

# VAST Volunteering Quality Standards



## Introduction

At VAST, we're passionate about volunteering and provide the support voluntary organisations need to recruit, train, and retain volunteers. From beginning to end, we provide 1:1 support to Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) groups across Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire.

Millions and millions of people volunteer in some way every single year and for many organisations, volunteers are the backbone of their operations. Without them, the number of people these groups support would fall significantly. That's why it's important to support your volunteers effectively from the very beginning, and to get your volunteering policies, procedures, and processes right.

So that we can continue in our passion to champion the huge importance of working effectively with volunteers, we have developed the '**VAST Volunteering Quality Standards**'. The scheme provides a framework which organisations can work towards accreditation based on their volunteering policies and procedures, and the way they work with new and existing volunteers.

## Our Vision for Quality Volunteering

Our vision for the quality standards scheme is to instil consistent volunteer-related best practice across the whole of the local voluntary sector through structured and proactive support.

To make this vision a reality and to develop a programme accessible to all groups no matter their size, the VAST Volunteering Quality Standards accreditation scheme is **free of charge** to organisations based in Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire making more realistic and achievable targets for smaller groups as well as the larger ones.

## What are the benefits to the VAST Volunteering Quality Standards scheme?

- ◆ It's free.
- ◆ It's easily accessible.
- ◆ It has been designed by the local sector for the local sector.
- ◆ It shows the commitment you have to your volunteers and their development.
- ◆ It shows how much you value your volunteers and the contribution they make to your community.
- ◆ It provides a supportive development opportunity for your organisation and your volunteers.
- ◆ It demonstrates good practice in all areas of volunteer management.

If you're not sure if this scheme is for you, please email [volunteering@vast.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@vast.org.uk) and a member of the projects team will be able to answer any questions you have.

## The Quality Standard Awards

The bronze, silver and gold awards have been developed by VAST Volunteering in consultation with local volunteers and the Stoke-on-Trent Volunteer Managers Network. This has allowed us to create realistic, achievable, and measurable benchmarks for voluntary and community organisations to work towards, with a clear set of industry-led criteria for which accreditation can be awarded.

### What you will receive for completing each level

You will receive a certificate to show you have met all the criteria for your award, and an award image to place in your email signature for each level.

Your level will be displayed on any roles advertised through VAST's Volunteer Brokerage Service.

We will also announce your organisation's progress via our social media and mailing lists.



### How to achieve the different levels

Once you have identified which award you can realistically achieve as an organisation, we will work with you to make that happen. It's a four-step process and will require input from anyone in your organisation that is responsible for managing and/or coordinating volunteers. You may also wish for some input from your volunteers too!

**We have an example self-assessment, action plan, SMART targets, and action plan review available upon request.**

## Step One

### Self-Assessment

We'll ask you to complete a short self-assessment so that we can understand your organisation's current position.

## Step Two

### Evidencing your Self-Assessment

You may need to confirm some of the information you provide with evidence. Once you have submitted your self-assessment, we'll arrange for a member of the team to review the evidence with you and discuss the most appropriate award for your organisation.

We are happy to accept a range of evidence for relevant sections of your self-assessment. Some examples of what we would accept are:

- Policies and procedures.
- Case studies, or testimonials.
- Volunteer training logs, or induction paperwork.
- Any other supporting documentation you feel is relevant to your volunteering accreditation.

## Step Three

### A Plan of Action

Together, we'll develop a personalised action plan utilising 'Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely (SMART) targets' with realistic expectations and deadlines.

## Step Four

### Progress and Achieve

We will continue to work with you, at your own pace, to achieve your desired award and to keep you developing and progressing in your volunteer practices.

#### **How we will help you achieve (and level-up) your award:**

- Bespoke 1:1 support with our highly experienced projects team.
- Support with developing effective volunteering policies and procedures.
- Personalised SMART target-based action plans to help your organisation develop and progress to reach its full potential.
- Access to the Stoke Volunteer Manager's Network.
- Access to free training on topics relevant to the VCSE Sector.

## Expected Timelines

We have designed the VAST Volunteering Quality Standards to be fully flexible, a scheme where organisations can work at their own pace. We will work with you to monitor and evaluate your progress, offering personalised advice on timelines and targets.

## The Levels

The VAST Volunteer Quality Standards have been split into three levels. The Bronze level requires all the criteria to be met whereas Silver and Gold require you to achieve at least 50% of that category, and be actively working towards the rest.



### Bronze Level Award

1. You must respond to all new volunteering enquiries within 72 working hours.
2. You must have VAST-approved volunteer and safeguarding policies in place.
3. You must be committed to keeping volunteers safe from harm, comply with data protection (GDPR), and have all the relevant insurance policies in place.
4. You need to ensure that your paid staff and trustees are fully aware why volunteers are involved in your organisation and the importance of their contribution.
5. There is at least one named person who is responsible for volunteers. This could be a volunteer manager, coordinator, team leader, etc.
6. Your volunteer role descriptions are clear. We recommend you use our template for these.
7. Your volunteer recruitment and application processes are clear and transparent from the outset.
8. You have a clear volunteer agreement in place. We recommend you use our template for this.
9. You have clear support in place for each volunteer, such as a supervision record.
10. The organisation take steps/has processes in place to keep in touch with volunteers on a regular basis.



### **Silver Level Award** (in addition to the criteria for Bronze)

1. You must respond to all new volunteering enquiries within 48 working hours.
2. You must have a detailed volunteer handbook for your volunteers.
3. Your organisation must be a member of the Stoke Volunteer Managers Network.
4. The named person responsible for your volunteers must have undertaken some form of volunteer management training.
5. Your volunteer roles must be regularly reviewed to ensure they are still current, and that your volunteers are still in the correct role.
6. You must be able to show that you value your volunteers' contribution and that your appreciation is shown.
7. You need to show that your volunteers have the opportunity to provide feedback about their experiences.
8. You need to show how your organisation is committed to supporting everyone into volunteering by providing a range of opportunities, flexible roles, and state how you aim to meet additional support needs.
9. The organisation has processes in place to make sure that volunteers are kept up to date with information/news relevant to their role as a volunteer.



### **Gold Level Award** (in addition to Silver and Bronze Level)

1. You must respond to all new volunteering enquiries within 24 working hours.
2. You share regular volunteer case studies.
3. You must provide regular training for your volunteers.
4. Your volunteers must have access to a clear path for progression or other opportunities within your organisation.
5. You must have resources (including time, funds, equipment, and technology) allocated specifically for volunteer involvement.
6. The organisation provides opportunities for volunteers to contribute to service development and/or improvement.

To get started with your accreditation, please complete a **self-assessment form**, and return it to **volunteering@vast.org.uk** together with copies of your evidence. If you are unsure about what evidence you need to submit, please get in touch and we'll do our best to help.

**To access a copy of the self-assessment form, please email [volunteering@vast.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@vast.org.uk)**

If you would like to find out more about the VAST Volunteering Quality Standards, please email us and we'll be happy to help.

