

A Guide to using WhatsApp to support volunteers

This guide helps volunteer coordinators effectively use WhatsApp Communities to streamline communication, foster peer support, and reduce admin time. With clear distinctions between chat groups and Communities, practical tips, and best practices, it ensures volunteers stay informed, connected, and supported, while maintaining healthy boundaries and a positive, respectful group environment.

You can find a general guide on setting up a [WhatsApp Community here](#).

Why Use WhatsApp Communities for Volunteers?

WhatsApp Communities offer a more organised and streamlined way to communicate with multiple volunteer groups, helping you:

- Share important information without it getting lost in busy chats
- Encourage peer support and shared learning
- Manage temporary groups for events or specific topics
- Reduce admin time by having everything in one place

What's the Difference Between a Community and a Chat Group?

Feature	Regular Chat Group	WhatsApp Community
Structure	One group	Multiple groups under one umbrella
Announcement Feature	No	Yes
Broadcast messages	Not separate	Via dedicated Announcements group
Subgroups for topics/events	No	Yes

Key Features & How to Use Them

Announcements Group

Every Community comes with a built-in Announcements group. Only admins can post in the announcement section so it ensures only the important bits land here. It's great for sharing:

- Monthly updates
- Policy changes
- Key dates and deadlines
- Training opportunities

Tip: Remind volunteers they can mute busy chats but leave notifications on for Announcements so they never miss key info.

Volunteer Support or Peer Chat Group

- A general group where volunteers can:
- Ask for advice
- Share good practice
- Celebrate wins
- Share group guidelines (see our pre-written version) to maintain boundaries and focus.

Temporary Groups for Events or Campaigns

- Create pop-up groups for:
- Planning a one-off event (so you only add those volunteers attending so as not to bother the others)
- Specific training follow-ups
- Archive or delete once no longer needed.

Best Practices for Coordinators

- Always ask a volunteer for consent before adding them to the group and explain that other volunteers will then be able to see their phone number
- Pin key messages in chats to help volunteers find them later.
- Introduce new volunteers in the main chat to build community.
- Be responsive but model healthy boundaries (e.g., not replying late at night).
- Check in regularly via the Announcements group with short, friendly updates.

Final Tips

- WhatsApp Communities are ideal for volunteers who want the convenience of choice of communication with the structure of a well-run project.
- Keep the Announcements group focused and calm, so volunteers know where to look for essentials.
- Use the flexibility of sub-groups to keep discussions relevant, manageable, and purposeful.

Volunteers WhatsApp Group/Community Guidelines

Having clear group guidelines is really important in volunteering. They help create a welcoming, respectful space where everyone feels safe and supported. Because volunteers come from all walks of life, a few simple rules make it easier to communicate kindly, protect confidentiality, and keep things focused. Guidelines also help set healthy boundaries and make sure the group stays useful and enjoyable for everyone. By starting with clear expectations, we can build a positive and inclusive community for all volunteers.

Here's an example of some guidelines you may want to copy or adapt for your community.

Welcome to our volunteer group! This space is for updates, celebrating wins, sharing ideas, and supporting one another. Please follow these simple guidelines to help keep the group safe, respectful, and useful.

1. Group Purpose

- Share updates and notices from the volunteering program.
- Exchange tips, resources, and good practice.
- Ask for advice or support.
- Build a positive community of volunteers.

2. Confidentiality & Safeguarding

- Never share names or identifying details about service users.
- Keep stories general
- Only share images with consent of the people in them

Do not share safeguarding concerns here—report them directly to your volunteer coordinator

3. Be Respectful

- Offer support, encouragement, and ideas.
- Avoid judgment or negative comments.

4. Keep It Relevant

- Stay on topic—volunteering only.
- Use private messages for side chats.

5. Mind Tone and Frequency

- Keep messages respectful and easy to follow.
- Avoid flooding the chat with long messages or voice notes.

6. Share with Care

- When posting resources or links, explain why they're useful.
- Keep content appropriate and relevant.

7. No Promotions

- Don't promote outside events or fundraisers unless approved by an admin.

8. Celebrate and Encourage

- Share successes (anonymously) to inspire others.
- Thank and encourage your fellow volunteers!

9. Take Breaks if Needed

- Mute notifications or step away anytime. Your wellbeing comes first.

A final note from IV

We hope this guide helps you create WhatsApp spaces that feel welcoming, useful and genuinely supportive for your volunteers. There's no one-size-fits-all approach, so take what works, adapt it to your community, and make it your own.

If you have any questions, want to chat through how this could work in your organisation, or need a little extra support, head over to InclusiveVolunteering.co.uk or drop me and email at maria@inclusivevolunteering.co.uk. Happy volunteering!