



Real Voices in Volunteering

A toolkit with all the information, policy, law and resources you need on volunteering, families and substance use



Adfam

Families, drugs and alcohol

Real voices in volunteering: toolkit

About Adfam

Adfam is the national umbrella organisation working to improve the quality of life for families affected by drug and alcohol use.

We work with local and national partners to develop policy and manage projects. As the voice of families and family support, we provide best practice guidance on drug and alcohol related family work. We continue to raise awareness of the needs of families affected by drugs and alcohol and work to inform and influence government policy, the media, and national, regional and local services.

Adfam's mission is that every family member should be able to access the help and support that they need and deserve.

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About the Drug Sector Partnership

Adfam, alongside DrugScope, eATA and the Alliance, is a member of the Drug Sector Partnership (DSP). Funded by the Department for Health the DSP exists to improve working between government and third sector drug organisations. Through 2010 and 2011 Adfam has delivered three strands of a workforce development project. This toolkit is the third and final part of the project.



The **drug sector** PARTNERSHIP

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I am delighted to introduce this new Adfam toolkit, which we hope will aid both current and prospective volunteers and volunteer managers in their work.

Volunteers have always played an essential role in the family support and substance use fields. Adfam itself was founded in 1984 by the mother of a drug user who could not find the support that she needed. The idea of someone motivated by their own experiences to give time and energy to 'do it themselves' and support others is therefore one we firmly believe in.

Current financial restrictions are greater than ever, and the skills and dedication of the whole workforce need to be effectively maximised. Those volunteering in the sector offer commitment, expertise and skills that we cannot – and should not – ignore.

I hope that this toolkit is of use to you and your colleagues.



Vivienne Evans OBE
Chief Executive, Adfam
January 2012

There is a strong tradition of volunteering in the family support and drug and alcohol fields

Volunteers, properly supported, can be a vital resource to any organisation. Often motivated by personal experience, they can bring skills and knowledge borne of hard experience, flexibility and dedication in working practices and a high level of empathy with clients and colleagues. Families affected by substance use tell Adfam that having a support worker who has been through similar experiences adds weight to their advice and makes them approachable and credible.

For volunteers, work may be particularly beneficial as a way of lending a helping hand to other people going through hardships they recognise and relate to. It may also be a way of gaining valuable experience of employment and a pathway back into paid work, especially for a person who has been unemployed long-term or perhaps in prison. Some volunteers may not themselves have problematically used substances but experienced similar issues in their families, and others may have no direct experience at all but simply wish to help their communities.

Even though they are not paid, volunteers don't come for free. They need to be supervised, supported and monitored just like paid staff. Services need to spend time developing effective recruitment, support and supervision processes which ensure both that volunteers possess the competencies they need to do a good job, and that they have effective channels for seeking support and feedback.

This toolkit brings together information for volunteers and volunteer managers (both potential and current) to help maximise the support available for the voluntary workforce and therefore also maximise the good they can do in the long term. The volunteer workforce has a great deal of recovery capital which can help vulnerable people, including substance users and their families, towards recovery.

General information on volunteering

Volunteering has always been popular. In the last few years in England the levels of those who volunteer at least once a year has constantly been between 70% and 75%, and the level of people who volunteer every month has been around 50%. 30% of the 65-74 age group volunteer once a month and give on average 16.8 hours every month.

Volunteering also fits firmly within the current government's emphasis on the 'Big Society' and the importance of local answers to local questions. Although the phrase 'Big Society' has only recently entered our common lexicon, the work of communities of all sizes throughout the UK has for decades been essential in supporting vulnerable people and utilising local expertise to meet local needs.

If you would like to read in more depth about volunteering in the UK and find statistics on the levels and type of people who volunteer please see:

- [Helping Out: A national survey of volunteering and charitable giving \(pdf\)](#) – Cabinet Office
- [2007-08 Citizenship Survey: Volunteering and Charitable Giving Topic Report \(pdf\)](#) – Department of Communities and Local Government
- [National Statistics \(pdf\)](#) – Volunteering England

CASE STUDY: 'JANE'

Volunteer and ex-service-user

I came into voluntary work after I reached abstinence from my alcohol dependency problem. I discussed my lack of confidence with my Education and Training Advisor from Steps-To-Work, who suggested volunteering to regain the skills and confidence I had lost due to ill health and unemployment.

My training and supervision with my organisation has been excellent – I have made very good progress through comprehensive training days and support from managers. My supervision has been supportive and sensitive to my needs; I have developed a close relationship with my supervisor and have confidence in her.

The biggest challenge for me has been working in an office environment, which was a complete change from my previous work. I was also initially concerned that I might still be considered a service-user. This has not been so – I have been accepted and respected as a member of the team, and this has enabled me to

gain confidence in my abilities without feeling judged. My clients have accepted me as a support worker with the knowledge and experience to help them at a time in their lives when they feel unable to cope. They are aware of my commitment to the service and appreciate.

I would strongly advise anyone to volunteer in an area they are interested in and can develop in. It has been a life changing opportunity for me, introducing me to aspects of work I would not have considered and providing personal satisfaction. This opportunity came at a time when I felt I had lost my career aspirations and did not know how to regain them. I have now changed my aspirations to working in the substance misuse sector and I have been able to reach my goal of achieving the City and Guilds' Community Justice Award through the local college.

1 Volunteering

This section gives information and signposts you to the basic tools you need if you currently volunteer, or are interested in becoming a volunteer. It explores the background to volunteering, its motivating forces and relevant legislation, offers links to in-depth resources and illustrates all the issues with quotes from the real people who have been there and done it.

During the development of this toolkit Adfam consulted extensively with volunteers and volunteer managers to hear from the real experts. Throughout it you can find quotes based on their expertise – these are the ‘real voices in volunteering’.

1.1 Why volunteer?

Many people get pleasure from helping others and give up their time without any thought of financial reward to improve the lives of those in need of a helping hand. Volunteering and charitable activities can provide satisfaction in themselves by serving an altruistic purpose and are encouraged by many religions and systems of belief as emotionally or spiritually nourishing.

Some volunteers may have a desire to help in a specific way or from a specific personal motive – a churchgoer who volunteers for her church to help the homeless, for instance, or a drug user in recovery who wants to help those in the position he once was. Having overcome their own challenges, some people are extremely eager to help others and share their strengths and experiences.

*I wanted to give back to those who had supported me throughout my journey and, more importantly, to those who were going through what I did. **VOLUNTEER***

Volunteering can also be helpful as it requires many of the same skills as paid employment. To this end it helps volunteers by building their skills (such as communication or computer literacy) and areas of knowledge (such as technical knowhow or policy expertise). These skills can then be translated to demonstrate the competencies needed to gain paid employment.

Volunteering may also provide opportunities to meet people – both friends and useful professional contacts. Lastly, volunteering demonstrates dedication – to put in time and effort to help others shows how willing a person is to work hard and exercise a long-term vision of personal development.

I needed to try and gain some work experience – I am finding it difficult to get paid employment without any.

VOLUNTEER

The Institute for Voluntary Research and partners developed *Assessing Voluntary Experiences: A portfolio of skills learned through volunteering* (pdf) which is designed to ‘assist you to reflect upon your voluntary experiences, to help you identify the skills you have learnt or developed and to help you to interpret these skills and experiences for potential employers’. If you are currently volunteering, this may be a good way of identifying the skills you are learning and demonstrating them in job applications.

Volunteers can cultivate a relationship with clients that paid staff may not be able to. They can be a critical friend outside the more formal practitioner/client relationship, and may perhaps have different skills and knowledge that will bring a fresh perspective and an independence of opinion.

1.2 Volunteering and the law

Volunteers do not currently have the same rights as paid employees, and the label of ‘volunteer’ does not in itself have a precise legal meaning. Whilst any volunteer who has a written contact with an employer is likely to have certain rights, many volunteers may not have full formal contracts. However, contracts are not only formally written and signed agreements – verbal arrangements and even just ongoing working relationships can all constitute types of contracts in the eyes of the law. The arrangements that volunteers and their employers come to are likely to be varied and flexible.

It's best for volunteers to read up on the topic and then clearly communicate what is needed and expected on both sides through the whole process. Induction and supervision should be used by volunteers to clarify their status within the organisation and raise any questions on how volunteering may impact on other elements of their life.

Read more:

- *Laws and rules* – Volunteering England

Volunteers have more freedom to do and say what they want and in how they interact with other colleagues and clients. The divides between volunteers and clients are not as defined or rigid as with paid staff.

VOLUNTEER MANAGER

1.3 Benefits

Jobcentre Plus defines volunteering as 'when you choose to give your time and energy to benefit other people without being paid for it' and acknowledges that 'volunteering can give you a much better chance of finding paid work'. Usually there is no limit to the amount of volunteering a person can do whilst claiming benefits, as long as they continue to meet the standard criteria of their benefit scheme. In terms of claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) a person who volunteers must also be actively looking for paid work; available for work; able to attend an interview at 48 hours' notice; and able to start a job at a week's notice.

Benefits laws are a bit woolly and off-putting.

VOLUNTEER MANAGER

A person who volunteers full-time for an organisation is described as a voluntary worker and if they receive an allowance from their employer to cover part of basic living costs, then they may not be eligible for benefits.

A person who does a paid job cannot decide to refuse payment in order to qualify as a volunteer and consequently claim any benefits available.

Volunteering England identifies the following key rules whilst claiming benefits:

- Keep to the normal rules of claiming benefits
- Tell your contact at Jobcentre Plus or whoever pays your benefits before starting volunteering
- Only claim for out-of-pocket expenses incurred and never allowances

Read more:

- [Volunteering and state benefits \(pdf\)](#) – Volunteering England
- [Volunteering while getting benefits \(pdf\)](#) – Jobcentre Plus

1.4 Criminal Records Bureau checks

The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) is an organisation specifically created to check the criminal records of prospective employees (including volunteers) for organisations. It is used by organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors and is designed to assess the suitability of people for working with vulnerable groups - including families and children.

Volunteers will often need a CRB check before working with substance users and families. Since CRB checks usually take several months to be processed, volunteers should encourage managers to start the application process as soon as possible.

For volunteers who know that their CRB check will bring up past convictions it is best to be honest and open with managers – for most people the criminal record may not in itself have any impact on the volunteering opportunity.

Read more:

- [An Introduction to Criminal Records Bureau Disclosures \(CRB Checks\) \(pdf\)](#) – Volunteering England

Working with vulnerable adults means that enhanced CRBs and risk assessment need to be in place for volunteers with criminal convictions – this has had an impact on placing volunteers.

VOLUNTEER MANAGER

1.5 Induction

Induction is an area where volunteers often report mixed experiences. As the first stage of training for a volunteer it represents an important chance to have organisational structures explained, values conveyed and instilled and generally be put at ease.

A good induction will set the tone for a volunteer's entire time working with an organisation; indeed a very poor induction may dissuade a potential volunteer from accepting a position. Inductions should cover a tour of the premises; explanation of health and safety protocols and core policies (including expenses); meeting other members of staff and hearing about their backgrounds and experiences; realistically setting and managing expectations; establishing working patterns; and a chance to raise initial worries and hopes. This dialogue should then be continued through the supervision process.

Volunteering should be exciting at the start and it's important to capitalise on this enthusiasm. However, don't be tempted to rush things – take time to build up your contacts, skills and experience.

Try not to do too much at the beginning and take as many training opportunities, including personal development, as you can. **VOLUNTEER MANAGER**

1.6 Supervision

Volunteers are employees just like paid staff, and just like paid staff they need on-going support and supervision. Volunteers are more likely than paid staff to work a smaller amount of hours per week and may be more likely to be at risk of becoming isolated and cut off from their manager.

Volunteers should encourage their managers to implement regular, ongoing support and supervision. During supervisions you can talk about your progress and how you feel about your workload and working patterns. This is the ideal time to bring up any additional needs, such as training or holidays.

For volunteers doing regular work with clients, it is important for them to receive appropriate clinical supervision to discuss client cases and try to resolve problems.

I've had no formal training – only experience in the misuse of drugs!
VOLUNTEER

1.7 Paths to volunteering

There are a number of organisations which can signpost you to volunteering opportunities.

Do-it is an online directory of opportunities which is also searchable by postcode.

Just People provide volunteering opportunities in the criminal justice system.

Local volunteer centres will be able to help you with local opportunities. You can search for the location of your local centre by inputting your postcode.

Time-bank is a national charity which both run its own volunteering projects and can signpost you to other local opportunities.

CASE STUDY: ROY

Volunteer, volunteer coordinator and family member
Hetty's, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire
www.hettys.co.uk



For the past two years, I have been the volunteer coordinator for Hetty's. Hetty's supports carers and families affected by someone else's drug or alcohol abuse and was established in 1996.

Coincidentally, in that same year my 20 year-old daughter died from an accidental overdose of alcohol and drugs. Needless to say, the effect and impact on me and my family was devastating. It took many years to adapt to life without her, but over time a new and adjusted level of 'normality' began to return to our lives.

When I felt ready to undertake some voluntary work, and taking into account the circumstances of my loss, I suppose there was a natural attraction towards an organisation like Hetty's. I believed I had a lot to offer in terms of helping those experiencing the fallout from someone else's drug or alcohol abuse. Whilst fully recognising that this was no longer about me, I felt I had a level of understanding and empathy which went beyond any theoretical approach and could be useful in offering support to families.

In a sense, the work I do is a way of trying to make sure my daughter's life was not lost in vain and that through her loss, my life experience can be used to help those in need of support. I know that when I go home at the end of the day, I have been part of a wonderful team which really does make a difference to people's lives.

So no matter how old you are and whatever life has thrown at you over the years, volunteering is a rewarding way of using those lessons to benefit others. We all have different interests in life and individual personal skills – some of which have yet to be discovered. Volunteering is a way of tapping into and developing these skills, and using them to help others in a way which is both emotionally rewarding and supporting the greater community.

This section gives you information and signposts you to the basic tools you need if you currently manage volunteers. It explores the benefits of employing volunteers, discusses the common issues which may arise and illustrates all the topics with quotes from the real people who have been there and done it.

2.1 Why employ volunteers?

Volunteers can contribute a great deal to any service. Of course the most immediate attraction to employers is that they are not salaried, which naturally saves money for the organisation; however, volunteers must not be treated as simply free resources which can look after themselves. They need to be supported just like any other member of staff. In many ways the best approach to managing volunteers is to treat them like anyone else – give them the same support and expect them to follow the same processes.

Read more:

- [Volunteer Management Portal](#) – Volunteering England
- [Managing Volunteers page](#) – Skills-Third Sector
- [Managing Volunteers Overview](#) – National Council for Voluntary Organisations
- [Managing Volunteers in Organisations that work with Offenders and Ex-Offenders \(pdf\)](#) – CLINKS
- The Association of Volunteer Managers has resources including an [online support form](#) for managers.

2.2 Getting qualified as a manager

As well as being generally beneficial to organisations, managing volunteers can help the continued professional development of managers by contributing to a portfolio of evidence that can be submitted towards a qualification. National Occupational Standards (NOS), created by Skills-Third Sector, are available to describe the competencies needed to successfully manage volunteers. The qualifications that exist for volunteer management use these standards as their basis.

Read more:

- [National Occupational Standards for managing volunteers \(pdf\)](#) – Skills-Third Sector
- [Why volunteer management requires specific skills \(pdf\)](#) – Skills-Third Sector
- [Advanced Apprenticeships in Volunteer Management](#) – Skills-Third Sector

Volunteers need to feel valued, with lots of support and validation. In order to retain volunteers there need to be clear structures and support mechanisms dedicated to them, separate from staffing structures.

VOLUNTEER MANAGER

2.3 Recruitment

The role profiles in Appendix A can be used by managers when recruiting volunteers. They should be used in combination with job descriptions when advertising and short listing for a job, to describe to applicants the competencies they need. Using an effective role profile has the benefit of promoting transparency and equality throughout the process. Everything a candidate needs to demonstrate is clearly specified in a set of measures which apply to all people equally, regardless of any individual characteristics. Questions and tests used in recruitment can then be designed specifically to allow candidates to demonstrate competencies.

Read more:

- *The Recruitment Guide* – Volunteer England
- *The Seven Deadly Sins of Recruiting Volunteers* – Volunteer Power

2.4 Induction

A comprehensive induction pack is a very useful resource to have for all employees. Once created it can be easily updated. A section can be made to cover volunteers and included or removed as appropriate. It's worth bearing in mind that volunteers will have less contact time than full-time paid employees and their inductions may therefore be harder to plan.

I participated in a three day induction. I found it very enjoyable and informative. I was taught about all the different roles with in the organisation. **VOLUNTEER**

It's important to set the tone during induction for the volunteer's time working with an organisation. Inductions should cover: a tour of the premises; explaining health and safety protocols and core policies (including expenses); introducing other members of staff; realistically setting and managing expectation; establishing working patterns; and listening to the volunteer's initial worries and hopes.

Please supervise your volunteers correctly as they need it. It is vital that volunteers are treated with the same respect as any other staff. **VOLUNTEER**

2.5 Supervision

Volunteers, like any staff, value support. Volunteers are more likely than paid staff to have less contact time and because of this they may need more support. Supervision is a chance for managers to catch up on the volunteer's recent experiences, hear any worries, discuss progress and advise on any training and support needs. If the volunteering has been around a potentially traumatic area of work – for example working with vulnerable people – make sure supervision is used to check on their wellbeing and happiness. Individual events may not be upsetting in themselves but can sometimes have a cumulative, longer term traumatic effect.

As well as general supervision to monitor performance and support needs, volunteers should also be given access to the same clinical supervision as paid staff if they are working with clients. This is a chance

to discuss individual cases, work around stumbling blocks and ensure that the volunteers are confident in their work with clients.

The forms in Appendices B and C can be downloaded, modified as needed and used in the supervision process.

During appraisal and supervision processes, the role profiles in Appendix A can be used by managers to monitor and assess the quality and effectiveness of the practice of staff. The structure of a role profile allows managers to identify exactly the areas where volunteers may need additional training or support, which can lead to the creation of staff development plans. Areas of excellence (as well as deficiency) can be identified using role profiles, by examining the evidence of how volunteers fulfil each area of competence.

Read more:

- [How can National Occupational Standards \(NOS\) benefit your business?](#)

2.5 Expenses

Volunteers can claim expenses for spending necessitated by their volunteering work (such as travel and food during the working day) but no more than that. Worrying about being out-of-pocket is something that may deter people from volunteering. It is therefore advisable for managers to explain their expenses protocol to volunteers as early as possible to reassure them; however, it is acceptable to encourage them to keep these costs to a minimum and to use the cheapest methods of transport available. It is best for volunteers to keep a record of any expenses and copies of receipts, tickets etc.

Read more:

- [Volunteer expenses \(pdf\)](#) – Wales Council for Voluntary Action
- [Volunteer expenses \(pdf\)](#) – Volunteer England

2.6 Criminal Records Bureau checks

The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) is an organisation specifically created to check the criminal records of prospective employees (including volunteers). It is used by organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors and is designed to assess the suitability of people for working with vulnerable groups, including families and children.

There are two types of CRB check – a standard version, and an enhanced version which is necessary for working with children and other vulnerable groups of people. A standard CRB check currently costs an organisation £26 and an enhanced one £36, but both are free if the applicant is a volunteer.

Organisations wishing to apply for CRB checks for prospective employees can either become a registered body (which requires the payment of a fee and at least 100 CRBs to be submitted per year) or apply through an umbrella body for the sector.

Sometimes CRB checks will disclose a criminal record. The section 'Some volunteers may have criminal records' on page 18 explains what to do if this is the case.

Read more:

- [Criminal Records Bureau](#)
- [An Introduction to Criminal Records Bureau Disclosures \(CRB Checks\) \(pdf\)](#) – Volunteering England
- [Volunteer screening and CRB checks \(doc\)](#) – Greater Manchester Voluntary Sector Support
- [eATA](#) is the umbrella organisation for the drug and alcohol services sector, which provides CRB checks

CASE STUDY: ABBY

Families and Friends Network, West Sussex



At the Families and Friends Network we recruit volunteers because we believe in giving people the opportunity to gain work experience, confidence and good training; involving local people in our project; and in the importance of ‘community matters’.

All our volunteers work really hard, and have a great sense of pride in their work and in themselves for giving something back to the community. They are always a joy to work with.

There are some challenges though. CRB checks can be difficult in recruiting as they take such a long time. Sometimes we have trouble keeping in regular contact with the volunteers because some of them are doing a full-time job at the same time.

I would definitely advise other organisations to recruit volunteers: it is so rewarding watching them grow and develop in their roles, and especially seeing them gain confidence. Volunteers also bring local knowledge, life experience and have a passion for local community issues.

At the Families and Friends Network we believe it is really important to give good support for all our volunteers and give them incentives. We provide group supervisions and remember volunteers' birthdays by sending a card from everyone at the network. We celebrate their achievements at the end of the year with a volunteer away-day, and give them certificates of achievement.

3 Volunteering, substance use and families

So, how is volunteering around substance use and families any different from any other type of volunteering? The previous section set out the generic tools and information that anyone working as a volunteer or volunteer manager might need. This section identifies why things might be different for people working around drugs, alcohol and families.

Volunteers who have no experience of substance use – either personally or through their family – and are simply interested in volunteering in the sector can look forward to an interesting and varied mix of work and people. Drug and alcohol use can affect anyone, which means that the people accessing services and needing support will come from all walks of life and backgrounds.

People who volunteer in the drug and alcohol field have generally been affected by these issues – if not directly then certainly indirectly. They bring with them a passion and commitment to make a difference.

VOLUNTEER MANAGER

3.1 Families of substance users need and deserve good support

The families of substance users have not always got the deal they deserve. On the one hand, society often expects them to support the drug or alcohol user socially, emotional, financially and practically: research by the UK Drug Policy Commission has indicated that this care saves the state £750m per year. But on the other hand, they are often not given much help in their own right and there is no statutory requirement for local authorities to provide support, with much of the work being done by small, grassroots voluntary and community sector organisations.

Families can suffer years or even decades of stress and worry on account of their substance using loved one. Having long been overlooked in policy-making, families are now getting some attention and support. However, there is still a long way to go and it's essential that families get good support for two key reasons: because they need and deserve it for themselves; and because well supported families can in turn effectively support substance users to access and achieve positive and sustained recovery.

3.2 Substance use is a sensitive subject

Working with families affected by drugs and alcohol may sometimes require extra care and sensitivity. Families often feel ashamed by the behaviour of their loved one and find it difficult admitting what's really going on to friends, family or professionals. Family members may feel that social stigma prevents them from sharing what they are going through. It is often years after their relative's drug or alcohol use starts causing problems that families seek support for themselves, and many never do at all.

3.3 Drugs are illegal

Apart from some 'legal highs' and alcohol, drug use revolves around the illegal supply, purchase and possession of controlled substances. Anyone who volunteers in the area should be up to speed with the law on drug use and if they feel uncomfortable at any time, know that they can look to their manager for support. Volunteers should never break the law, even if they think they may be helping in some way.

As well as personally supplying, purchasing or possessing drugs it is also illegal under the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971) to knowingly allow your premises to be used for the consumption of controlled substances.

Many prescription drugs become controlled if misused – they are considered to have a legitimate use when prescribed to someone with a medical condition but become controlled substances if sold on the street.

Read more:

- [Misuse of Drugs Act \(1971\)](#)
- [Drugs and the Law](#) – Release

3.4 Volunteering and the criminal justice system

The illegality of drug use inevitably leads to the criminal justice system playing a significant role in the lives of some substance users and their families. This may lead to some volunteering opportunities in the criminal justice system (for example visiting prisoners, or working with families in the visitor's centres of prisons).

For these types of opportunities, both volunteers and volunteer managers need to be familiar with any extra requirements that the involvement of criminal justice services may bring, such as visiting and security procedures in prisons. Clear communication between all parties should lead to an understanding of what is needed and help manage expectations.

Read more:

- [Volunteering Guides for organisations that work with offenders and ex-offenders](#) – CLINKS
- [What Can I Do? \(pdf\)](#) – pact and Churches' Criminal Justice Forum

3.5 Some volunteers will have been affected by substance use themselves

Some people may be motivated to volunteer by their own experiences of drug and alcohol use. This will give them insight and empathy when dealing with clients, but it may also bring with it some challenges of its own.

A special set of challenges and opportunities present themselves for someone in recovery who returns to the service he or she was treated at to work as a volunteer. On the one hand, their experience of the service and existing relationships with both staff and clients will be extremely useful; on the other, they will have to work hard to establish new relationships and a new role within the organisation.

*I am accepted more by clients than I am by paid staff. People that knew me from my using days were all really pleased that I'd sorted myself out but staff still treat me as a drug user because I'm still on methadone. **VOLUNTEER***

Having 'been there' themselves, the volunteer will be able to provide insight and empathy in working with clients struggling with their own substance use problems, whilst other staff members will have to get used to working with someone they may previously have treated as a client.

*As soon as people realise
I am an ex-alcoholic they
open up to me.*

VOLUNTEER

The label 'volunteering' can cover a wide variety of activities within the drug and alcohol sector. Whilst some volunteers will have direct experience of drug or alcohol use, others may be from families affected by these issues. Family members are often motivated to set up

support groups to provide mutual peer support for family members to come together and share experiences and strategies; Adfam itself began in this way.

If you are a family member interested in setting up a support group Adfam has produced a book *Setting up a family support group* which can be purchased online, alongside a variety of other resources.

In some of these cases, the formal roles of volunteer and volunteer manager are blurred and no longer relevant as the 'volunteer' may be the person running the entire support group. Some of these groups go on to receive funding from local authorities or other sources, further blurring boundaries as previously voluntary positions may then become funded.

3.6 Some volunteers may have criminal records

For volunteers with a history of substance use, it is possible that CRB checks will come back with past criminal activity identified - with acquisitive crime connected to drug use a common reason.. This need not be a cause for concern in itself. Many people with criminal records have not committed offences that will negatively impact on their capacity to volunteer.

Volunteers may themselves disclose criminal records when applying to volunteer or filling in CRB applications, and this openness should be encouraged. Managers treat volunteers in an open-minded and non-judgemental manner. A CRB check which returns something does not immediately equate to a volunteer who is unsuitable for employment.

Volunteering represents an opportunity for change and positive development, and all volunteers should be given a chance to prove themselves without being handicapped by past actions. For volunteer managers who work outside the substance misuse field, there is no reason to be worried by historic substance use of volunteers – each individual should be assessed on their own merits and current position in their journey of recovery. Organisational policy and child or adult protection policies should be consulted and used to decide on the suitability of a candidate.

The idea of a 'two year rule' has been around for a long time in the drug sector and refers to the idea that employees (including volunteers) must be drug-free for two years before being employed. This was never a rule officially supported by the National Treatment Agency (NTA) or other organisations, but has passed into common currency. It is potentially damaging to the recovery prospects of substance users and should not be used. Instead, volunteer managers should use their judgement on a case-by-case basis to assess the needs, capabilities and competencies of potential volunteers. They should also take into account the support structure the volunteer has in place to aid their recovery.

Someone with very little social support from friends and family, an unstable housing situation and other problematic issues in their life may be less ready to take up a demanding volunteering position than someone with an accepting community, supportive social network and stable housing.

As the NTA notes: 'appointing someone to a post (voluntary or paid) should only depend on their competencies to do the job...time drug-free is not an indicator of competence'. A more subtle judgement than a blunt 'two years' is clearly needed.

Read more:

- [Recruiting volunteers with criminal convictions](#) – Volunteering England
- [Two year rule note \(pdf\)](#) – NTA

3.7 Self-disclosure

For a volunteer with a substance-using past, self-disclosure may present some significant challenges. Developing guidance on self-disclosure is the prerogative of every organisation, and advice on when (or if) to disclose to clients will vary. Volunteers have told us that self-disclosure has helped them build relationships with clients, but it's for every volunteer and their manager to decide exactly how disclosure should happen.

Being able to self-disclose broke down numerous barriers in the relationship between me and those I came into contact with.

VOLUNTEER

For both volunteers and volunteer managers the decision must be taken very carefully, with due thought given to how it may affect relationships with clients.

I have a massive issue around not being able to disclose in my work role as it feels like I am lying to clients when they ask me certain questions. **VOLUNTEER**

3.8 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is very important when volunteering around substance use and families. Substance users or their families may share traumatic experiences regarding drug or alcohol use (or further issues such as mental health difficulties, domestic violence or other forms of abuse) that they would not wish to be shared with other staff. Clients may also be reluctant to share experiences around substance use due to their illegal nature. Honest and open dialogue will be more likely if clients are put at ease by being aware of, and having confidence in, the confidentiality policy.

Confidentiality issues may also arise when a substance user in recovery returns to volunteer in the service they previously accessed for treatment. The volunteer may have pre-existing relationships with clients (including having used drugs or alcohol together) – in this case it's best they inform their manager and, if possible, avoid direct work with those clients. In a small service this may not always be possible, in which case the volunteer and manager should discuss the topic during supervision and monitor the relationship.

Although the confidentiality of experiences shared by clients and families is of paramount importance, exceptions must always exist for instances when the safety of an individual or child is at risk. In practice this means that all staff, including volunteers, must be aware of the confidentiality policy of the organisation and make sure clients understand that it will be breached if there is a serious worry about the safety of an individual, a child or others.

It is possible that sometimes a volunteer or manager may bump into a client in a social setting or in the community. In this case confidentiality must still be observed, even though the setting is not the normal professional one. Information disclosed in sessions in the work environment should be never be shared outside them (except if there is a safety risk as described above).

3.9 Domestic violence

Most people who use drugs or alcohol are not abusive or violent towards a partner or family member. However, research shows that perpetrators often use drugs and alcohol before an assault (the figures from the Home Office and British Crime Survey range from 44-73% under influence of alcohol when an assault occurs, and 12-18% for drugs). This does not mean drugs and alcohol are excuse for abuse – perpetrators still choose to be abusive, and the vast majority also use abuse when sober.

You should be aware of what to do if you come across a situation where you suspect domestic violence might be happening – if you fear that your client or anyone else is in immediate danger ring the police (999). If you would like further support you can ring the national domestic violence helpline (0808 2000 247) which can offer advice and support for both victims and professionals. If a client discloses domestic violence and you have concerns about any children or vulnerable adults living in the home, you should follow your organisation's child and adult safeguarding policies. You can disclose this, even if the session was confidential.

If you are a volunteer, ask your manager about your organisation's child and adult protection and confidentiality policies.

Thinking It Through is a toolkit Adfam produced in conjunction with Against Violence and Abuse (AVA). It is for anyone who works with young people affected by substance use and domestic violence and can be [bought online](#).

The Stella Project is run by AVA and is the main project in the UK looking at the crossover between substance use and domestic violence. They have produced a toolkit which can be [accessed free online](#).

3.10 Child and adult protection

Organisations must have child and adult protection policies in place whether they work directly or indirectly with vulnerable groups of clients such as children, families or substance users. It is therefore important for managers to ensure that their organisation has developed these policies and that the volunteers are familiar with them and pose no risk to clients.

Read more:

- [Protection and safeguarding](#) – Volunteering England

Real voices in volunteering – ten messages

Adfam consulted 21 volunteers and 15 volunteer managers in person and online. We would like to give a special thanks to these people who have contributed their real life experiences to this toolkit. Their opinions and expertise have been used to inform the entire project and this section contains the top ten messages of good practice for both volunteers and managers.

1 Equality

'You are part of their team – there is no 'us and them'' (Volunteer manager). Treating volunteers like 'normal' paid staff was singled out as important by many volunteers. Managers felt that treating volunteers like other staff helped improve their practice.

2 Inclusivity

The importance of inclusivity and listening to the experiences of volunteers was also mentioned as important, with one volunteer manager saying *'always treat them as equals and involve them in all the workings of your organisation – they may well be sat on the commissioning board deciding your fate someday!'*

3 Volunteering as its own reward

'Volunteering is a real opportunity to make changes in your own life and gain experience' (Volunteer manager). For a multitude of reasons volunteering was considered as positive and improving. Most volunteers mentioned wishing to expand their skills in some way, with a few also making reference to their own experiences with drugs and alcohol.

4 Volunteering is personal

Volunteers have their own experiences which will inform and enrich their work – *'Volunteers in my view bring more personal motivation'* (Volunteer manager).

5 Go for it...

'Be brave – step out there!' (Volunteer manager). Many people stressed the importance of being bold and going for every opportunity that arose.

6 ...but take time to build up skills, knowledge and strategies

'It can be so rewarding but try not to do too much at the beginning' (Volunteer). It may be tempting for volunteers to try and do everything straight away. Whilst this enthusiasm is priceless and should be capitalised on, don't be tempted to dive in without the necessary preparation and support.

7 Ongoing support is best for everyone

Both volunteers and managers reported decent and ongoing support as essential to a profitable volunteering experience. *'Encourage us, reassure us and be patient with us'* (Volunteer).

8 Preparation is important

'Have all structures and processes in place before you set any more up' (Volunteer manager). The value of preparation and having a full set of resources to support recruitment and supervision was clear from consultation. Planning ahead will also be needed for CRB checks.

9 Be open to learning opportunities

'Be open to having your pre-conceptions challenged: don't pretend to know about something you don't, you will get sussed out' (Volunteer manager). For both volunteer and manager the process is a learning and development opportunity that can broaden skills, outlook and knowledge.

10 Spread the word

'Have passion, enthusiasm and a can-do attitude. Share your experience to encourage more people to volunteer.' (Volunteer) Volunteering benefits everyone – spread the message!

CASE STUDY: SENAN

Volunteer and ex-service user
Solihull Integrated Addiction Services (SIAS), Solihull
www.freedomfromdrugs.org.uk



I was a service user at Solihull Integrated Addiction Services (SIAS) and first got involved with volunteering through their service user group. I do some of the family support work and use my experience to help families understand more the nature of addiction and what it's like to be an addict.

I have great experience in this field from personal drug use issues and have a passion for this type of work. It keeps me busy and gives something back to the community. To be honest I wasn't sure what to expect but I really enjoy what I'm doing.

I do feel part of the team – other staff and volunteers have all helped me along the way. I was the first volunteer to come through and I'm being trained as I go along. I've been given in-house training in various areas and have access to several managers and our volunteer supervisor.

I did use the service myself and this has been both a good and bad thing. Over-familiarity with some service users means I have had to put in boundaries with certain people.

To anyone in my position interested in volunteering I'd say be flexible, have realistic goals and be prepared to put the work in – you get nothing for nothing!

Appendix A: Role profiles

As part of the Drug Sector Partnership Adfam carried out a workforce development project looking at ways of supporting practitioners working with families affected by substance use. After consulting with stakeholders, role profiles were created based on the units available in the NOS directory. The role profiles have now been disseminated within the sector for use by organisations. Role profiles can be used in the recruitment process, appraisal and supervision of staff, the creation of staff development plans, any changes in service targets or outcomes to respond to new needs and other processes.

Click on the unit titles to access them on the NOS Directory.

Adfam is also developing an accreditation scheme for practitioners, with an assessment made of their competencies.

Family support practitioner

This role profile sets out the main competencies of a practitioner working with families affected by drug or alcohol use.

Core competencies

- Promote effective communication and information sharing
 - Promote, monitor and maintain health, safety and security in the workplace
 - Reflect on, develop and maintain your practice
 - Develop practices which promote choice, well-being and protection of all individuals
-

Additional competencies

- Contribute to safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults
- Assess and act upon immediate risk of danger to substance users
- Raise awareness about substances, their use and effects
- Work with families, carers and individuals during times of crisis
- Assess the needs of carers and families of individuals with mental health needs

Drug and alcohol practitioners

This role profile outlines the additional competencies that a drug and alcohol practitioner would need to work with families.

- Contribute to safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults
- Provide services to those affected by someone else's substance use

Appendix B: Job description

Job title	
Department	Reporting to
Location	
Grade (if appropriate)	Date (when last updated)
Main purpose of job (one sentence describing the overall purpose of the job)	
Main tasks of the job (either list the relevant units from National Occupational Standards, or reference tasks to the relevant unit numbers)	
Level of responsibility (e.g. number of staff supervised, role as a team member, compliance with regulations/legislation etc)	
Working conditions (e.g. hours of work, any travelling required etc)	

Appendix C: Appraisal form

Appraisee

Appraiser

Section 1: Objectives agreed for the coming year

To be achieved by when?

Section 2 Any other actions to be taken

By whom?

Signature of appraisee

Date

Signature of appraiser

Date

Appendix D: Supervision form

Name

Issues discussed and any actions agreed

To be achieved by when?

Date and time of next supervision meeting

Supervisor's signature

Date

Staff signature

Date

Appendix E: Useful resources and organisations

Adfam

Adfam is the national umbrella organisation working to improve the quality of life for families affected by drug and alcohol use.

www.adfam.org.uk

Association of Volunteer Managers (AVM)

AVM is an independent organisation which represents any managers of volunteers. It campaigns to promote the interests of this group and develops and disseminates good practice.

www.volunteermanagers.org.uk

CLINKS Volunteering Guides

CLINKS has produced five comprehensive guides for volunteering and the criminal justice sector – service user involvement; setting up a project; managing volunteers; demonstrating effectiveness; and quality standards.

www.clinks.org/publications/reports/vol_guides

CSV

CSV is a training and volunteering charity which works to reduce social exclusion and encourage a positive stake in society for everyone by providing volunteering opportunities, education and good practice.

www.csv.org.uk

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

The DWP is the government department responsible for benefits and employment law.

www.dwp.gov.uk

Do-it

Do-it provides a searchable online database of volunteering opportunities which can be accessed by volunteers and contributed to by organisations.

www.do-it.org.uk

Family and Parenting Institute

The Family and Parenting Institute is a charity which champions the needs of the family and campaigns for a more family friendly society.

www.familyandparenting.org

Greater Manchester Voluntary Sector Support (GMVSS) volunteer factsheets

GMVSS have produced a wide range of factsheets for both volunteers and volunteer managers.

www.gmvss.net/factsheets

Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR)

IVR conduct research and evaluations into volunteering projects, build the volunteering evidence base and disseminate good practice to the sector.

www.ivr.org.uk

Just People

Just People is an initiative from the Prison Advice and Care Trust (pact) which promotes volunteering in the criminal justice sector. Just People recruit and prepare volunteers for work with other organisations in the sector.

www.justvolunteer.org

Job and skills search

Job and skills search is a searchable online database of volunteering opportunities developed by Directgov.

<http://jobseekers.direct.gov.uk/homepagevw.aspx>

National Occupational Standards (NOS) directory

The NOS directory lists the NOS available for use by volunteers and managers to build role profiles and support supervision.

www.ukstandards.co.uk

Pathways to Employment in London – A guide for drug and alcohol services

This DrugScope report outlines some of the challenges facing substance users in London. It contains information and good practice for services and managers.

www.drugscope.org.uk/Resources/Drugscope/Documents/PDF/Policy/employment-report-revised.pdf

Staff development toolkit for drug and alcohol services

This resource from the National Treatment Agency (NTA) covers many tools and topics useful to volunteer managers, including National Occupational Standards.

www.nta.nhs.uk/uploads/nta_staff_development_toolkit_2006.pdf

Skills Hub

Skills Hub is a searchable, free online directory of resources for drug and alcohol workers.

www.skillsconsortium.org.uk/skillshub.aspx

The Stella Project

The Stella Project is run by Against Violence and Abuse (AVA) and is the main UK project looking at the crossovers between substance use and domestic violence.

www.avaproject.org.uk/our-projects/stella-project.aspx

Time Bank

Time Bank is a national charity which runs volunteering projects on various social issues and has a searchable database of volunteering opportunities.

<http://timebank.org.uk>

Volunteering England

Volunteering England is a charity and membership organisation which seeks to promote volunteering in England. Its work includes policy, projects, good practice development and research.

www.volunteering.org.uk

Volunteering Good Practice Bank (Volunteering England)

Volunteering England have put together this large, searchable online bank of information for both volunteers and volunteer managers.

www.volunteering.org.uk/goodpractice

Volunteer Management Wiki

The Volunteer Management Wiki is an online bank of resources that is open to everyone to edit.

www.wiki.volunteermanagers.org.uk

Volunteering Wales

Volunteering Wales provide information and advice for current and prospective volunteers in Wales.

www.volunteering-wales.net