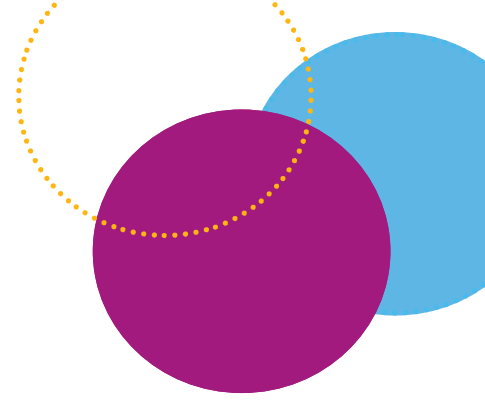


Volunteer Centres - frequently asked questions



What's the difference between a Volunteer Centre and a CVS?

Support for voluntary and community sector organisations is generally split into two areas. Volunteer Centres (VC) work with organisations on all aspects of volunteer recruitment and management. Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) or other local support and development organisations work with 'voluntary and community sector' groups on organisational development, fundraising and business planning. They will also work with their local council to ensure that the voluntary/community sector has a voice. In Lincolnshire, the CVS and VC services are merged – so in each area there is one organisation delivering both services for that area.

What's the difference between a Volunteer Bureau and a Volunteer Centre?

When VCs first started they were usually called Volunteer Bureaux, but a few years ago the entire English network was rebranded as 'Volunteer Centres'. Sometimes you might also hear Volunteer Centres referred to as 'Volunteer Development Agencies' or 'VDAs'. This was a catch-all term when VCs were called different things, but is still often used in government publications and consultations.

Should our organisation register with more than one Volunteer Centre?

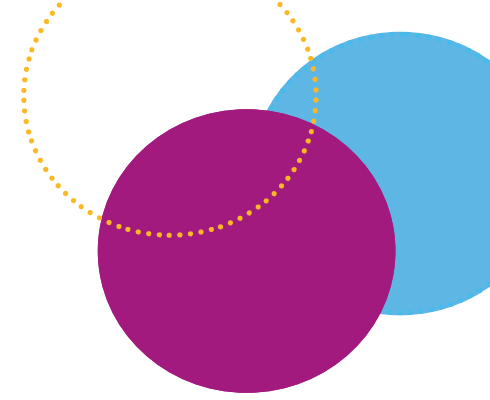
The most important Centre to register with is your local one, as they will be able to offer you support at a local level. Any opportunities registered locally can also appear on the Do-It website (www.do-it.org) so can potentially be seen by anyone searching the site. If you want to target recruitment across a wider area than just the district you are based in, talk to your local VC and ask them to share your opportunity information with other VCs. This will save you having to fill in the same forms for different VCs.

Lincolnshire CVS and Voluntary Centre Services have formed a partnership to deliver a new single point of access volunteering information website for Lincolnshire to cover all 7 accredited volunteer centres, across the 7 district in Lincolnshire: lincolnshirevolunteering.org.uk ,

The new website will host a live, searchable volunteering opportunities database, self help tools for community groups, advice and support for volunteers and most importantly, contact information for the real people who deliver services in our local communities. Visitors to the site will also be able to find training sessions and local events, read the latest news from the Voluntary Sector and promote third sector job vacancies, for a small fee.

Why does my Volunteer Centre keep bugging me about whether our details are up to date?

Organisations may forget to inform their VC if their details change, or if they no longer need volunteers in a certain role. This means that the information VCs hold on their databases may become out of date, that people are given details of vacancies which are no longer available, or are given the wrong contact details. This can be frustrating to potential volunteers, so VCs do everything they can to try and ensure their database is up to date. This is why you will regularly (usually once a year) get asked to confirm if the details they hold about you are correct.



Why does my Volunteer Centre keep sending volunteers who aren't right for us? Do I have to take all the volunteers that they send me?

It is not part of a VC's role to assess whether potential volunteers are appropriate for an organisation, and they do not replace an organisation's normal application and selection processes. The VC will guide people to help them find opportunities that match their skills and motivation, but it is down to the individual to decide which opportunities they want to apply for, and down to your organisation to decide whether someone is suitable for your roles. If you clearly describe what you want the volunteer to do and mention any skills they would need to have when you register your opportunities, then it is easier for the VC to give people guidance about whether the role is right for them.

Most organisations will need to have some sort of selection procedure in place because not everyone who enquires about your roles will be suitable. The VC will not mind you turning down some of the people they have referred to you if they are genuinely not right for your role, but it is helpful if you give the volunteer honest feedback about why they are being turned down and refer them back to the VC for alternative roles. Your VC can help you develop a selection procedure that works for you.

We are not really part of the voluntary sector; will the Volunteer Centre understand our needs?

Volunteer Centres work with all kinds of volunteer involving organisations. As well as organisations in the voluntary sector, they work with the public sector, with environmental and heritage organisations, arts groups, sports clubs and cultural or faith groups. They understand that different organisations work in different ways and have different priorities, risks and aims. The basic principles of volunteer management good practice remain the same and VCs are used to working with diverse organisations to look at how the principles could be applied in their setting.

Why has my Volunteer Centre never sent me any volunteers?

Volunteer Centres cannot guarantee to find volunteers for every organisation. There are so many volunteer roles that people can pick and choose what they are interested in - some roles/organisations are just more popular than others. If you never receive any referrals from your VC it is worth checking whether there is something about the way you have listed your role that is putting people off. You may not have given enough details for people to get a good flavour of your opportunity, or have asked for specialised knowledge that not many people have, or have asked people for a long commitment, or people may be put off if you are unable to reimburse travel expenses, for example. Your VC can help you identify if there is more you can do to make your vacancy more appealing.