

Preparing to recruit and support volunteer groups

This 10-staged checklist is designed to guide your volunteer programme planning, offering key considerations and advisory steps, as well as further reading.

Checklist

- ☐ **Assess the nature of the material** – Identify emotionally intense or trauma-related content volunteers may face.
- ☐ **Consult mental health professionals** – Seek expert input when designing programmes involving distressing material.
- ☐ **Train staff supporting volunteers** – Equip managers with skills in mental-health awareness and trauma-informed care.
- ☐ **Provide volunteer orientation with emotional context** – Offer one-on-one chats and group inductions focused on emotional preparedness.
- ☐ **Limit individual exposure** – Rotate tasks to reduce repeated exposure to distressing content.
- ☐ **Schedule short debriefs after each shift** – Conduct structured check-ins to gauge how volunteers are coping.
- ☐ **Ensure staff are on-site and available** – Maintain a supportive presence during volunteer work hours.
- ☐ **Foster social support and reflection** – Encourage peer connection through group reflection and shared breaks.
- ☐ **Monitor external triggers** – Stay alert to dates or events that could re-trigger emotional stress.
- ☐ **Continuously reflect and adapt** – Reevaluate training, task load, environment, and feedback regularly.

Further Reading

Marsden, J. 2020 [Providing Emotional Support For Archive Volunteers: Methods used on the Manchester Together Archive](#)

Collins, H., Allsopp K., Arvanitis, K., Chitsabesan, P., and French P.2020. '[Psychological impact of spontaneous memorials: A narrative review](#)', *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, Online First Publication, March 19, 2020.

Miles, E., Corder, S. and Kavanagh, J. (eds) (2020) [Contemporary collecting: an ethical toolkit for museum practitioners](#)