 20% of the population and 'PLUS' groups like ethnic minorities, inclusion health groups (those who are socially excluded) or people with learning disabilities and autism who experience significant health inequalities.

- **Remove financial barriers:** Always be upfront about expense reimbursement to ensure those in the 'Core20' demographic are not excluded by cost.
- **Provide multiple formats:** Some potential volunteers may find a standard document difficult to read. Consider offering the description in Easy Read (simple text with images), Large Print (16-18 point font), or as an audio recording. You could even provide a link to a BSL (British Sign Language) video. Call or meet with them in person to discuss the role if this is easier.
- **Inclusive imagery:** Use photos and images that reflect the diverse population you serve, ensuring people from all backgrounds see themselves represented.
- **Gender-neutral language:** Avoid gendered terms (like 'mums') and use 'they' instead of 'he or she' to be inclusive of all identities.
- **Cultural awareness:** Remember that not everyone celebrates the same holidays; structure your recruitment around this.
- **Add flexibility:** Offer flexible options (e.g. role sharing, flexible scheduling, remote, pause-and-return or episodic volunteering) to help harder to reach applicants, disabled people, carers, people with health conditions and working-class volunteers etc.

Top Equality, Diversity and Inclusion TIPS

- **To ensure your volunteering roles are truly inclusive, use plain, gender-neutral language and provide descriptions in accessible formats like Easy Read or audio.**
- **If possible, clearly state that travel and meal expenses are reimbursed to remove financial barriers for those in the most deprived communities.**
- **Focus on creating a warm, jargon-free tone that prioritises the volunteer's motivations and community impact.**

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)

