

Police Volunteers

Communications Strategy Template

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Title and version	Police Volunteers. Communications Strategy Template
Summary	This document gives an overview of the Communications Strategy for police volunteering. It identifies key objectives and details communications activity required to meet these objectives
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1) **About the Communications Strategy**

Relevant and effective communications are crucial to the success of any Volunteer Programme. The implementation of simple and efficient channels of communication that allow the spread of information and feedback across a range of key audiences – both internal and external – is the main aim of this strategy.

This strategy is specifically aimed at Police Services who are looking to implement a new, or promote an existing, volunteer programme. Effective communication will help to identify and address the fears, concerns and aspirations of both the public and police staff. Therefore, the objectives of this strategy will ensure that:

- The public is aware of how the volunteer programme is contributing to the service provided by the police and how they can get involved.
- Police Staff, officers and key stakeholders understand the key principles of volunteering and how it can benefit the service that they provide to the public.
- All staff involved in volunteering are aware of their responsibility for effective communication and how this impacts on service delivery and improvement
- All staff involved in volunteering have the right information at the right time to do their job
- Specific Union concerns around volunteering are addressed in a timely and effective manner.

The overriding principles of this strategy will:

- Make communication everyone's responsibility;
- Encourage open, honest, accountable, constructive, two-way dialogue to inform, influence, engage, listen to and consult with all internal and external customers;
- Ensure all information is communicated in an honest, professional, accurate, targeted and timely manner to both internal and external audiences;
- Ensure that information reaches target audiences in the most appropriate way, making special efforts to include traditionally "hard to reach" groups and those internal and external customers who have "special needs"; in order to achieve full commitment to diversity.
- Maintain a culture of communication up, down and across the organisation as a fundamental part of good leadership – this will include engaging with existing Communications Departments where applicable
- Ensure any volunteer-based promotions promote a consistent corporate identity and image within the wider police brand identity.

2) **About Police Volunteers**

People volunteer with the police for many reasons, for instance:

- They want to give something back to the community
 - They want to assist the police but are unable to commit to full time hours
 - They are considering joining the police but want to "test the water" first
 - They want to add to their CV
 - They have skills & experience, that they want to put to use for the police
 - They have spare time (they may be retired or have children who have recently left home) which they want to put to valuable use
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3) Key areas of focus

There are three key areas of focus for this Communications Strategy:

- External PR
 - Internal PR & Communications
 - Intra-volunteer Communications
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❖ External Communication

External Communications Objectives:

- To recruit more volunteers (who reflect the diversity of skill sets required by the police and the diversity of the local community).
- To raise awareness of police volunteers to the public and to promote positive messages regarding volunteering.
- To engage with local businesses and organisations both as a source of volunteers and localised sponsorship.
- To anticipate and address potential negative stories which may occur relating to police volunteers.

Audience:

- Local residents who fit the basic core volunteer criteria. With specific target audiences based upon local community diversity and local police skill-set requirements.
- Community groups representative of the diversity mix of the locale

Channels:

- Local press (advertising, event attendance, press release etc)
- Local poster / leaflet sites (libraries, information centres, community centres, shops)
- Local volunteer centres
- Organisations relevant to target audience (e.g. Age Concern, MIND, Mencap, GP referrals, Chambers of Commerce, Job Centres)
- Safer Neighbourhoods Ward Meetings
- HR recruitment
- MSC recruitment
- Local radio
- Community newsletters
- Community / council internet sites
- Internet site
- Existing volunteers
- Events & open days

Messages / information needs:

- What is police volunteering?
- How can you help police volunteering?
- What will you get out of police volunteering?
- Is police volunteering relevant / appropriate for me?
- What's in it for me?
- Where is police volunteering available?
- How does police volunteering help the local community?
- What are the other benefits of police volunteering?
- Positive case studies.

- How can I apply / get more information?
- Contra-indications: poor health, age limit, residency, address, vetting.

Marketing Needs:

- Consistent brand to apply to marketing materials (logo, strapline, image library, colours etc) and to messages (key message points, wording, 'tone of voice' etc)
- Identification of target audience and of media relevant to that audience
- Support to volunteer promoters in producing materials, copy, imagery etc (including an online 'toolkit' of templates)
- Support to volunteer promoters in gaining funding for key marketing activity
- Central assessment of success of marketing activity (response rates to specific campaigns, conversion rates etc)
- Development and maintenance of a 'fit for purpose' volunteering section of the police Internet site.
- Establishment of police volunteers as a viable 'other option' where applications for MSC have lapsed or been withdrawn (e.g. promotional insert in MSC application brochure).
- To consider above for regular Police recruitment.
- Focus on 'customer journey' - i.e. the experience of a potential volunteer from seeing a PR message to contacting the police (helpline, web, etc) through to assessment and selection – and ongoing communications experience once they become a volunteer.
- 'Disaster plan' (in liaison with central police media function) to allow for timely and effective media handling of potential negative PR arising from volunteering involvement.
- Library of marketing materials.

Key stakeholders:

- Police staff / officers tasked with promoting / managing police volunteers
- Police Media / Press Liaison Officers
- Senior management teams
- HR Press office
- Safer Neighbourhoods Communications & Marketing (as appropriate)
- Local, national media

❖ Internal Communication

Positive messages are the key to delivering the police volunteering.

Negative attitudes about perceived threats to the jobs of paid police staff should be countered wherever possible. The success of police volunteering relies in part on all staff being made fully aware of the difference between paid staff roles and volunteer involvement.

The continuing objective internally is to ensure all staff are aware of the purpose and objectives of police volunteering. This will help to overcome cynicism, promote the benefits of growth, encourage applications for volunteers and enable the two-way communication of corporate messages and the sharing of feedback, successes and good practice. Safer Neighbourhoods are a good target audience for the use of volunteers, and communications regarding volunteering opportunities have been cascaded via the Safer Neighbourhoods Newsletters and other available channels.

Internal Communications Objectives:

- To raise awareness of police volunteering within the Police Service and to promote positive messages around volunteering.
- To inform the Police Service of the opportunities that can be offered to volunteers and to gain feedback on possible roles required.

- To counter potential resistance and 'negative press' within the Police Service and to 'de-mystify' volunteering among police staff and officers.
- To gain buy-in from key stakeholders within the Police Service – especially SMT, Steering group members, and staff who will be working alongside volunteers.

Audience:

- Senior police management
- Senior Management Team
- Safer Neighbourhoods teams
- Union reps
- Police Staff
- Police Officers
- MSC
- Potential recruits to police volunteering from MPS
- Volunteers (existing and new)

Channels:

- "Met Volunteer" day in June to highlight police volunteers (tie in with National "Volunteering Week" June 1-7)
- Internal police publications
- Relevant Police Intranet homepages
- Relevant section on external Police Internet site
- Internal posters
- Safer Neighbourhoods newsletters
- Safer Neighbourhoods meetings
- Front Counters posters
- Annual Volunteer Recognition events (this to also be used to promote police volunteering in external media and 'launch police volunteers internally & externally')
- Steering Groups / SMTs
- Police press / media offices
- Induction / training for Specials / recruits

Messages / information needs:

- What is police volunteering and how does it work?
- How can police volunteering help you?
- What are the potential / required roles for volunteering?
- How is the police addressing Union concerns? Counter messages to negative press (e.g. volunteers are taking staff jobs, volunteers are incompetent / not security cleared etc)
- How does police volunteering help the local community?
- What are the other benefits of police volunteering?
- How is a new role designed
- Positive case studies – what are volunteers currently doing?
- Human interest stories relating to volunteers
- Communication of recognition for volunteers (quality / length of service)

Marketing needs:

- Presentation to promote police volunteering at internal meetings (PowerPoint CD, FAQs, positive press cuttings, case studies)
- Brand toolkit for use in internal publications – reference should be made to fit with Police Service brand
- Copy for internal publications / newsletters
- Support in recognition activity (presentation, certificate, letter etc) and promotion of this activity throughout police service

- Approved responses to common negative perceptions that may be raised internally
- Support in dealing with ad hoc negative PR situations that may occur (in liaison with Police Service press office)
- Support in gaining funding for key marketing activity
- Monitoring and reporting of volunteer feedback

❖ **Intra-volunteer communications**

Finally, communications *within* the Volunteer Programme are a key issue. A dedicated intranet site would be a key means of information sharing between volunteers and volunteer managers.

Intra-volunteer Communications Objectives:

- To share information between volunteers and key volunteer stakeholders and to promote a sense of inclusiveness across the police service.
- To provide a means of communicating best practice and applying this across the police service.
- To enable volunteer managers to address issues and queries with their peers in a timely and effective manner.
- To inform volunteers and volunteer managers of key developments within the police and in the external environment
- To ensure consistency of standards and procedure in key activities (e.g. training, performance reporting, risk assessments, brand identity etc).

Audience:

- Volunteer managers
- Volunteers
- Unions
- Steering Groups
- Other internal & external stakeholders as appropriate

Channels:

- Intranet Site
- Policy documents (currently in development)
- Monthly meetings
- Email cascades
- Dedicated volunteering newsletter
- Training / induction days

Messages / information needs:

- What is working well in police volunteering?
- What has not worked well / what lessons have been learned?
- Is there an existing piece of work I can use, to avoid me reinventing the wheel?
- What is the procedure for.... ?
- Who do I need to speak to for.... ?
- Is there anybody out there??

Marketing & Communications needs:

- Online access to libraries of information in order to avoid replication of work already done
 - Key documents to be produced and made available where appropriate where activity needs to be consistent across the police service (e.g. recruitment of volunteers, logging of hours, development of role profiles etc)
 - Forum for sharing experiences (negative, positive, queries) among volunteers & managers – possibly through Group meetings or virtual forums (e.g. Intranet).
 - Development and maintenance of 'fit for purpose' Intranet site dedicated to police volunteering.
 - Ongoing training and updates as required.
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5) Evaluation

A process for evaluating the success of the above communications should be developed, in order to:

- Measure the impact and effectiveness of the various communication methods
- Promote best practice in communications across the service
- Use the evaluation to improve communication channels and achieve the aims and objectives of this strategy
- Inform key stakeholders of the Communications Strategy as to the success of its implementation against identified KPIs.

Suggested methods to measure and evaluate are through feedback questionnaires, focus groups, capturing source of interest from volunteer applications and monitoring communication and press coverage.
