

Leeds City Council Parks and Countryside Service

Recruiting volunteers for your 'Friends of' or volunteer group

How to get new volunteers for your group

1. Advertising and publicity

Posters, leaflets and flyers:

If you have access to a computer and printer, it's so easy to produce posters and flyers to advertise your group these days. If you need any help designing, printing or laminating them, contact the Parks and Countryside Outreach Manager (details below).

Once you have some posters, leaflets or flyers, all you need to do is put them where people can see them!

- On site – at entrances, on trees on main routes, at playground, in visitor centre – where-ever people go
- Around local area (in shops, schools, community centres, leisure centres, libraries etc)

Adverts in Parks and Countryside events leaflet – Out and About (Contact Outreach Manager to make this happen)

In local press: newspapers, magazines, newsletters, local radio

Websites:

Advertise on local websites eg:

- 'About your area' at <http://www.aboutmyarea.co.uk/West-Yorkshire/Leeds/>
- <http://www.do-it.org.uk>
- Leeds Communities online at <http://leeds.talis.com/engage/> can be used to promote your organisations (it links to over 2000 local community groups at present).

Or create your own website. An easy way of doing this is to set up a facebook page for your group and put the address on your posters so people know to follow it.

Volunteering organisations: You can advertise volunteer vacancies at:

- *Voluntary Action Leeds* on <http://www.val.org.uk/page/volunteering>
- *V involved* who aim to get 16 – 25 year olds volunteering, email them on info@learningpartnerships.org.uk for more details.

2. Other local community groups

It might be worth contacting other local community groups (e.g. Women's institute, In Bloom groups, Historical Societies, Wildlife Organisations) to let them know what you're up to. Ask them to help you publicise your group and some of their members might even be interested in becoming part of your group too. You can use Leeds Communities online

(<http://leeds.talis.com/engage/>) to see who your local community groups are. Libraries can also provide that information.

3. Events

Another way to recruit members and volunteers from your group is to get involved in or run local events. At those events you should have a mailing list so people who would like to get involved can put their contact details on there for you to get in touch later. See the last page of this document for an example.

Joining local events

To reach a large number of people, it maybe worth asking if you can have a stall at local community events such as fun days, school fairs and the like. You could have some displays about your site, old photos are particularly popular. Displays would attract people to your stall so you could ask them if they'd be interested in getting involved.

Organising your own events

Guided walks, litter picks, fun days, slide show presentations, even meetings can attract local people to visit or start thinking about a site. Once you have people at your event you can ask if they would be interested in getting involved. However, you do need to make sure your events are widely publicised so that enough people know about it to make it worthwhile – it might be useful to be aware that events that are a bit different (e.g. night walks) tend to get more publicity

Finding volunteers for one off jobs

Sometimes your group is fine but you could just do with a bit of extra labour to get a particular job done. In that case you might look at the following:

Corporate Volunteers

Private businesses are increasingly looking for environmental work to do for their team away days. They love to get out of the office and feel they have made a difference. If you would like to recruit a group of corporate volunteers for a day contact Shelley Riley at Leeds Ahead on 0113 2467877 or email Shelley.Riley@aheadpartnership.org.uk or you could approach local businesses directly (especially the larger ones like supermarkets and banks).

Leeds Parks Volunteers

The Countryside Rangers run two volunteer groups that roam around the city doing odd jobs here and there. To find out if they can help you, contact the Senior Ranger on Countrysiderangers@leeds.gov.uk or 0113 3367548.

Young people

Local secondary schools, Scout and Guide groups may all be able to help you out if you give them a call (although, you would need to ensure the job is suitable for the age group!)

How to keep your volunteers

Sometimes it's not too hard to recruit new members but it's hard to retain them or get them actively involved. To ensure you keep your group members and volunteers, you need to think about why people are/aren't getting involved:

- **Timing** of activities needs to be suitable e.g. Sunday morning some people go to church
- **Friendliness** – it's important that group members welcome new people and are friendly and open. If the group has a clique at its centre that seem to know each other really well and aren't so open and friendly with new volunteers, the new volunteers won't stay long
- **Fun!** – are the volunteer activities enjoyable? Make sure you don't work people too hard or have meetings that go on too long. Providing refreshments is important and you need to make sure that all your activities are varied, enjoyable and satisfying (so people feel they have achieved something). Meetings need to have a purpose and feel that the attendees are making progress towards the stated aims of the group.
- **Involvement** – do all the members of the group feel they have an important job to do that makes a difference (however small)? Sometimes volunteers turn up to help out but no-one gives them a clear instruction about what they should be doing or there doesn't seem to be anything much to do – make sure everyone is involved.
- **Influence** - Do members feel they have an influence on group activities and, more importantly, on the greenspace you are working for? If members feel their work has no noticeable effect, they won't see the point of being a member.

Contacts

Voluntary Action Leeds can provide you with advice on training on running a volunteer group, e.g. how to set up a website, how to get funding, how to recruit volunteers. For more information check out their website on <http://www.val.org.uk> or call them on 0113 297 7920.

Leeds City Council Parks and Countryside Service: For support with any of these aspects of getting people to join your group, contact the Parks and Countryside Outreach Manager on 0113 3957400.

