



Greyhound Rescue Wales

Volunteer Strategy

2017

DRAFT 2 for Consultation

1. Introduction

Volunteers give very generously of their time, energy and commitment, whether it is fundraising, retail work, homechecking, helping at Hillcrest, etc. Their work is crucial to the aims and objectives of GRW. Therefore one of GRW's agreed priorities for 2016-17 is to *diversify our roles and responsibilities to a wider base of volunteers* (GRW Annual Report of Activities 2015-2016, 14). Volunteering is not only vital to the welfare of GRW dogs, but promotes GRW's work in the wider community and, as volunteering has been shown to promote health and wellbeing amongst volunteers, it is important in GRW's social role.

Volunteering at GRW has developed organically through local informal networks. It has worked very well, but as the charity continues to grow it is felt that a strategy is needed. More specifically:

- We do not know the true number of people volunteering for us, we do not always know what our volunteers want nor why some leave and others stay, and this makes it difficult for us to engage, support and communicate with volunteers effectively and to recruit new volunteers.
- There is much good work and good practise amongst different sections of GRW, it would seem desirable to ensure that different sections can learn from one another.
- Increasingly charities are asked to formulate good governance strategies. Our volunteers are vital to our organisation and thus should be included.
- We always need more volunteers.
- We want to ensure all our volunteers feel valued
- We want volunteers to be involved in forming and shaping what we do
- We want to ensure volunteers have the support they need to carry out their work.
- We want to ensure that volunteering is inclusive.
- We want to ensure that our volunteer practise is fair and open.

In order to achieve the above we have set out a number of interrelated key aims. Each aim has a list of recommendations. The list is not exhaustive, it should be considered flexible, and there is no timetable. How and when individual aims are implemented will depend upon if and when trustees feel that the charity is able to resource them. It should be recognised that organising a successful volunteer team needs a great deal of input, thus in many cases paid staff and other volunteers need to be consulted to gage the feasibility and desirability of plans. In many cases too, existing volunteers and paid staff may need additional training and support.

The purpose of this document is to suggest how volunteering and GRW could work more effectively and to provide a statement of intent.

2. Key Aims

Our strategy will have three key aims:

- Understand the number, aims and types of volunteers we have and how we can actively recognise, value and support them.
- Where needed to increase the number of volunteers we have and the types of roles available.

- To consider strategic partnerships.

3. How we Plan to Achieve our Key Aims

Aim 1: Understand the number, aims and types of volunteers we have and how we can actively recognise, value and support them.

Context

GRW is a growing organisation with a duty of care to dogs, paid personnel, volunteers, funders and other stakeholders. To date this has largely been carried out successfully by unpaid staff. GRW operates with an informal, family like atmosphere.

However, charities are now working under increasing scrutiny and need to evidence good governance in all aspects of their work including how they recruit and support volunteers. GRW has a duty of care to volunteers and has to ensure safe working environments and make sure volunteers have the right training to do the jobs they do successfully.

GRW wants to make sure volunteers continue to be valued, have a clear role description, and understand where they can get help from and also their responsibilities as a volunteer. This is important to maintain our current volunteers as well as recruiting new members to our team. It is also very important if GRW is to make better links with other volunteer networks who can advise and support us.

GRW also wants to recognise volunteers for the excellent work they do, whilst we cannot offer massive rewards we can still do something that tells our very important volunteers how much they are valued. We want to develop a reward and recognition scheme and will need the help of volunteers to do that.

Recommendations

1. To develop a compact agreement between GRW and volunteers that covers the following:
 - A clear role description
 - Hours/times committed to support GRW
 - What GRW expects from the volunteer
 - What the volunteer can expect from GRW, including support, training and other benefits
 - Any skills or training required to undertake the volunteer role
 - Any health and safety related issues specific to the role for example lone working
2. Develop a Reward and Recognition scheme that encompasses the following:
 - Regular volunteer awards in various categories

- Recognition of specific achievements in magazine and social media
 - Volunteer nomination process for other volunteers to nominate each other for outstanding work
 - Nominations to national volunteering recognition schemes (this also raises the profile of GRW)
 - Send birthday cards to volunteers
3. Create a database with the contact details of all our volunteers, the roles they undertake, their achievements and aims. This could be used in writing references for volunteers, to ensure that existing volunteers with particular skills and aims are known when new roles or paid work is developed. It can also be used to gauge whether or not GRW is inclusive.
 4. Agree a policy of offering existing GRW volunteers interviews for paid posts, before they are offered more widely.
 5. Formalise the recruitment process. This may involve:
 - An application form including sections on what the volunteer can offer GRW and what they hope to achieve from becoming a volunteer; where necessary references and indication that a DBS check may be needed.
 - An informal chat may be appropriate depending on the volunteer role, to ensure the volunteer knows what is expected from themselves.
 6. Formulate an exit questionnaire so that we are aware of reasons why volunteers may leave, and additionally capture information which may better support existing volunteers or be used to develop the volunteering programme.
 7. Actively seek feedback from volunteers through surveys, polls, focus groups, etc.
 8. Have regular meetings with volunteers, in groups and on a one to one basis in order to understand and act upon any concerns, and to ensure GRW is communicating effectively with volunteers.
 9. Institute a volunteer newsletter, ideally edited by volunteers, which can be used for reward and recognition, communicating GRW changes, job roles, vacancies, etc. This could be largely a digital document.

Aim 2: To increase the number of volunteers we have and the types of roles available.

Context

As GRW grows and develops it is inevitable that our volunteer base will also need to grow. Much of this is carried out informally. We would like this to continue but also to add a more formalised approach to recruitment. Additionally, there are areas which we have not actively explored. Some of these, for example, inclusivity, will need much input and possible additional training of existing paid staff and volunteers in order to be successful.

At the same time it should be recognised that various ‘cells’ within the GRW volunteer base work very well and need neither additional volunteers nor increased inclusivity. In these cases changes should not be imposed upon those leading and organising volunteers.

Recommendations

1. To develop role descriptions for volunteer vacancies including requirements and outcomes and learning which volunteers may gain through that role.
2. Pro-actively advertise roles on the GRW website, on social media and, where appropriate, in the press.
3. Connect with Wales Council for Voluntary Action in advertising and promoting roles and in taking advice.
4. Offer short-term project specific roles.
5. Actively promote the inclusivity of GRW volunteering to ensure that as far as possible, the volunteer community reflect the community of Wales in terms of religious beliefs, ethnicity, ability, gender, etc.

Aim 3: To consider strategic partnerships.

Context

Strategic partnerships, for example, corporate volunteering, and Wales Council for Voluntary Action might help support us in achieving our aims.

Corporate Volunteering

Corporate volunteering is growing exponentially across the UK. Many organisations have policies on social responsibility and value and the concept of corporate volunteering has become crucial in enabling large and small organisations to give something back in their communities. The projects organisations normally get involved in are often small. For example, a well know coffee chain recently painted a day room in a hospice in South Wales and a high street bank undertook to renew a garden in a local care home.

Whilst the projects themselves provide some help to local charities and voluntary organisations the wider outcomes charities report are equally important. For example, community links and business support, engagement of a wider network of people who would better understand the work and values of GRW and crucial links to fundraising.

Many larger charities now actively seek corporate volunteers to help them with specific projects, for example the RSPB actively seek corporate partners to help with different projects. GRW could consider this as one of its approaches to volunteering.

Other strategic partnerships

Related to this there may also be opportunity to explore formal links with schools, colleges and schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award. GRW already has some links with job centres for retail work. This might be extended to other roles. Additionally links could be formed with other bodies such as the Shaw Trust. These links too would

not only provide support for GRW but, as with corporate volunteering, would ensure engagement of a wider network of people who understand the aims of GRW.

We want to consider taking forward discussions with networks such as Wales Councils for Voluntary Action (WCVA). They actively support the recruitment of volunteers and give advice and support on volunteering whether it is for short term projects or an ongoing role. Presently (2016), it costs £60 pa to join WCVA.

Recommendations

1. To develop an agreed approach in engaging corporate partners.
2. Develop links with agreed organisations.

6. **Next Steps**

TBA