



Salford Volunteer Centre




Good Practice Guidelines

Version 4

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 Celebrating 40 years of
making a difference in Salford

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Salford's Good Practice Guidelines in Volunteer Management

Any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives. Central to this definition is the fact that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual.

This can include formal activity undertaken through public, private and voluntary organisations as well as informal community participation and social action. Everyone has the right to volunteer and volunteering can have significant benefits for individuals. – NCVO, 2015

Introduction

These guidelines have been written by Salford Volunteer Centre in consultation with Salford's Volunteering Steering Group; The Salford Volunteer Coordinators Forum - VIVA; Volunteering Greater Manchester; and with the aid of guidance from the national volunteering body - NCVO.

Salford already has some excellent examples of good practice in volunteer management to draw on. These guidelines aim to make such good practice accessible to an even broader range of voluntary organisations, community groups, faith groups, social enterprises and cooperatives that involve volunteers. This dissemination of good practice will bring us closer to realising our long term vision, in which:

- Salford is a place that fully values its volunteers and their contribution
- There is an improved standard of volunteering experience for all people who volunteer

What are the Good Practice Guidelines?

The Guidelines provide a good practice checklist for all organisations that involve volunteers. They can be used on their own or in liaison with CVS or Volunteer Centre Development Workers. The guidelines are intended as an introduction. Throughout the guide are references and links to further information, good practice examples and resources. Although specialist subjects, such as safeguarding or diversity in volunteering, are not covered in great detail, the guide does include a list of additional resources and useful

links, which will signpost to specialist services in volunteer management and to resources on working with specific groups of volunteers.

Who are the Guidelines for?

The Guidelines are intended for voluntary organisations, community groups, faith groups, social enterprises and co operatives who currently involve volunteers or those who want to set up a volunteer programme.

Some organisations, for example, may be planning to involve volunteers for the first time and be looking for initial guidance, whilst others may already have a successful volunteer programme in place and want to review it or address specific issues such as diversity or volunteer retention.

The guidelines provide an introduction to the following good practice areas:

1. Drawing up a Volunteer Policy
2. Recruitment and Selection
3. Safer Recruitment
4. Management of Volunteers
5. Support and Development of Volunteers
6. Payment of Expenses
7. Volunteers Who Claim Unemployment and Related Benefits
8. Exit Policies

Why follow the Good Practice Guidelines?

- To help recruit, train and retain the type of volunteers that are needed
- To be part of a Salford-wide strategy which encourages high standards in the delivery of services by volunteers and high standards in the volunteering experience
- To provide an ongoing checklist on good practice in working with volunteers in your organisation
- To protect and safeguard volunteers working in your organisation
- To demonstrate to potential funders your organisation's commitment to good practice

The Benefits of Involving Volunteers

- Volunteers provide a diverse pool of experience
- Volunteers help an organisation to achieve its aims and achieve a level of service that could not otherwise be provided
- Volunteers give organisations a wider range of skills to utilise
- Having volunteers can make an organisation more welcoming for service users and more reflective of society

Motivations of Volunteers

Volunteers can be motivated by the opportunity to:

- Learn new skills
- Use existing skills
- Do something for their community
- Gain work experience
- Support their studies
- Make friends
- Feel useful

Understanding what motivates volunteers is the key to retaining them and is something you can discuss during an informal interview. It must be remembered, however, that motivations can change over time, so ongoing communication is important.

Volunteer Case Study 1: Brian

Brian had been unemployed for three years due to ill health. At the Salford Volunteer Centre 'Drop In' service he explained that whilst he couldn't find employment for himself, he had helped several of his friends find work by aiding them put together CVs and fill in application forms. The Volunteer Centre told him that there was a volunteering opportunity available at a community Job Club, offering support to people on benefits.

Brian applied and started volunteering for the project, helping people develop their I.T. skills, fill in application forms, compile CVs and similar tasks which he had an aptitude for. Brian was so effective within this role that when an employment opportunity arose within the project he was clearly the leading candidate for the job.

"Brian said that...using our service 'gave him options'

and was grateful we had managed to find him

his 'ideal' opportunity."

Brian is now employed and works for 5 hours a week. He has been instrumental in helping 16 people attending the Job Club find employment and the Club has been featured in an article by the Salford Advertiser. Brian said that coming to the Volunteer Centre and using our service 'gave him options' and was grateful we had managed to find him his 'ideal' opportunity. He also said that he believed we had 'truly listened and had taken on board' what he had said.

Guideline 1: Drawing up a Volunteer Policy

A volunteer policy is a framework for a volunteer programme. It enables an organisation to consider the benefits and challenges that come with involving volunteers. The process of writing a volunteer policy means you have to consider why and how you involve volunteers and where they fit in with the aims of the organisation. The volunteer policy links together all the other policies in your organisation that affect volunteers, such as recruitment, expenses, equal opportunities and diversity and so on. **A Volunteer Policy should be written in clear English, if it is unnecessarily complicated people will not use it.**

Why is a volunteer policy needed?

- A volunteer policy shows the commitment of the organisation to its volunteers.
- A volunteer policy gives a clear summary of what volunteers can expect in terms of recruitment, training, volunteer roles, expenses and supervision. It clarifies the volunteers' role within the organisation so they know how they can expect to be treated.
- Having a volunteer policy helps to ensure that your volunteers are treated equally and fairly because the ability to refer to a written policy ensures that decisions and procedures are consistent.
- It helps to clarify a volunteer's role within the organisation in the eyes of paid staff, trustees and others who may be involved with the organisation.

When drawing up a volunteer policy consult with existing volunteers, paid staff and senior management.

What should a volunteer policy include?

Each volunteer policy will be unique to the organisation but should include the following:

- What the organisation actually does and its mission statement

- Statement of intent – this is a short statement that outlines why you want volunteers to be involved in your organisation and how they help the organisation achieve its aims. In organisations where there are paid staff the statement would clarify that volunteers will not replace paid staff but will enhance the service provided.

Your volunteer policy can be kept more concise by referring volunteers to existing policies, rather than including them at detailed length within the volunteer policy itself. Other information can be captured under the following headings:

Recruitment

The policy should include details of what your recruitment process actually entails, i.e. whether you use application forms, what form any interview process takes, whether you require references or carry out Disclosure and Barring Service checks etc.

Volunteer Role Description

Having a clear role description which includes the tasks you want a volunteer to undertake helps when recruiting, and makes it easier to match the skills of the volunteer to the requirements of the role. A clear role description will also provide clarity for the volunteer in terms of what they are being asked to do. A role description, however, doesn't have to be 'set in stone' and can be adapted to suit the skills of a particular volunteer. This means that if you have a volunteer who meets part of the role description but not all of it then you shouldn't necessarily discount them.

Induction

The policy should outline the induction process that volunteers will be offered when starting their role, and what form this might take.

Training

Outline whether training is offered as part of the volunteer role, and how volunteers can access further relevant training. Remember – any training should be relevant to the volunteer's role in order to be compliant with benefit rules.

Supervision and Support

The section on supervision and support should include details of precisely who will be supporting the volunteer, as well as what form any ongoing supervision will take, i.e. how often supervision will take place and who will provide it. Alongside this should be a named person whom the volunteer can consult in the event of any problems arising.

Expenses

The policy must make it clear that out of pocket expenses will be paid to volunteers. This will ensure that your volunteer programme is inclusive and open to all.

Insurance

Your organisations Insurance Policy should refer to the fact that you involve volunteers and what activities they undertake.

Health and Safety

You should direct people to your Health and Safety Policy so they know how to access it. Health and Safety issues should also be covered as part of the volunteer induction process.

Equalities and Diversity

It is good practice to include volunteers in your equalities and diversity policy. This is where your organisation can set out its commitment to welcoming volunteers from all backgrounds and acknowledge the positive impact that volunteers have on your work.

Problem Solving Procedures

It is sensible to have procedures in place to deal with complaints by or about volunteers. These should be separate and distinct from those which apply to paid staff.

Confidentiality

Where issues of confidentiality are concerned the volunteer policy should inform volunteers that they are bound by the same requirements as paid staff.

Websites

Download our volunteer policy toolkit from our website:

<https://www.salfordcvs.co.uk/sites/salfordcvs.co.uk/files/Creating%20a%20Volunteer%20Policy%20-Toolkit.pdf>

Guideline 2: Recruitment and Selection

The recruitment and selection process for volunteers will depend on your organisation and the role the volunteers will be applying for. Some organisations have more people wanting to volunteer than they can take on so need to select, others need to screen volunteers carefully because of the nature of the work and some can take on anybody who is interested. The procedures you have in place need to suit your organisation whilst still being fair and welcoming.

Role Descriptions

Before recruiting volunteers make sure you have worked out exactly what you want volunteers to do. Having clear role descriptions will simplify the recruitment process and potential volunteers like to know exactly what they will be expected of them.

Recruitment Methods

It is a good idea to recruit your volunteers in a wide variety of ways as this will help recruit a more diverse range of people. Ways of promoting your volunteer role include:-

- Volunteer Centre
- Word of mouth
- Posters and/or leaflets that can be distributed in various places such as libraries, job centres and community centres
- Presentations or talks about your organisation to specific groups

It is important to have separate recruitment processes for volunteers and paid staff. It is also advisable to develop distinct application forms for volunteers, rather than merely adapting those which are used when recruiting paid staff and you also shouldn't conduct any interviews in the way you would for paid staff, as this would be overly formal and inappropriate.

Your recruitment process may include some or all of the following:

Application forms

If you do use application forms make sure they are concise, clear and accessible in order to avoid putting people off. Volunteer Centre can give example role descriptions and application forms. Contact

Claire.roberts@salfordcvs.co.uk

Informal interview / introductory chat

Remember that this is a two way process and is as much about the volunteer deciding whether they like the organisation as you deciding whether they are appropriate for the role. This is not a job interview and therefore shouldn't be as formal as one. Try to encourage the potential volunteer to relax so that they can perform effectively in the interview.

References

They can be useful and are essential if volunteers are working with children or vulnerable adults. It must be remembered, however, that asking for references may prove to be a barrier to volunteering. If you require a reference from a previous employer, for example, this could prove difficult for anyone who hasn't recently been employed. In cases such as these, try to think about other people the volunteers could supply references from.

DBS checks

Whether you run a Disclosure and Barring Service check depends upon the type of role being undertaken by the volunteer, and the nature of the organisation and the client group to be served. Please see guideline 3.

Trial period

It is a good idea to provide a volunteer with a temporary trial period. This is in the interest of both the organisation and the volunteer themselves, as it allows for a degree of flexibility and a chance to ensure that the volunteering opportunity meets all expectations.

If it transpires that a potential volunteer is not suitable for a role, they need clear feedback as to why this is so, followed by an alternative offer or a referral to the Volunteer Centre.

Try to follow up on any interest in volunteering promptly, and make sure the volunteer is fully engaged in the process as quickly as possible, since a failure to do so may see potentially valuable volunteers looking for opportunities elsewhere.

Guideline 3: Safer Recruitment

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Safer recruitment does not start and finish with applying for a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check. Remember that a DBS check will only provide information that is known to the police or other authorities. Relying on Disclosures may also lead to discrimination against people who would be suitable to work with clients or volunteers even if they have previous convictions. Instead organisations need to look thoroughly at their working and volunteer practices, to create a safer environment for all.

<https://www.gov.uk/dbs-check-requests-guidance-for-employers#overview>

Only certain roles are eligible for DBS checks, before you consider asking a volunteer to apply for a check you are legally responsible for ensuring that you are entitled to ask. It is illegal to DBS check somebody who is not eligible due to their role.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-check-eligible-positions-guidance>

If DBS checks are needed, the organisation must have a written policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders, in order to ensure that ex-offenders are not excluded from volunteering unnecessarily.

Day to day practice

Ultimately, more protection for everyone in the organisation comes through day to day good practice. Avoiding one to one contact between volunteers and vulnerable clients and carrying out risk assessments obviously reduces risk. Adequate supervision meetings are also important. As with any aspect of volunteering, small problems can become large ones if they aren't noticed and addressed early in the process. People in supervisory positions should be properly trained to ensure they can recognise when there is a problem and know how to deal with it.

The management of volunteers is just as important if not more so than the management of paid staff. Without being able to call on the incentive of reimbursement, volunteer managers need to give extra care and attention to the varied motivations that bring people to volunteering. These are likely to include:

- Desire to put something back into the community
- Wishing to meet new people
- Learning new skills
- Building self-esteem and self-confidence
- Providing a route to education or employment
- Simply having fun

Volunteer managers need to be aware of why people have chosen to volunteer in their organisations and make sure that the volunteering experience matches these expectations. In order to ensure the long term retention of their volunteers, volunteer managers need to pay close attention to the following:

- Volunteers are not used as a substitute for paid workers
- Volunteers are given a clear and interesting role description that is reviewed regularly to ensure they can thrive and develop in their role
- Volunteers are given suitable induction training and support at the beginning of their volunteer placement
- Each volunteer has a named contact for information and support
- Volunteers receive regular supervision through the most appropriate means, including one to one, in a group, via email, via phone, text etc...
- Training is provided for each volunteer in order for them to carry out their role safely and well
- Volunteers' views are sought and they are given the opportunity to participate in decision making within the organisation
- Expectations of volunteers are made clear (preferably in writing) with regards to health and safety, equal opportunities and other roles and responsibilities (e.g. confidentiality)
- Each volunteer role is understood by all parties involved, including paid employees, the volunteer and the service users
- Each volunteer has access to and understands the organisation's problem-solving or grievance and complaints procedures
- Channels for clients, members of staff or volunteers to raise concerns and complaints should be clear, transparent and easy to

access. There should also be very clear guidelines on dealing with allegations of abuse.

Volunteer Case Study 2: Lesley

Lesley came to the VC with her health trainer to enquire about her options regarding volunteering. Lesley's confidence was very low and she had been unemployed for nearly 5 years. She said would prefer to do something where she met people rather than task orientated. Lesley was referred to the Salford Women's Centre which seemed to meet her requirements perfectly. Lesley started volunteering as a kitchen assistant but also lent a hand to any other tasks she was asked to do.

"Volunteering has been a life saver for me,

it has opened a lot of doors."

Lesley attended several Salford CVS training courses and as her confidence grew so did her volunteering responsibilities. Lesley is now proudly the Volunteer Coordinator for Salford Women's Centre and also coordinates volunteers for The Charities Shop. Lesley is now confident and looks and acts very differently to the individual that first visited the Volunteer Centre.

Lesley said "Volunteering has been a life saver for me; it has opened a lot of doors. I am now in part time employment. This time last year this was an impossibility because of my low self-esteem and lack of confidence, now things are really looking up".



Guideline 5: The Support, Recognition and Development of Volunteers

Support for volunteers is vitally important and how this is provided depends upon the context of the volunteering opportunity. Recognising and thanking volunteers for the work that they do shows that you value the time and effort your volunteers put in. It should also be remembered that if volunteers feel appreciated and are aware of the impact they make, they are more likely to remain in their role. Volunteers should always feel that they are integral members of an organisation and its work, and are therefore highly valued.

Ways in which you can support your volunteers

There should be a specific, named person the volunteer can go to with questions or queries.

Ensure that there is always somebody on hand to offer support to volunteers, even if it is on the end of a phone.

One effective means of supporting a new volunteer is to pair them with a 'buddy' - a more experienced volunteer who is willing to take an interest and provide advice and encouragement.

Holding regular volunteer meetings will provide a vehicle via which all of your volunteers can meet up, share experiences and have input into the work of the organisation.

Regular supervision sessions help to ensure good two way communication and provide the opportunity to find out how the volunteer is prospering, whether they are enjoying the role and if they have any training needs.

Recognition

Regularly thank and show appreciation to volunteers, both formally and informally (during supervision, via emails, volunteer notice boards and newsletters, cards, social events, awards ceremonies, feedback and thank yous from service users, trustees and managers).

Recognise individual volunteer achievements, such as the number of hours volunteered, any training undertaken, individual contributions and progress made.

Maintain regular contact with volunteers via the most appropriate method: in person, by phone, email, text, newsletter, website, groups etc, whichever method means that contact is easiest to maintain.

Development

Formally evidence a volunteer's progress. Some volunteers want or need a formal record of their progress and achievement as evidence for prospective employers, trainers and other agencies. Talk to your volunteers about this and support them to create personal portfolios or records of achievement

Volunteers who need extra support

Volunteers with extra support needs include individuals who may have:

- Learning disabilities
- Mental health problems
- Physical disabilities
- Sensory impairments
- Issues around drug or alcohol rehabilitation

Or those who may be:

- Ex-offenders
- The long-term unemployed
- Housebound
- Individuals who speak very little English
- Individuals with low self-esteem

The support offered can take many forms, and will depend on the individual volunteer's needs. For instance, the Volunteer Manager may meet with the individual to discuss their needs and identify ways in which the organisation can support them to volunteer, or the volunteer may already have a carer or support worker who can assist them in performing their volunteer role. Some organisations may provide a buddy or a mentor; a more experienced volunteer or a member of staff. In some cases, volunteers may require extra supervision or support meetings.

The need for additional support isn't always ongoing, as some volunteers may only need extra support on their first day with the organisation, to help them settle in. For other volunteers, they may only need help with learning the route from their home to the place where they will be volunteering.

By offering a more in-depth level of support, organisations find that they can broaden their volunteer base by recruiting from sections of the community that they may not have previously reached. By making volunteering more inclusive, the organisation can demonstrate its commitment to equality and diversity.

Specific Support

Specific support could take the following forms:

- Helping would-be volunteers fill in forms.
- Offering interview support, for example, attending the interview with the client.
- Communication support for deaf clients.
- Support and guidance to clients with mental health needs where their confidence is lacking they have low self-esteem or issues around stress and anxiety.
- Travel training which can be useful for those whose placement is in an unfamiliar area and for clients with sight problems.
- Regular supervision, which may take the form of talking about any problems that a client may be facing in their placement or simply monitoring how the placement is progressing .

Involving individuals with support needs also gives them the opportunity to make a valuable contribution to both the organisation and the wider society. Not only can they benefit from the volunteering experience, but they can also 'give something back' and be the 'helper' rather than the 'helped'.

Managing volunteers with extra support needs should not make excessive demands on your time if you have clearly identified what you want the volunteer to do, and how much support you can realistically provide. As with all volunteers, it is best to have a clear task description and agreement about what induction, training and support will be provided. This should be agreed at the very beginning of the placement and regularly reviewed with the volunteer.

Volunteer Case Study 4: Ian

Ian lost his right arm and badly injured his leg in a motorbike accident. He is a very keen cyclist and doesn't let his disabilities slow him down.

He was referred by the VC to Cycling Projects where he has since become an invaluable member of their team helping out at the cycle track in any way he can. Earlier this year he completed an impressive one –armed fundraising swim, managing a staggering 27 lengths and raising in excess of £500 for the charity.

He has proved himself to be a reliable and conscientious volunteer and because of his efforts has received a glowing reference from Cycling Projects, which he has since used to secure paid employment. Ian received recognition for his dedication and hard work when Cycling Projects nominated him for the Heart of Salford Awards in the Personal Achievement category. He received a certificate signed by the Mayor of Salford and all his accomplishments were read out to an appreciative audience.

Ian said "I really enjoy volunteering. It got me off my backside and I got a job through it too!"



'Cycling projects nominated him for the

Heart of Salford Awards in the

Personal Achievement category.'

Guideline 6: Expenses

The reimbursement of volunteer expenses can help an organisation to meet its equality and diversity commitments by reducing a barrier to volunteering often experienced by those on low incomes or in receipt of state benefits.

Therefore, organisations are advised to build volunteer expenses into all funding applications or budgets as part of the regular costs of a volunteer programme. Organisations should offer to pay out-of-pocket expense to volunteers. In general any reasonable expense incurred as part of the volunteering activity should be reimbursed.

Out of Pocket Expenses

This can include:

- Travel to and from the place of volunteering.
- Travel while volunteering.
- Meals and refreshments taken while volunteering.
- Care of dependants; including children, during volunteering.
- Postage, phone calls, stationery etc.
- Cost of protective clothing/special equipment etc.

The procedure for claiming expenses should be made clear and accessible to and be known by all volunteers. (It should be noted that not all volunteers will have bank accounts or be able to wait for their expenses.) To comply with both employment and benefits legislation, organisations should ensure volunteers can only claim and be reimbursed *actual* expenses against receipts. Flat rate payments that do not reflect actual expenses must be avoided.

Where volunteers do not want to claim their expenses, it is still useful to ask them to do so and then suggest that this could be made as a donation to the organisation or another charity. This means the organisation has an accurate record of the actual costs of supporting volunteers.

Salford CVS have a Volunteer Expenses Fund groups can apply to. More information available here: <https://www.salfordcvs.co.uk/grants-201516>

Guideline 7: Volunteers who claim unemployment and related benefits

Volunteers claiming benefits can be reassured by the organisation that they are allowed to volunteer for an unlimited number of hours as long as they fulfil the regulations of the benefits agency and meet the conditions of their particular benefit. It is the volunteer's responsibility to inform the benefits agency that they are volunteering.

Some benefit claimants need to do 35 hours each week of 'work search' activity, volunteering can count towards half of this. People can still volunteer as much as they like in their own time, such as at evenings or weekends.

Organisations can offer to supply the volunteer with a letter outlining their volunteer role; the letter can be given to the relevant benefits agency by the volunteer if wished.

Websites

Guidance on volunteer placements, rights and expenses:

<https://www.gov.uk/volunteering/when-you-can-volunteer>

For further guidance contact Claire.roberts@salfordcvs.co.uk

Guideline 8: Exit Policy

There are many reasons for a volunteer leaving; their individual circumstances might have changed, they might have finished their task or they might simply feel like a change. It doesn't matter why a volunteer left, exit interviews are an important tool if volunteer organisers are going to learn from their mistakes and make the volunteer experience a more positive one. They provide a great opportunity to reflect on policies and procedures. A volunteer may be more frank if they are leaving and feel able to evaluate their volunteer experience more honestly.

If a volunteer leaves of their own choice:

- Ensure they have an opportunity to discuss their decision.
- Recognise how their input has been of value to the organisation.
- Show appreciation.
- Complete an exit interview.
- Tell other members of the team (with the volunteers' permission) of their intention to leave.
- Maintain regular contact until they leave.
- Offer to write a reference.
- Introduce them to any link groups for ex-volunteers.

If a volunteer is being asked to leave because their own attitudes and values do not reflect those of the organisation, you need to:

- Arrange a meeting with the volunteer, documenting particular behaviour that is not in line with the organisation's policies, outlining your observations and giving time for a response.
- Arrange a follow up meeting.
- Be fair and balanced.
- Refer the volunteer onto their local Volunteer Centre for information about alternative volunteer opportunities.
- Follow up all meetings with a letter.
- Avoid apologising for the values of the organisation.

- Don't forget to thank them for volunteering for the organisation and wish them luck in the future.

When you are asking a volunteer to leave after misconduct, some of the key things to remember will be the same as above, but with some added suggestions. You must ensure that you have procedures in place to deal with such situations.

Also:

- The volunteer needs to feel they have had a fair hearing.
- Ensure the volunteer knows they can have representation throughout the process.
- Do not delay – try to complete the process within a matter of days, as drawing it out can be stressful for all parties.



Remember that an unhappy ex-volunteer can damage your reputation by bad-mouthing you to friends, colleagues and even in some cases, through the local press. Avoid this kind of negative publicity by being clear and fair and keeping people on your side wherever possible.

Further Advice

For further advice and information on how to improve on best practice in volunteer management and the implementation of these guidelines:

- The Volunteer Centre and Development Team at Salford CVS can provide advice, support and training including good practice advice in any aspect of volunteer management: www.salfordcvs.co.uk
- Guidance on Safeguarding Young People:
<http://www.partnersinsalford.org/sscb/work.htm>
<http://greatermanchesterscb.proceduresonline.com/>
- Guidance on Safeguarding Adults:
<http://www.partnersinsalford.org/asg.htm>
- Refugees and Asylum seekers:
http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/in_your_area/greater_manchester
- Mental Health:
<http://www.mindinsalford.org.uk/>
- Ex-offenders:
<http://www.nacro.org.uk/>
<http://www.backontrackmanchester.org.uk/publications/Volunteering%20with%20a%20criminal%20record/>
- General advice and information, good practice advice and support Volunteer Centre Salford or NCVO:
www.salfordcvs.co.uk
<http://www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/volunteering>