

**COMMUNITY
ACTION
SUFFOLK**

Strengthening the voluntary and community sector



Cost of Living: Volunteering

Information leaflet for Suffolk
Volunteer Coordinators

March 2023

Welcome

Welcome to the *Cost of Living: Volunteering information leaflet*

This information leaflet has been created by Community Action Suffolk (CAS) in partnership with the Suffolk Volunteering Strategy steering group. It provides an overview of what you may need to consider to help, support, retain and attract volunteers, as well as sources of further information and resources.

Cost of living

The Cost of Living crisis has had a direct impact on volunteers individually, while at the same time there is an increased demand for volunteers. Volunteers are being asked to do more and organisations are facing a shortage of volunteers as volunteering levels are decreasing. The number of hours current volunteers give is also decreasing.

With so many competing priorities for people, is volunteering having to move down the to do list or is it because volunteers cannot risk being out of pocket when volunteering? Are there other factors to consider in a crisis such as this?

How can VCFSE organisations support volunteers?

The cost of living crisis is likely to impact all of us at some point and this leaflet asks us all to consider how we can help, support, retain and attract volunteers and start meaningful conversations about the cost of living for volunteers.

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1. Considerations for Volunteer Leaders

Expenses

Ideally, a volunteer should never be out of pocket at any point by volunteering, but highlighting this now is more important than ever:

- Ensure you have a clear, easy-to-follow expenses process
- Make it clear in your volunteer opportunity adverts
- Consider the role of the volunteer and what expenses might be incurred as a result; the expenses for a home-based role will be different from a role which requires travel
- Remind volunteers to claim expenses (as appropriate)
- When planning volunteer involvement – include volunteer expenses
- Consider whether you make faster payments to reimburse volunteers if necessary

Involving volunteers does not mean there is no cost to an organisation or volunteer

Health and Wellbeing

Volunteers, like employees may need support with mental health, and financial worries can increase mental health concerns. Are you regularly catching up with volunteers to ask how they are?

- [Volunteer Now](#) highlights the Wellness Action Plan as a way to support the mental health of your volunteers
- Know what help and support is available to signpost volunteers to [Suffolk Mind](#)
[Dementia Connect: Alzheimer's Society](#)
[Suffolk Good Neighbour Network](#)
- Check in with your volunteers on a regular basis
- [The Samaritans](#) are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to talk through any issues

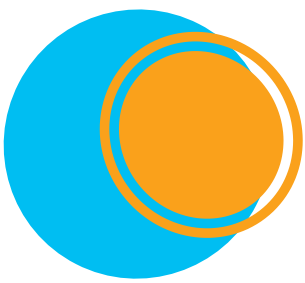
Youth and Young People

The impact of the cost of living crisis on younger people cannot be overlooked.

- The [Young Minds](#) website provides a useful guide on talking to young people about money worries and the cost of living crisis, including how to offer them reassurance and support
- [NSPCC](#) offers advice on supporting children who are struggling with their mental health

Case Study

An East Suffolk Volunteering Pathways Officer helped find a placement for a volunteer, referred from the job centre, at a local museum. Without the opportunity to claim travel expenses for the 6 mile return journey, Billy would unfortunately have been unable to continue to offer her help as she was not in a position to fund the petrol for the trip. The placement is supporting Billy to gain skills and experience for job applications, as well as making the most of her life experience that she can share with the museum. The museum is very happy and have asked Billy to extend her volunteering hours.



Yes	No

2. Volunteer Journey - Checklist

Plan		
Does your business/organisation plan include volunteer expenses?		
Do you have a Volunteer Expenses Policy & clear process?		
Are you clear on what you can or cannot offer for expenses?		
Include		
Do you mention your expenses policy in advertised Volunteer Roles		
Are you looking at funds to support expenses policy?		
Do you offer free refreshments during volunteering?		
Support		
Do you promote and go through your expenses policy at induction?		
If you have no funds available, have you considered individual grants/trust funds to support?		
Are you 'checking in' with volunteers 121 regularly?		
Have you sent your volunteers information on Cost of Living support?		
Do you offer a reward & recognition scheme? (eg: tempo credits/Reward Hub?)		
Impact		
Do you have records of numbers and finance? (To help inform future bids)		
Do you ask for feedback from volunteers about the impact this has made?		
Exit interview: Do you ask about why they have decided to leave?		

3. General Signposting

Financial Support

Volunteers themselves may be struggling financially, there are organisations and websites with information which can help. Here are a few:

[Cost of Living Support Leaflet](#)

[Government Help for Households](#) offers information on what cost of living support you could be eligible for

[Ofgem](#)'s site includes information on grants and schemes which can help reduce your home energy bills, as well as help with high energy bills

The [Citizen's Advice](#) website can help you to find support with the cost of living

[Step Change](#), a national debt charity, offer guidance on coping with the rising cost of living

[AgeUK](#) offers information to help you feel in control of your finances

Welfare Advice

[Infolink Cost of Living Support](#) – key contacts for support around food, fuel, finance and housing

[Suffolk Local Welfare Assistance Scheme](#) – help for those experiencing financial hardship

Volunteer recruitment

[Volunteer Suffolk](#) – for help to recruit your volunteers

[Volunteer opportunities, rights and expenses: Pay and expenses - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Funding and Sustainability Support

[Community Action Suffolk Sustainability and Funding Advice](#)

[Funding 4 Suffolk portal](#)

[Suffolk Community Foundation](#)

[Suffolk County Council External Grants Team](#)

[Babergh & Mid Suffolk Grants Team](#)

[East Suffolk Grants Team](#)

[Ipswich Grants Team](#)

[West Suffolk Grants Team](#)

[Christians Against Poverty](#)

If you have any questions, please contact the Community Action Suffolk Volunteering Team

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