



Planning for Volunteer Involvement

Recruitment is not the first stage in working with volunteers! Time spent beforehand in planning how volunteers will fit into your group will pay dividends in the long run.

Volunteering is a two way relationship. It requires both parties to put something into the process in order to receive mutual benefits. On this basis, the organisation should plan and manage the way in which it involves volunteers in order to maximise the potential benefits to all concerned – the organisation itself, its clients and the volunteers.

This section helps you to consider why you involve volunteers in your organisation, the challenges and opportunities that may arise.

Identifying the need for volunteers

If you are thinking of involving volunteers in your organisation there are some preparations and considerations that you can make to ensure that the volunteering experience is positive for everyone involved. The following questions should be considered in partnership with service users and staff who will be working alongside the volunteer:

- **Will the Board and staff support the involvement of volunteers?** – It is important that the volunteers will be supported and valued by staff and board members.
- **Why are you doing it?** – Before deciding to involve volunteers within your organisation, it is very important that you consider why you want to work with volunteers, and whether you really need volunteers. Essentially volunteers should add to the efficiency, diversity and quality of your organisation. Voluntary activity should complement the work of paid staff not substitute for it. The actions of volunteers should not threaten the livelihood of paid staff.
- **How will volunteers add value?** – Volunteers can be involved at all levels of your organisation, from making decisions at a management committee level, to working in the community at grassroots level.
- **What roles are appropriate for volunteers to do and what roles are not?** – Volunteers should be involved in roles that complement paid roles and do not replace them. In smaller organisations, where there are no paid staff, volunteers will be involved in all aspects of your work and this distinction will not apply in the same way.
 - Volunteers could assist members of staff with something they currently don't have the time to do.
 - Volunteers could help you complete a project, which current resources don't allow.

- Volunteers could help support in areas within your organisation that members are unable to undertake because they do not have the skills.
- Volunteers could help in new areas of need that are currently not being catered for.
- **What capacity you have for involving volunteers?** – Some of the areas you might want to think about are:
 - Day to day management of volunteers. Is there a person/people who would supervise and support volunteers?
 - Physical space (desks etc.) for volunteers.
 - Expenses (travel, childcare etc.) Is there a budget to cover cost of supervision staff, expenses, admin, training, DBS checks and any other expenses that are applicable to the role?
 - Advertising volunteering roles.
 - Training volunteers.
 - Changes to insurance.
- **Do you have policies and procedures?** - At a minimum your organisation should have the following in place:
 - Health & Safety policy
 - Equality & Diversity policy
 - Volunteer policy
 - Appropriate insurance
- **How will the organisation find volunteers?**
- **How will the organisation manage the volunteers after selection?** – Volunteers will need to feel that they have a direct contact within your group or organisation – so you will need to consider who that person will be. It could be a member of staff or committee who has experience in leading a team, or it could be an identified volunteer, or a group of people – all of whom can support the volunteers.
- **What ongoing feedback and support will be available to the volunteer?**
- **What other staff time (for inductions, training, support and supervision etc.) will be required?**
- **What training will the volunteer need to perform the role and how will it be identified and provided?**
- **What qualities/skills will these volunteers need to have?**

Organisations should try to create a number of volunteering roles that can be adapted to suit people with different motivations, skills, interests and the amount of time that people can offer. This will encourage a wide variety of potential volunteers to get involved and promote diversity.

Mixing and matching each characteristic of a volunteer's role will help to create a range of:

- Individual volunteers
- One-off opportunities
- Group activities (perhaps by employee volunteers)
- Daytime, evening or weekend opportunities
- Variable patterns of commitment, e.g. weekly, fortnightly or monthly: It is important to strike a balance between a volunteer having enough to do, so that they have a sense of achievement, and overstretching a volunteer, as this will scare them off.

Once you have decided that it is appropriate to involve volunteers in your organisation and you have the necessary resources in place then the next step is to devise the volunteer role.