

Volunteering at Nottinghamshire Neighbourhood Watch (NottsWatch ®)

Personal Account (Publicist/MSA)

Introduction

I have been volunteering at NottsWatch for 4 months after being taken on as Publicist and undertaking additional training for the role of Multi-Scheme Administrator. My primary role as publicist comprises of managing the Facebook & Twitter accounts including responding to queries from members of the public, interacting with external partner profiles & campaigns and scheduling posts to go out.

Application Process

The application process was pleasant, and felt collaborative, as the applicant has access to a wealth of information and guidance notes both about the organisation and the benefits of volunteering in general. I got the distinct impression in the application stage that the organisation had a genuine interest in me as an individual, and the fit of the organisation and line of work to my personality, motivations and aspirations. I received a confirmation e-mail after submitting my online application and covering letter, as well as an electronic message and invitation to meet the Chair of the organisation.

Induction

The initial briefing provided to me by the Chair was highly collaborative and I was given the opportunity to put forward ideas based on the information being provided about the current developments and future plans of the organisation. In addition to this, I undertook training with the web developer for Neighbourhood Watch organisations across the country which included a run through of the website functions and an opportunity to ask questions. Further, I had the opportunity to meet with local scheme coordinators to discuss their concerns and feelings – This information was fundamental to being able to fulfil the expectations of my role as I developed an awareness of the needs of residents at the grassroots level.

Culture

The culture of NottsWatch that I had the opportunity to observe was one with a clear focus on progress, adaptability and increasing relevance. These sentiments were echoed by both external partners/training providers and internal colleagues. Having had the opportunity to see the levels of commitment and motivation by key board members with a view to achieving these goals, I am happy to say that I have the opportunity to contribute to this transformation and rebranding.

Professional Development

This experience has been pivotal for me personally, both as a university leaver and young person – Within the first couple of weeks I had consolidated my written/verbal, business research & writing and networking skills. I did this through my involvement in meetings with local scheme

coordinators in which I had the opportunity to build rapport, demonstrate understanding/empathy and investigate concerns proactively as the meetings were semi-structured.

Following the first few weeks I was allowed to investigate & explore certain issues I had identified through the aforementioned interactions. These included scam mail prevention, social isolation & loneliness (as symptoms/indicators of fraud victimisation) and updating/enhancing the alerts system by working with the webmaster, scheme coordinators and the web developers.

I also had the opportunity to conduct self-directed primary & secondary research, which strongly correlated with work I had done previously and my academic studies. The application of these skills to a meaningful cause gave me a great sense of purpose and satisfaction, and increased my motivation and commitment to working with NottsWatch.

Conclusion

All in all I would say this experience has been vital to the development of core skills required for employment. From my job searching activities I have found the most receptive job types/sectors to the skill areas developed are PA & Admin in non-profit, charity and private sectors. I would also say that work in the voluntary sector, and for NottsWatch, is unique in that ideas and suggestions are openly embraced and oftentimes license is granted to investigate the feasibility of their application.

There are various opportunities within NottsWatch. For more information see www.nottswatch.co.uk/joinus