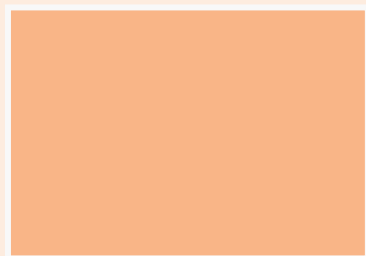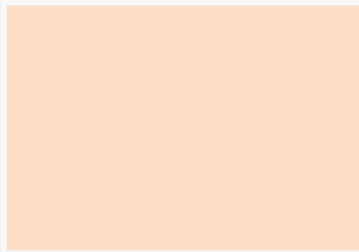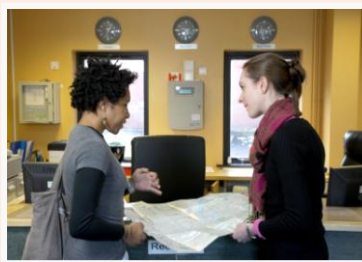# As Good As They Give

Providing volunteers with the management they deserve

Workbook Five
Volunteers and the Wider Organisation

Volunteering takes many forms - traditional service giving, mutual aid and self-help, advocacy and campaigning and community action. All such forms of volunteering are equally valid.

Volunteer Now promotes and develops volunteering as a valuable and integral part of life. We believe the following principles and values should underpin volunteering:-

- Volunteering encourages civic participation and demonstrates active citizenship
- Volunteering is an expression of the individual's freedom to choose
- Volunteering is unwaged and benefits from being a reciprocal gift relationship that meets the needs of organisations and volunteers
- Volunteering promotes inclusion and should be open to all
- Volunteering enables people and communities to influence and contribute to social change
- Volunteering works best when it is guided by good practice

This workbook was originally developed in 2001. A review of all five 'As Good as they Give' workbooks was carried out in 2012 , facilitated by funding provided by The Building Change Trust.

As Good As They Give
Providing volunteers with the management they deserve

Workbook Five - Volunteers and the Wider Organisation

How to use this book

This workbook is aimed at the individual or team responsible for co-ordinating or managing the involvement of volunteers within an organisation or project. It explores some basic organisational issues facing volunteer-involving organisations and, in particular, Volunteer Managers who want to develop a professional approach to their role.

Volunteers are involved in such a wide variety of organisations, and undertake such a diverse range of tasks that one book cannot claim to address all the issues which face every organisation and every individual Volunteer Manager. Instead, this workbook seeks to explore underlying principles for volunteer involvement, which can be applied in any type of volunteer-involving organisation regardless of size. It identifies some procedures and skills for implementing these principles and provides examples of good practice, which, it is hoped, will make it of use as a practical tool when undertaking these tasks in real work situations. However, it also makes frequent use of exercises and activities to encourage you to use your own knowledge and experience to tailor these suggested ways of working within your own organisational contexts.

The workbook has been designed primarily as a learning resource for the individual Volunteer Manager to work through alone or, better still, with colleagues, but it could also be used as a basis for group training sessions. However you choose to use the book, it should help you acquire skills and knowledge needed to:

- describe the place of volunteers in your organisational structure.

- outline some key legal considerations for organisations that involve volunteers.

- describe a best practice approach to equality in volunteering.

- identify appropriate action to enhance diversity in your organisation.

- identify key factors in good volunteer-staff relations.

- monitor and evaluate the impact of volunteer involvement.

- identify opportunities and barriers to developing volunteering in your organisation.

The following symbols will help you to use the workbook:

Key principles, which represent the main focus of a chapter or section.

Indicates an **example** or **case study** that illustrates good practice in a particular context. It does not imply an 'ideal' way of applying the good practice principles, just one that worked in that setting.

Reflective **exercises** are designed to draw out ideas and knowledge on an issue, or to help place it in a relevant context.

Tasks, on the other hand, involve practical activities or research with a tangible application to the reader's work.

Finally, **references** to other materials allow more in-depth reading on specific issues which space does not allow us to fully explore in this publication.

Before starting, you should be aware that this workbook is part of a series that addresses the key areas of volunteer management. Volunteer resources cannot be maximised unless they are fully integrated into the organisation's structure and aligned towards the organisation's mission and ethos, so addressing the issues explored in this workbook is an essential step towards the more effective involvement of volunteers. Equally, the needs of volunteers and volunteering deserve the same sort of attention as those of other stakeholders, not least a designated individual to co-ordinate the management and development of this valuable resource. Further workbooks in the series outline basic good practice principles in relation to core volunteer management tasks - planning for volunteer involvement, recruitment and selection, management and training. You are particularly encouraged to work through the first book in the series, *Planning Volunteer Involvement*, prior to starting any of the others.

Other workbooks in this series are:

One   -   *Planning Volunteer Involvement*
Two   -   *Attracting and Selecting Volunteers*
Three   -   *Managing and Motivating Volunteers*
Four   -   *Managing Volunteer Training*

1. Introduction

Some key principles

Before starting to think about any particular aspect of volunteering, it is vital to clarify what we mean when we talk about 'volunteering'. This workbook is based on three key ideas about the nature of volunteering.

The first key value is about the nature of volunteering. While it is often useful to think about volunteering in the broadest sense - as any community activity or as active citizenship - there are times when we need a clearer definition of volunteering. For instance, when we are undertaking practical tasks, such as formulating policy and procedures for volunteer involvement within our organisation or group, it is important to be able to state clearly to whom such policy and procedures apply.

Volunteering has been defined as... **"the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, the environment or individuals outside (or in addition to) one's immediate family. It is unpaid and undertaken freely and by choice."**
Join in, Get Involved: Build a Better Future Volunteering Strategy for NI, 2012

This is the definition that we will use in this workbook and it raises four distinct points about the nature of volunteering:

1. Volunteering involves an active commitment. It is more than simply donating money or lending one's name to a cause.
2. Whatever the volunteer's original motivation, the benefits of their voluntary activity are felt beyond the volunteer and his/her immediate family.
3. There can be no element of compulsion or coercion in volunteering. Each individual must make the commitment of his/her own free choice.
4. While volunteering should not leave the volunteer out of pocket, giving or receiving payment creates a particular kind of relationship, one which is different to that between a volunteer and the group or organisation with which s/he works.

The second key idea about volunteering is that **volunteering is a two-way relationship**. The traditional view is that volunteers make a gift of their time, without any desire or expectation of getting anything out of the process. Although the element of altruism is felt by many to be an essential ingredient in volunteering, this 'one-way' relationship is no longer seen as either realistic or useful by many of those with a direct involvement in volunteering.

Instead, volunteering is understood as a relationship that, like most relationships, requires both parties to put something into the process in order to receive mutual benefits. On this basis, the organisation has a clear responsibility to plan and manage the way in which it involves volunteers in its work in order to maximise the potential benefits to all concerned - the organisation itself, its clients and the volunteers.

The volunteer

Ideas, contacts, enthusiasm, time, skills, experience...

Recognition, friendship, fun, skills, experience...

Volunteering

'Resources training, welcome, insurance, support, expertise...

Flexibility, skills, community involvement, ideas, diversity...

The organisation

NOTES

The third and final key idea is that **volunteers have a unique contribution to make** to the organisations and client groups with which they work, which is different from but complementary to that of paid staff. Many organisations think of involving volunteers only in terms of saving money. This implies that, "If only we had enough money, we wouldn't need (or even want) volunteers in our organisation." So volunteers are tolerated as 'cheap labour' or second-class staff. This has important implications for every aspect of how you will involve and manage volunteers, from which tasks they do, to the resources spent on their involvement.

If the economic considerations only produce 'second choice' reasons for involving volunteers, what are the 'first choice' reasons?

Aim: To examine your organisation's attitudes to volunteers and its approach to volunteer involvement.

Spend 10-15 minutes thinking about or discussing why your organisation involves volunteers and try to write down at least three or four reasons in order of importance.
Think about...

- the sorts of roles or functions that volunteers fulfil in your organisation.
- how volunteers contribute to the achievement of the organisation's objectives.
- the relationship of volunteers to paid staff, and to your service-users, if applicable.
- what, if anything, your mission statement or constitution says about volunteers.

Look at the reasons you have listed and consider if they pass the following 'ideal world' test: In this particular 'ideal world', the needs your organisation deals with still exist, but there is limitless money to spend on meeting those needs. Do the reasons you have listed mean that there would still be a place for volunteers within your organisation?

Now read the following extract to see if there are (other) 'first choice reasons' for involving volunteers in your organisation.

First choice reasons for involving volunteers

If you play this mind game (the 'ideal world' test), you will identify some of the unique things volunteers offer an organisation - so special to volunteers that paying a salary negates or changes them completely:

- Volunteers have perceived credibility with clients, donors, legislators, and others for the very reason that they do not receive a paycheck from the organisation.

- It often makes a difference to the recipient of a service that the provider is there purely because he or she wants to be.

- Volunteers are insider/outsiders, bringing a community perspective and a wide range of backgrounds consciously different from the employees. Because they give a few hours of time, volunteers have a broader point of view than the paid staff who may be too close to the work to "see the forest for the trees".

- Volunteers extend your sphere of influence and access to additional people, businesses and organisations in the community. Even the volunteer who helps you once a year becomes another person with knowledge about your work.

- Boards of directors of nonprofit organisations are - by law - an intermediary between donors/funders and program participants, acting as "trustees" of funds from which they themselves derive no profit.

- Volunteers bring the "luxury of focus" to their work. While paid staff members must spread their time and efforts equitably among all clients and projects, volunteers can be recruited to concentrate on selected individuals and issues.

- Volunteers can be asked to work odd hours, in varying locations, and to fill special needs for which staff time can not be justified yet which are important to individual clients.

- Volunteers often feel freer to criticise and speak their minds than employees do.
- Volunteers, as private citizens, can sometimes cut through red tape and bureaucracies more directly than employees.
- Volunteers can provide new and valuable contacts and networks and extend the reach to new audiences, donors etc.
- Volunteers can experiment with new ideas and service approaches that are not yet ready to be funded - or that no one wants to fund for a wide variety of reasons. Historically, in fact, volunteers have always been the pioneers in creating new services, often against the tide of opposition from more traditional institutions.

Other Benefits of Volunteers

Since we live in the real, limited-resources world, what are the other benefits to an organisation for involving volunteers? Volunteers offer:

- Extra hands and the potential to do more than could be done simply with limited salaried staff; this "more" might mean an increased amount of service, expanded hours of operation, or different/new types of services.
- Diversity; volunteers may be different from the salaried staff in terms of age, race, social background, income, educational level, etc. This translates into many more points of view and perhaps even a sort of checks and balances to the danger of the staff becoming myopic.
- Skills that augment the ones employees already possess. Ideally volunteers are recruited exactly because the salaried staff cannot have every skill or talent necessary to do all aspects of the job.
- Community ownership of solutions to mutual problems. Especially if your organisation addresses issues affecting the quality of life, when people participate as volunteers they empower themselves to improve their own neighborhood (which is your mission, after all).
- Studies have shown that satisfied volunteers frequently are so supportive of the organisations with which they serve that they become donors of

money and goods as well. They also support special events and fundraisers by attending themselves and bringing along family and friends.

So Why Pay a Salary?

Perhaps you have been thinking the reverse of the question of why you involve volunteers, namely: "Why should we salary anyone?" It is important to recognise that the answer is not that offering a salary gets you people with better qualifications. A volunteer can be just as highly trained and experienced as can any employee. Instead, offering a salary gives the agency a pre-determined number of work hours per week, the right to dictate the employee's work schedule, a certain amount of control over the nature and priorities of the work to be done, and continuity.

(c) Adapted from Lee, J F & Catagnus, J M. *Supervising Volunteers*, Energize Inc, 1999

Finally, one last thought on the 'second choice' or economic reasons that you may have for involving volunteers in your organisation. Volunteers do not save money but they do help organisations to spend the money they have in the most effective and efficient way. Therefore it is more accurate to say that volunteers provide excellent value for money, with the consequent understanding that volunteers do not come for free. Organisations must be willing to invest in this valuable resource in order to get the best value out of it.

Organisational issues when involving volunteers

Of course, almost any aspect of volunteer-involvement could, and perhaps should, be considered an issue for the whole organisation. However, other workbooks in this series deal with areas of work that fall specifically within the remit of the Volunteer Manager - planning for volunteer involvement, recruiting and selecting volunteers and managing, motivating and training volunteers. This workbook aims to deal with some of the wider issues that organisations face anyway, and which need to be considered further in the light of their impact on or relevance to volunteers.

These include questions of:

- health, safety and risk management;
- equality and diversity;
- the relationship between volunteers and staff;
- how to measure the impact of volunteers' work, and
- their place within the organisation, now and in the future.

It is essential that organisations make themselves aware of their legal obligations in these areas and take action to meet them. However, it would be impossible to cover all the potential issues in one workbook, or to begin to interpret the implications for individual organisations. So instead, this book examines a number of broad issues relevant to all volunteer-involving organisations, in order to provide a starting point from which to consider your own responsibilities and how they should be addressed. The principles that underpin the workbook therefore arise from a best practice approach rather than aiming merely to fulfil minimum obligations.

The information contained in this workbook is intended to be a guide - not a full statement of the law. While the information is correct at the time of writing, legislation can change quickly and significantly. With any legal issues it is strongly recommended that you seek professional legal advice for your specific circumstances.

2. Volunteers, volunteering and the organisation

One of the greatest strengths of volunteering lies in its diversity - both within and between volunteer-involving organisations. Chapter 4 addresses diversity within organisations, but when putting forward core principles for volunteer-involvement - as this series of workbooks does - the differences between organisations are also relevant. The range of organisations, groups and initiatives in which volunteers become involved varies from huge trans-national charities through highly-structured statutory bodies to small, informal community groups with no paid staff at all - but all of them can find clear 'first choice' reasons for involving volunteers. The ways in which their volunteers get involved also cover a spectrum from traditional service-giving to mutual aid and self-help, advocacy and campaigning and community action.

It is important to recognise, therefore, that putting in place the kind of structured procedures advocated in this series of workbooks need not detract from this diversity. On the contrary, organisations that can identify and articulate a clear, shared value base, will find that the good practice principles and procedures underpin all these forms of volunteering in ways that reflect the values that gave rise to volunteer involvement in the first place. The variation between organisations simply means that the way in which the principles are applied may look very different from one group or organisation to the next.

How do volunteers fit in to the organisation?

In translating the principles and practice issues discussed in this and the other workbooks into your own organisational context, it may be helpful to consider how volunteers fit into the organisational structure. Four possible models of volunteer involvement are shown opposite and are based on research conducted by the London School of Economics' Centre for Voluntary Organisation.[1]

Aim: To examine the place of volunteers in your organisation's structure and identify implications for their involvement.

- Examine the models of volunteer involvement outlined on the following page. By yourself or with a colleague, decide which, if any, most closely reflects your organisational structure.
- Discuss what implications this might hold for:
  - how you prepare for volunteer involvement.
  - how you recruit and select volunteers.
  - how you manage motivate and develop volunteers.
  - how you evaluate the impact of volunteer involvement .
  - how volunteering could be developed in your organisation.

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[1] Models of Volunteer Involvement on page 7 of this workbook, is based on Rochester, C. *One size does not fit all: four models of involving volunteers in small voluntary organisations,* Voluntary Action, Volume 1, Number 2, 1999

MODELS OF VOLUNTEER   INVOLVEMENT[1]

The Service Delivery Model
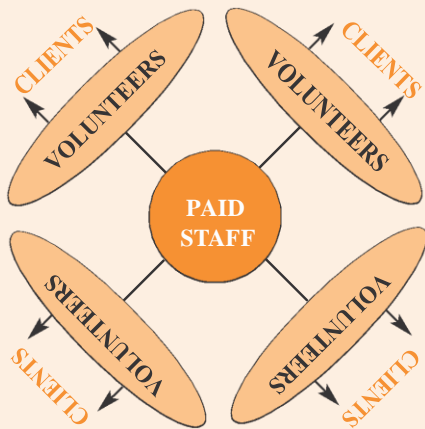
These organisations are volunteer-based and typically employ relatively few paid staff. Volunteers deliver services directly while the role of the paid staff is to manage and support them. These organisations tend to have clearly articulated volunteer roles, not least because it is primarily the nature of the voluntary activity itself that attracts volunteers. As a result, volunteer recruitment and training can be done in groups and management procedures are usually quite formal.

The Support Role Model

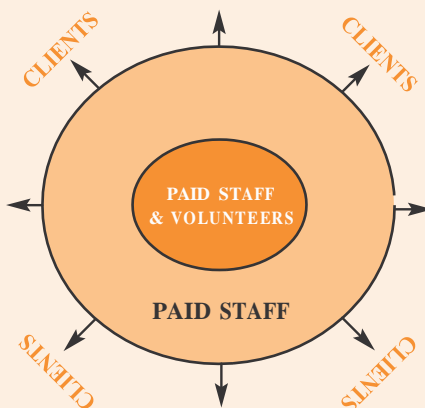

In contrast, this model is likely to apply to organisations that are more staff-based, with a smaller proportion of volunteers. In these organisations it is the paid staff who are mainly responsible for delivering services, supported by volunteers who may assist directly or provide operational support. Since much of the voluntary work may be generic (such as general administrative or fundraising activities), volunteers are more likely to be motivated by the wider organisational goals than by the type of work they do. This means that

volunteers may be recruited to one-off roles and therefore training is individualised. With the resulting variations in volunteer management needs, management procedures may also be less formalised.

The Member/Activist Model
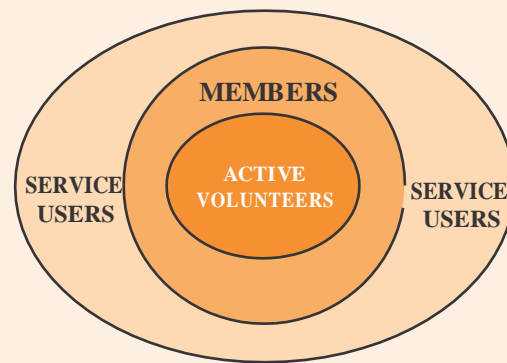
These groups may have no paid staff at all, being run on an entirely voluntary basis. There may even be difficulties in distinguishing whether any individual is a volunteer as opposed to a member or service user, as volunteers may benefit personally from group's activities, but are also motivated to 'do something about it'. Often, volunteer roles are not strictly delineated and can be extremely flexible. In such groups, volunteer management procedures are likely to be quite informal and may not even be explicit.

The Co-Worker Model

Organisations that fit this model are not distinguished by the proportion of paid staff to volunteers. Those who do volunteer in such organisations tend to have a high degree of involvement and identify strongly with the organisation's aims. Often, the volunteers' roles develop in response to organisation's need and management procedures may be less hierarchical and sometimes less formal.

While the basic good practice principles remain the same, your organisational context may demand new and creative solutions to some of these volunteer management questions. The other workbooks in this series will help you identify the basic good practice requirements in relation to many of these tasks, but should leave plenty of room to develop procedures and systems which are compatible with your organisation's wider culture. There is one fundamental issue that these models highlight which it seems appropriate to address here, however, and that is the distinction between volunteers and paid employees.

The opening chapter of this book provides a clear definition of volunteering. Yet many, if not most volunteer-involving organisations at some stage find themselves facing dilemmas around the distinction between volunteers and employees: Who should undertake which kinds of work? Should the two groups be treated differently or the same in some particular respect? In particular, organisations often cite these fears as an explanation for failing to put in place a coherent, structured management system for their volunteers. Such formality, they argue, is appropriate only in paid employment and could lead to confusion about the nature of the volunteers' relationship with the organisation if applied to volunteering. It is true that this could have serious implications for volunteers as well as organisations, but such confusion is not difficult to avoid.

Employment issues and volunteers

The key to avoiding or resolving these sorts of the dilemmas is to be absolutely clear about the nature of the relationships that exist between the volunteer, the organisation and paid staff and to ensure that whatever policies and procedures exist for managing volunteer involvement reflect those relationships. It is clear from the key principles outlined in the previous chapter that volunteers are not just another kind of employee. The first workbook in this series, *Planning Volunteer Involvement,* puts the case that volunteer management is a qualitatively different role from managing paid staff because motivations for volunteering mean that to treat volunteers as employees can

stifle the flexible nature of the relationship and drive volunteers away. It is important that organisations do not simply take employment-based procedures and apply them wholesale to volunteer management. Specific procedures should be developed that reflect the flexible and voluntary nature of the relationship between volunteer and the organisation. There are a number of issues we need to look at to clarify how the relationships in volunteering should be handled.

Employment law - Unlike employees, volunteers are not really recognised in law and consequently do not have many rights. While this in no way justifies treating volunteers less well than paid staff, organisations should be careful to **avoid creating a situation where volunteers could be regarded as employees** - and therefore entitled to employee rights such as minimum wage, sick pay and unfair dismissal. Legally, a contract of employment has less to do with a written document, than the nature of the relationship between an individual and an organisation.

A contract of employment can be inferred where all the following conditions exist:
- **Consideration** - This means that the individual receives something of material value from the organisation in exchange for the work. What is exchanged can be of minimal value, and need not be money.
- **Obligation** - This means that the organisation has an obligation to provide work for the individual to do and the individual is obliged to do the work.
- **Intention** - Courts or tribunals usually decide whether a legally-binding contract was intended by looking at all the circumstances of the case. While a written contract could be taken to suggest intention, it may be difficult to disprove intention when consideration and obligation are present, even if no written contract exists.

There have been a number of cases in the UK where 'volunteers' went to a court of law to claim they were treated like employees. In the case of Armitage v Relate, Mrs Armitage was **obliged** to complete 600 hours of counselling work in exchange for the organisation **paying training costs**, or she would have had to repay these costs.

In the case of Chaudri v Migrant Advice Service the **payment of 'flat rate' expenses** of £25 pounds per week, including during periods of holidays or illness, led another tribunal to rule in favour of the Mrs Chaudri's claim to be an employee. However, in the case of Gradwell v CVS Blackwell, Wyre and Fylde, no contract was found to exist because there was no minimum time commitment and only out-of-pockets expenses were reimbursed, even though all volunteers signed a written agreement and were able to attend training paid for by the organisation. To read other examples of Case Law go to section 4 of the; 'Volunteering and the Law Information Sheet'.

As this demonstrates, organisations which adhere to the good practice principles outlined in these workbooks should have nothing to fear in this respect. Certainly the existence of proper systems of management for volunteers in no way implies an employment contract, especially when those systems differ from systems for employees in ways that reflect the different relationships.

Job Substitution - As the cases above illustrate, asking volunteers to undertake what really ought to be paid roles without extending them the rights of employees is not only exploitative of volunteers, but potentially very damaging to the organisation. Similar damage can be done when volunteers are assigned work tasks which ought properly to be the responsibility of their paid colleagues - not to mention the strain this can put on relations between paid workers and volunteers who may have to work side by side. The issue of job substitution is a tricky one, which every organisation must ultimately examine for itself 2, but here is Volunteer Now's position on the matter.

Volunteering and job substitution

Volunteer Now recognises that volunteer involvement needs to be reactive to social change. Many Volunteer Involving Organisations are currently working in an environment of funding cuts i.e. less money for paid staff against an increasing demand for their services. This can lead to increasing pressure to fill 'previously' paid for posts with volunteers, in order that they can continue meeting the needs of the community they serve. However, where volunteers are working alongside paid staff, cognisance must be given to the need to ensure that a clear distinction is made between the roles and tasks that each have.

Volunteer Now believes that volunteering roles add value to the work of an organisation and in many instances volunteers are instrumental in delivering the actual services.

Where paid staff are involved, volunteers should:

- Enhance what is done by them and not carry out duties of paid staff or 'displace' roles that would normally be paid for or undercut their pay or conditions of service.

  'Displacement' is when paid staff make way for (or are displaced) so that volunteers can fill their roles.

- Volunteer involvement works best when there are good procedures, clarity of roles, mutual trust and support between paid staff and volunteers.

Volunteering in the Private Sector

- Volunteer Now has also set out its position on the **role of volunteers in the private sector**. To read its position, go to the 'Developing Volunteering' Section of the Volunteer Now website. However, ultimately the position is that volunteers should not be expected to carry out unpaid work where profits are made unless those profits will be redistributed / reinvested to work where there will be public benefit.

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2 See Workbook One, *Planning Volunteer Involvement,* for guidance on how to address these issues in a volunteer policy.

Welfare benefits

Another issue related to the need to distinguish between volunteering and employment is the impact of volunteering on entitlement to welfare benefits. **Technically, volunteering is unlikely to affect benefits and there is no limit to the number of hours a person can volunteer as long as they continue to meet the conditions of their benefit and adhere to guidelines set out by the Social Security Agency** (Department for Social Development, *Volunteer and Keep Your Benefit*, 2012).

It is recommended that organisations follow a few basic guidelines when involving volunteers who receive benefits :

- Make contact with your local benefits agency and let them know about your organisation, what you do and how you involve volunteers. Try to establish a relationship with one or two named individuals whom you can contact when you need advice or information.
- When recruiting and placing volunteers, find out if they are in receipt of benefits and explain that they need to check if and what the 'conditions' of their benefit are. For instance, volunteers receiving Job Seekers Allowance must be available for interview within 48 hours of request and if successful able to begin working within a week.
- Advise potential volunteers to talk to their local benefits office before they begin volunteering to discuss the volunteer role they are interested in.
- Make it clear to volunteers that it is their responsibility to take whatever steps are required by the Social Security Agency / Jobs and Benefits Office before they begin volunteering. This usually includes answering questions about role i.e. when, where, how often, what doing etc.

Staff-volunteer relations

In light of the issues above, it seems appropriate to give a little thought at this point to the relationship between people who get paid to work in your organisation. and those who do so voluntarily. Clearly job substitution as described above can leave one or other party feeling exploited or threatened, and does nothing to help the potentially difficult relationship between them.

However, there is much more to fostering harmonious and productive relationships between volunteers and staff than the absence of bad practice. Like any teamwork situation, the keys to good staff-volunteer relationships are:

1. a shared understanding of the organisation's ethos and goals;
2. clear and distinctive roles for everyone in achieving those goals; and
3. clear, accessible lines of communication.

Many of the good practice procedures outlined in these workbooks promote these aims including, for example:

- having a clear organisational value-base for volunteer involvement;
- developing written role descriptions for volunteers;
- having attraction and selection procedures to match individual volunteers to appropriate roles;
- identifying systems and individuals to manage and support volunteers;
- facilitating volunteers to develop the skills needed to work effectively in their roles;
- monitoring and evaluating the impact of volunteer-involvement in achieving the organisation's goals.

An organisation that does all these things shows that it **values** volunteers sufficiently to organise and manage their work properly. Such organisations rarely need to be reminded of the importance of also explicitly **recognising** and **appreciating** the work that their volunteers do. Whether it is through long-service awards, celebrating Volunteers' Week or a simple, sincere 'thank you' for an individual volunteer, a little recognition can go a long way towards making volunteers feel truly part of the team.

Further guidance on volunteering while on social security benefits is available from the Leisure, Home and Community section of the Northern Ireland Government website, NI Direct. An Information sheet 'Volunteering while on Benefits' is also available from the Volunteer Now website.

3. Protecting volunteers, service users and the organisation

Among the most serious concerns for organisations that wish to involve volunteers, are the risks to the health, safety and security of volunteers themselves and to service-users, paid staff and members of the public. These vary hugely, of course, depending on the nature of an organisation's business, the characteristics of beneficiaries or client groups and the sort of work that volunteers undertake. While aiming for a best practice approach to the protection of volunteers and those with whom they come into contact, it is sensible to start by understanding the nature of an organisation's legal responsibilities in relation to the health and safety of volunteers and others.

Understanding legal responsibilities

Individuals' and organisations' legal obligations are generally defined in two ways:

- through **statute law,** defined by an Act of Parliament, that sets out specific obligations.
- in **common law**, which is not codified in an Act of Parliament, but arises from the precedents set by judges in individual cases.

By its very nature, it is difficult to fix the limits of common law as it sets out broad responsibilities, which are continually being tested and defined through individual judgements. It is still important, however, to try to understand the general duties placed upon your organisation in order to fulfil them appropriately.

★ It is under **common law** that we all - organisations and individuals - have a general legal **duty of care** to avoid causing harm to or endangering people or property as a result of our activities. In any organisation, members of staff and the governing body must inform themselves of their specific responsibilities and take reasonable steps to meet them.

Failure to do this may be seen as **negligent**, i.e. that a 'reasonable person' could have been expected not to act in that way. In order to prove negligence, someone who has suffered injury, loss or damage (the plaintiff) must show that the organisation or individual (the defendant) was at fault because:

- the plaintiff was owed a duty of care by the defendant which was not met;
- danger was foreseeable (i.e. the defendant knew, or should have known, that it existed);
- and the danger was controllable (i.e. the defendant could have done something about it).

Where negligence can be shown, employees or trustees could be held individually liable in law if their action or inaction is found to have resulted in injury or damage.

Statute law can help clarify some of the specific legal duties your organisation faces. While it should be remembered that much legislation is defined in terms of responsibilities for and to employees, some health and safety legislation, including the Health & Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978[3], applies to all those who may be affected by the organisation's activities, not just employees. This Order provides an overarching structure for health and safety in the workplace and incorporates other existing health and safety laws, codes of practice and regulations. Organisations must examine their own activities to identify all the supplementary legislation relevant to them.

★ The basic requirements, however, that the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 makes on organisations include:

- safeguarding the health, safety and welfare of the people who work for them while they are at work;
- conducting their work in a way that ensures that those who come into contact with the organisation (including voluntary workers and service-users) are not exposed to unacceptable risks to their health or safety;
- identifying risks arising from work activities and taking appropriate

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[3] Organisations outside Northern Ireland will need to identify their own relevant legislation.

preventative and protective measures to reduce them;

- ensuring that premises and any equipment or substances therein are safe and without risk.

The Health and Safety Executive also advises that, "In general, the same health and safety standards should be applied to voluntary workers as they would to employees exposed to the same risks."[4] The Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act (2007) has introduced a new offence for organisations charged with gross failures in health and safety which leads to death.

A best practice approach therefore, suggests that even measures that refer specifically to 'employees' should be understood to apply to anyone who does work for the organisation, whether or not they are paid. At the very minimum, then, every volunteer-involving organisation must consider:

- how they ensure the provision and maintenance of safe premises and equipment for use by volunteers;
- how they provide information and training to ensure volunteers work safely;
- how everyone, including volunteers, is made aware of his/her rights and responsibilities in relation to health and safety;
- how they assess and deal with risks posed to and by volunteers, including risks to personal safety, access to confidential information; and
- what their health and safety policy says about volunteers and their work.

Working with such broad definitions, it is easy to imagine all kinds of potential disasters and catastrophes that might result from the involvement of volunteers in an organisation's work. However, it is vital to acknowledge that every aspect of an organisation's activities creates risks and dangers, whether it involves paid staff or volunteers. Indeed, our every action - whether as private individuals, employees or volunteers - is really a calculated risk. It is impossible to create a totally safe and risk-free environment while continuing to do the things needed to fulfil organisational mission and objectives.

Assessing and managing risk

The only practical and responsible approach is to be proactive in protecting the health and safety of all those who come into contact with the organisation. As well as setting out this commitment in a **health and safety policy**, organisations need to calculate the risks that workers, beneficiaries and the public might be exposed to as a result of the organisation's activities and take steps to remove or reduce those that are unacceptable. We will look at some general advice on the issue of **risk management** next in this chapter and then consider health and safety policy and **insurance** as two key elements in how organisations can manage risks. (The other issues listed above should then be considered in light of these measures and your organisation's own procedures and circumstances.)

Health and safety at work regulations which came into effect in NI in 1993, place a legal duty upon employers and the self-employed to assess the risks to the health and safety of their employees, volunteers and others. Risk is simply the potential for harm to be done, and a risk assessment, therefore, is a careful examination of what, in the work your organisation does, might cause harm or damage. Conducting a risk assessment highlights the potential areas for concern and helps you to decide whether existing procedures and precautions are sufficient or whether further measures need to be taken to prevent harm. If volunteer activities cannot be successfully incorporated into the wider organisational risk assessment, then a separate assessment should be made of the risks involved in volunteer activities. The key to effective risk assessment is to be organised and thorough in identifying the potential for harm or damage in your volunteers' activities. The flowchart on the following page demonstrates a comprehensive four-stage process.

Guidance on organisational responsibilities regarding Compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and Intellectual Property Rights are available from the Volunteer Now website. You may also be interested in reading the 'risk assessment and volunteering' information sheet that is available from the Volunteer Now website.

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[4] *Charity and Voluntary Workers - A Guide to Health and Safety at Work*, HSE, 1999.

NOTES

THE RISK MANAGEMENT PROCESS

1. Identify risks

2. Analyse & Evaluate risks

Likelihood of risk | Magnitude of harm

3. Control risks

Avoid the activity
Yes → / No ↓

Remove the risk
Yes → / No ↓

Reduce the harm
Yes → / No ↓

Transfer the liability
Yes →

4. Record results

5. Review risks

'Charity and Voluntary Workers - A Guide to Health and Safety at Work', Health & Safety Executive, 2006

Volunteer Now provides a general template risk assessment tool. The Health and Safety Executive also supplies a range of template risk assessment tools for different scenarios i.e. charity shop volunteers.

The following exercise will help you work through steps one and two of the risk management process in order to get a clear picture of the risks involved in your volunteers' work.

> ☞ Aim: To begin to identify areas of risk in relation to volunteering activities.

- List the various areas of work where you involve volunteers in your organisation. Select one of these areas or one volunteer role and break it down into the various volunteer activities involved.
- Pick one of these activities to assess for hazards (i.e. any thing or situation that can cause harm) and consider what potential harm it might pose to:
  - people - volunteers, staff, service-users or members of the public.
  - property - premises or equipment belonging to the organisation, the volunteer, the service-user or public property.
  - the organisation's reputation or standing with staff, volunteers, service-users, the community or funders.
- Take each risk in turn and rate from 1-10 on the following elements:
  - the magnitude of the harm, where 1 might be a minor cut and 10, a fatality.
  - the likelihood of harm where 1 is near impossible and 10 is a certainty.

  Use these ratings to prioritise the risks connected with this volunteer activity. For instance, volunteers having substantial unsupervised access to young children may be considered a serious risk because of the magnitude of the danger (the potential for physical, emotional or sexual abuse) even though the likelihood of such harm being done is small.
- Working through each of the risks you have identified in order, list any systems, procedures or equipment you currently use to reduce the magnitude and/or the likelihood of harm. Much of what is simple good practice in managing volunteers - including selection procedures, supervision systems and training - already goes some way to managing some of the risks linked to volunteering. Decide which risks require further measures to reduce them to an acceptable level.

You will need to repeat this process for all the roles or activities in each area of work you have identified. This may seem like a huge chore, but like most large tasks, risk assessment is best tackled by breaking it down into a number of smaller tasks. Besides, many of the risks you identify will recur across a number of areas or activities and, as stated previously, most will require no further action if you have adequate protective measures in place. It will take some time to complete a risk assessment for the whole programme, but the important thing is to make a start. Doing so helps limit your liability under the law by showing that you have taken this responsibility on board - although this will only be the case if you also take appropriate action to deal with the risks identified in the process!

So, what constitutes 'appropriate action' in relation to the unacceptable risks you might identify? Should those concerned simply be warned of the potential danger or must every risk be eliminated? We already know that the latter is not possible, but the flowchart on page 13 should help you decide how best to tackle each hazard - look again at step three of the risk management process.

> 🔍 Steps to safety
>
> i) The first aim should always be to remove the risk completely where possible. This will usually involve **ceasing the activity** in its present form, either permanently or temporarily until the hazardous circumstances change. Often this may not be a viable option because it removes the organisation's ability to fulfil its aims. If we look at the example mentioned earlier, a community crèche might find it impossible to provide its services without volunteers sometimes being alone with young children.
>
> However, sometimes a hazardous activity is carried out simply through habit or convenience. The same example might be applied to a local scout troop, where volunteer leaders need never be alone with members during the usual weekly meetings. However, when leaders have been in the habit of providing lifts to or from the meetings, this places both the child

and the volunteer at risk. It is still quite possible to conduct the group's business without this activity, so the leaders may decide as a matter of policy to stop providing lifts for boys.

ii) If it cannot be removed, then the next option is to **reduce the risk** to an acceptable level. This can be done by changing systems of work, management procedures, equipment or materials used or the circumstances in which the hazardous activity takes place. So the community crèche might put in place child protection policies and procedures to minimise the number of situations where leaders are alone with children and to make children aware of their rights in this respect. Or, to take a different example, the interview rooms in which volunteer counsellors meet clients might be arranged in such a way to give the counsellor easy access to the exit and have panic buttons installed to minimise the risk of violence against the volunteer.

iii) If there is really no way to change or modify an activity to reduce the risk, the best option may be to **minimise the harm** that could be done. Conservation volunteers clearing waste ground will need to use sharp implements and possibly power tools, and may have to handle hazardous waste. In this situation, the potential damage could be significantly reduced by providing protective clothing and/or equipment.

iv) The final option, which you should consider only if none of the others is viable, is to limit the repercussions for the organisation or the individual volunteer by **transferring the liability**. This could be done by providing insurance cover for the volunteers and/or the organisation, or requiring the individuals involved in the activity to sign a waiver. Of course, a waiver is not worth the paper it is written on (literally) if you have not fulfilled your duty of care, and your insurer will require you to have taken all reasonable preventative measures before they will pay out. So this last option is often additional to, rather than instead of, one of the other three actions considered above.

Policy and Insurance

As we have seen, the issues thrown up by conducting a risk assessment will often have repercussions for what volunteers can do in their voluntary work and/or how they must do it. Equally, they may have an impact on how paid staff who work with volunteers do their jobs. These changes must be made known and implemented consistently across the organisation, but this can be difficult to achieve. One way to disseminate this necessary information and help emphasise the importance of following the necessary practices and procedures is to develop written rules and guidelines around health and safety in your organisation. Drawing all such guidance together in a health and safety policy lends further weight and promotes compliance.

While you are not legally required to provide a written health and safety policy for volunteers, most organisations are required to do so for paid staff. So, from a best practice approach, it is hard to justify anything less for those who work voluntarily. You don't necessarily have to produce a separate policy for volunteers; it can be incorporated into a joint policy. It should be made clear in the policy that the wider organisational health and safety policy applies to volunteers. Informed by your volunteering risk assessment you may need to change the current policy or amend it to incorporate some additional volunteering- related statements or measures. This information could be relayed to volunteers' at their induction.

However, if the risks faced by your volunteers are substantially different to those for staff, you may prefer to draft a health and safety policy specifically for volunteers. For example, if one of the roles in your organisation is a **volunteer driver**, it is important to assess specific risks attached to this role and to clarify and clearly communicate the organisation and volunteers responsibilities regarding car insurance etc. More information on volunteer driving is available from the Volunteer Now website.

Developing a written health and safety policy for volunteers should help clarify roles, responsibilities and procedures. As such, it is an important tool in helping the organisation to look after volunteers and those with whom they come into contact, and ensuring their safety.

★ Any health and safety policy should:

- make a general statement outlining the organisation's commitment to ensuring the health and safety of volunteers. This section might state that although volunteers are not employees, the organisation takes their welfare seriously and is committed to looking after them and ensuring they are safe when carrying out their volunteer roles.

- identify responsibilities for health and safety procedures. This should include the name and role of individuals with responsibilities for specific areas, such as first aid, fire safety or the maintenance of equipment.

- outline safety procedures. This would include what to do in the case of a fire, how to record and report accidents or injuries, rules for the use of equipment or hazardous materials, safeguarding personal safety etc.

It is essential that volunteers are made aware of the health and safety policy and know and abide by the relevant procedures. The policy should be introduced during induction and reviewed with the volunteer at the end of their settling-in period. The policy itself will need to be updated regularly, so make sure that this responsibility is allocated to an appropriate person.

While a clear and properly implemented health and safety policy is an important tool in preventing accidental or malicious harm, it is not a guarantee that things will never go wrong. The sort of basic good practice procedures mentioned earlier are essential to ensure that policy is translated into practice. However, while prevention is undoubtedly better than cure, organisations do need to provide adequate insurance cover for damage, loss or injury suffered or caused by volunteers in the course of their voluntary work. The following are the most common types of insurance cover used by volunteer-involving organisations.

- Public Liability Insurance which you must have if the public uses your premises or attends events or activities run by your organisation. Public

Liability Insurance provides cover up to an agreed maximum sum against injury to persons or damage to property as a result of your activities, but claims by or against volunteers are not automatically included. You will need to make sure that your policy does cover volunteers and the actions of volunteers in all the places where they carry out their voluntary work (e.g. in clients' homes), and that it extends to one-off events such as fundraisers or open days, if necessary.

- Employer's Liability Insurance covers employees for injuries suffered during the course of the work and anyone who employs paid staff must hold such a policy. While there is no legal obligation to do so, organisations should as a matter of good practice extend this to cover volunteers. However, although the cover provided may be identical, be careful that your policy clearly distinguishes between employees and volunteers as two distinct groups in order to avoid problems with implying employee rights and responsibilities for volunteers (see chapter 2).

- Professional Indemnity Insurance protects against liability for damages awarded to people who have suffered financial loss as a result of incorrect or inadequate advice. This is essential to protect your organisation if you provide advice services. Again make sure that volunteers are specifically covered in your policy if you involve volunteer advisors.

- Personal Accident Insurance provides payment in the event of injury or death occurring during the course of work, regardless of whether or not the organisation is liable. As such it is a voluntary benefit that you may wish to extend to staff and/or volunteers, or even to particular volunteer roles.

4. Equality and diversity in volunteering

In Northern Ireland we have an equality and human rights legal framework which protects people in (or seeking) paid employment from discrimination. However as volunteers are not deemed to be employees, in most situations volunteers will not have legal protection under this framework. This is because there are a number of fundamental and important things that make volunteers stand out from paid employees (see page 8).

Our understanding of how a court of law interprets volunteers relationship to legislation mainly comes from 'case law' i.e. when a case is brought to court.

Legal obligations aside, few would dispute the ethical duty that organisations have to treat individuals and groups fairly and equitably. The likelihood that this ethical duty may become legally enforceable should only serve to reinforce this approach.

As already discussed in this workbook, equal opportunities policies and procedures can help to ensure that everyone in an organisation, including staff, volunteers and visitors are clear about expectations in this regard. However, an organisation also needs to think beyond equality and focus on diversity if it aspires to best practice in this area. Diversity has emerged as a powerful concept both within and beyond the volunteering sector in the last decade. Indeed, the first Volunteering Strategy for NI has placed a great emphasis on enhancing the accessibility and diversity in volunteering. A key priority being to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to volunteer and that volunteering is representative of the diversity of our community.

What is diversity?

There are a number of key differences between an approach to issues of difference based on the traditional equal opportunities view compared to one from what we might call the 'diversity perspective'. As noted above, while concerns about equal opportunities may well arise from a real desire for justice, action is usually **externally driven**, based on minimum legal requirements. The focus of this action is usually on **policies and procedures** to help **groups** of people who do not fit the (white, able-bodied) 'norm' to **assimilate** into systems and cultures designed for and by those who represent the 'norm'. The implication of this approach is that difference ultimately presents a **dilemma** which can be resolved using a **standardised** solution.

In contrast, diversity is about valuing and **celebrating difference**. A diverse organisation welcomes each **individual** for the different skills, attitudes and experiences they bring. Aside from social or ethical reasons, a diverse organisation sees added value in business terms from involving the widest possible range of individuals. There is a clear **internal** impetus for maximising the fresh ideas and perceptions that people from different backgrounds bring because they can improve the way the organisation works. This means that how the organisation perceives and reacts to difference becomes a **strategic** issue, starting with the group's culture and values. Moreover, a positive appreciation of difference puts the onus to **adapt** on the organisation rather than the individual, so rather than one solution, there is almost unlimited potential between, and even within, organisations to create and innovate their own approaches.

Aim: To consider current diversity issues in your organisation.

Think about each of the following points and make a note of any questions or issues they raise regarding your organisation's ability to attract, facilitate and develop a diverse range of volunteers.

- Think of a team of staff and/or volunteers working in your organisation. **Do they represent diverse backgrounds or characteristics?** For example, think about age, gender, ethnicity, religion, educational and work backgrounds, family circumstances, disability*.

- How many ways can you think of in which your organisation **recognises, acknowledges and welcomes difference?** For example, think about value and missions statements, goals and objectives, policies and procedures, culture and partnerships.

- How can staff, volunteers and service-users **influence and challenge what is done and/or how things** are done in your organisation? For example, think about lines of communication, representation, forums, consultation, evaluation.

- How many **practices or processes** relating to your volunteer programme can you identify which **are reviewed for equality of access and diversity?** For example, think about identifying roles for volunteers, attracting and selecting volunteers, supporting and developing volunteers, monitoring and evaluating volunteer involvement.

It should be clear from this exercise that diversity is a far-reaching concept - but what can organisations do in practical terms to foster diversity in volunteering? The rest of this chapter will focus on practical ways in which you could approach these issues.

Diversity in volunteering

Diversity in volunteering means two things:

- A varied body of volunteers - This does not mean setting quotas based on gender, age or race, but seeking to develop a volunteer team that reflects the diversity in the communities you operate in and serve.

- A variety of roles that volunteers can carry out - This means not just different kinds of tasks and activities, but volunteering opportunities at different levels that offer different patterns of volunteering to facilitate the skills, experiences, preferences and availability of a wide range of people.

Clearly, these two aspects of diversity in volunteering are inter-linked because different kinds of people have different kinds of skills, are attracted to different kinds of activity, available at different times and so on. It therefore follows that if you offer a diverse range of volunteering opportunities you will be more likely to attract a diverse range of volunteers. The following case studies describe how two local volunteer-involving organisations took simple but effective actions to address these two aspects of diversity in volunteering.

* To fully understand the make up of your volunteers with respect to age, sex, gender and how representative they are of the community you work in, you may wish to establish a monitoring system. Further guidance, including a template monitoring form is available from the Monitoring Diversity and Equality of Opportunity in Volunteering Info Sheet available on the Volunteer Now website.

Diversity in volunteering-people and opportunities

People

A local community development association in a Protestant area of Belfast, was working on a strategic plan for the next five years. When it came to examining how representative their volunteers were, the group restated their commitment to equal opportunities, but emphasized that their mission was to serve their local community, which was 100% Protestant. The group had good links with the community association in the nearby Catholic estate, but it was unrealistic to expect them to recruit Catholics as volunteers.

The consultant working with them on the strategic plan pointed out that being diverse and representative is not just about religion. To be truly representative and diverse the group should look at the different kinds of people within their own community.

Once they started to talk about it, it was hard to stop. For example, they pointed out that there were disabled people in their community, yet they had no disabled volunteers. They discovered that although there were a lot of lone parents in the area, none of them were volunteers. The group decided to target these two under represented groups but realised that they did not have the expertise to discover why these people were not coming forward as volunteers.

They decided to ask some disabled people and lone parents in the area what would encourage them to get involved. One lone parent said that she was bored sitting at home and would love to get out and about. However, she could not afford childcare. The group did not yet have the resources to reimburse this expense, but they pointed out that they already ran a crèche for local parents. They decided that the children of volunteers could attend the crèche free of charge while their parents are volunteering.

A disabled person in the area said they were interested in getting involved in the management of the group. However he pointed out that he would have trouble getting into the group's offices to attend meetings and this put him off volunteering. The group admitted that the premises were not ideal. They were currently looking for funding to help improve access but in the immediate future they decided to hold committee meetings on the ground floor,

rather than in the meeting room upstairs, where they had been meeting for the last ten years

Opportunities

A charity shop in Newry had a reliable group of five volunteers. All the volunteers were around the same age and had been volunteering in the shop for many years together. The local Volunteer Now office contacted the Volunteer Organiser of the charity and told them they had been contacted by a young fashion and design student, who was interested in volunteering in a charity shop. The student had indicated that he had a keen eye for design and wanted to practise his talents and contribute to a worthwhile cause at the same time. Initially, the Volunteer Organiser didn't know if she had the time to think about introducing a new role. She was also conscious that all the current volunteers were very happy with arrangements and the organisation did not want to risk losing a good team of volunteers. However, the Volunteer Organiser agreed to speak to the volunteers and discuss the potential introduction of a new person and role. The shop volunteers did seem a little reluctant to change at first so the Volunteer Organiser asked if there were any particular roles they could think of which would utilise the students skills.

They suggested that the shop windows could be a little more exciting. It was agreed that the new volunteer should be given the role of looking after and creating visual displays, leaving the other volunteers to get on with their usual roles of pricing goods and dealing with customers. When the new volunteer began his role, his energy and enthusiasm rejuvenated the group of volunteers and, although the nature of his role meant he could carry out the voluntary work at flexible times, he often chose to do so when he could enjoy the company of the other volunteers. As a result of the new window displays, the sales in the shop rose by £200 in the first week. The Volunteer Organiser admitted that introducing a new type of volunteer and finding an appropriate role did require more effort on her part, but it was well worth it! Adapted from *Diversity in Volunteering*, Volunteer Development Agency, 2001

Embracing diversity- getting started

It is precisely because diversity touches every aspect of an organisation that it can be hard to know where to begin in order to develop diversity in your volunteering programme. On the other hand, it is in the very nature of a diversity perspective to begin where you are at. So, as a first step you will need to find out where that is by researching and reflecting on the current situation in your organisation.

Aim: To develop a picture of current awareness and practice in relation to diversity in your volunteer programme.

- Review your notes from the first exercise in this chapter to identify some of the things you may want to think about. To ensure a diverse range of perspectives on what these issues might be, you will need to consider some form of consultation.

- Draw up a plan for how you will undertake one or both of the following:

  - Conduct an audit of volunteers in your organisation to discover who already volunteers with you and identify which groups or characteristics are missing. You could also ask them about the kind of tasks they carry out and how the work is organised. Try to find out if doing different things, or doing things in different ways could assist them in their volunteering.

  - Consider setting up a monitoring system so that you can collect demographic information on the make up of your volunteers in a systematic way so that annual / bi-annual audits can be carried out.

  - Alternatively or additionally, survey a range of stakeholders - including service volunteers and management committee volunteers - to find out their views on how they think the organisation is doing with regard to diversity. You could use the exercise on page 18 and ask for their ideas on what you might do to increase diversity.

Once you have established your starting point there are two main areas where you will need to consider taking action:

Policy and practice - how what you do and how you do it impacts on diversity.
Image and information - what information you provide to volunteers, staff, user groups and the general public and how you communicate it.

The following activities are identified with one or other of these two areas, but in reality they overlap at many points and your action plan should address how you can promote and develop diversity in relation to both these areas.

Putting diversity into practice

Policy and practice

- Include specific reference to volunteers and volunteering in your organisational equal opportunities policy and/or include a statement on equal opportunities and diversity in your volunteer policy.

- Ask staff and volunteers at all levels of the organisation to draw up a 'wish-list' of projects they would like to initiate or services they would like to develop. Then get them to think about how volunteers might undertake or support these new schemes. Encourage them to imagine what such a volunteer role might look like without the restrictions generally imposed on paid work roles. Identify one or two viable ideas to take forward.

- Examine your practices for recruiting volunteers. Where do you place recruitment advertisements and materials - are certain groups unlikely to have access to them there? Think about the format of recruitment materials too. Are they inaccessible to those with visual impairments, literacy problems or those who do not have English as their first language? Does the imagery or language appeal to certain groups only? Do you make use of the widest range of media to enable potential volunteers to contact you quickly and conveniently? How user-friendly are your systems for responding to such contacts and matching potential volunteers to appropriate roles?

- Review the practical arrangements you make with volunteers including:
  - how you welcome new volunteers and help them to become part of the organisation
  - the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses
  - the accessibility of locations for voluntary work and meetings
  - the flexibility in the timing of voluntary work and meetings and the amount of time volunteers are asked to commit
  - the ways in which you meet support and development needs of volunteers with a range of support needs
  - the communication regarding processes for volunteers who want / would benefit from time-out/ longer breaks.
- Review the make-up of your management committee and discuss with them how a more diverse range of committee members might be recruited, perhaps by targeting individuals with certain characteristics or building requirements for representation of key groups into the nomination process.

Image and information

- Incorporate diversity into the process for proofing all materials and publications that your organisation produces. Be aware of the language and imagery you use and what implicit messages they send. Could you offer to provide materials in alternative formats or languages?
- Develop an internal communications strategy to ensure the two-way flow of information and opinions, particularly between management/staff and volunteers/service-users. Could notice boards, news-sheets, e-mail updates or opening up staff meetings to volunteers make information more accessible? Could suggestion boxes, focus groups, exit interviews or evaluation facilitate feedback?
- Consider how organisational change (including action to improve diversity) impacts on the volunteer programme. How is the change process managed in relation to volunteers? Are volunteers involved in developing and implementing change, or is it simply imposed on them?

Remember, developing diversity is a long-term process. The actions suggested above are only a start and by no means exhaustive. You may find that your organisation's structure or culture lends itself to other equally effective approaches.

Eight Equality Standards for promoting equality of opportunity and diversity in volunteering

Volunteer Now and the Equality Commission have published useful joint publications to guide volunteer involving organisations in monitoring and promoting equality and diversity. Part of the guidance is a set of eight quality standards which organisations can benchmark itself against in order to promote equality of opportunity and diversity in volunteering.

1. **Commit** to Promoting Equality and Diversity

2. **Allocate** Appropriate Resources

3. **Encourage** Fair Participation for All

4. **Develop** Inclusive and Diverse Volunteer Opportunities

5. **Protect** Volunteers from Harassment

6. **Promote** Fair and Transparent Recruitment

7. **Communicate** Clear and Fair Procedures

8. **Support** Diverse Individual Needs

Full copies of the Volunteer Now and Equality Commission guidance documents are available from the Volunteer Now website.

There is also a range of other organisations with expertise in particular aspects of diversity and inclusion. Contact details for a few are included at Appendix II.

5. Evaluating volunteer involvement

Perhaps the ultimate organisational issue in relation to volunteering is finding out just what difference volunteers make in the organisation overall. This includes identifying how volunteers contribute to achieving organisational goals and objectives, and measuring how well the organisation manages the important resource that volunteers represent. The fact that evaluating volunteering can be given a very low priority in many organisations is worrying, because there is a huge amount of evidence based learning that comes from it. If volunteers are valued as an important and inherent part of the organisation, it is much harder to argue against the need to check that this significant resource is producing the desired results and to ensure that it is being managed in the most effective way. So at the very least, organisations owe it to their funders and service-users (not to mention other stakeholders) to take stock of how their volunteer programme is doing, as they should for any other area of work.

Some people need to be convinced of the value of evaluating any aspect of their work. To them, evaluation is simply an exhausting paper-chase, which leads to someone who does not understand their work passing critical judgements on it and them. Unfortunately, in the past the voluntary and community sector's experience of externally imposed evaluation has sometimes been like this. Some funding agencies, focussed on the achievement of quantitative outputs, required the compilation of endless statistics and often missed the real benefits accomplished through the process itself. Not surprisingly, this gave evaluation a bad name, but it need not and should not be like that.

Why evaluate?

⭐ **Evaluation** is, "*An assessment or judgement comparing what actually occurred with what was intended*." (The Evaluation Trust, 2008)
Evaluation, therefore, is about assessing the **impact** of your volunteering programme against the plans and goals you have set.

Often the terms evaluation is discussed alongside monitoring. All organisations keep records and notes, and discuss what they are doing. This simple checking becomes **monitoring** when information is collected routinely and systematically against a plan. The information collected through monitoring can form an essential part of the evaluation process. "Evaluation often uses monitoring information that has been produced over a period of time. However, this is not always available, and evaluation may use one-off methods of enquiry. Often the best combination is bringing together regular monitoring data with additional information gathered against specific key questions. An organisation should think about evaluation from the start, so that monitoring can be carried out with evaluation in mind." (www.knowhownonprofit.org).

With **external evaluations**, the assessment is lead by someone outside the organisation. This can be the preferred option of some organisations that do not have the resources to carry it out in-house, values the objectivity it offers and has a budget to commission someone else to do it. Alternatively, evaluation can be an ongoing, **internal process** by which organisations measure their performance and achievements against their goals and objectives to see how they are doing. A good funder will be impressed by organisations that show initiative and value in evaluating their own performance.

Self-evaluation of volunteering can help organisations to:
- identify the **work done** by volunteers and what **impact** it has.
- show how volunteers' work helps **achieve** wider organisational aims.
- get the **views** of all its **stakeholders** about volunteers and volunteering.
- highlight **successes** in the volunteer programme, as well as identifying areas for **improvement.**
- work out how volunteering might be **developed** in the future.
- **improve** the quality of services provided by and to volunteers.

While you should be able to identify a number of concrete benefits to you, your organisation and your volunteers from adopting a self-evaluation system, it can be difficult to know where to start if you have never gone through the evaluation process in its entirety.

There are many different models for evaluation, but the basic process should always include the following steps:

1. Planning -Deciding what to measure, when and how i.e. Methodology
2. Data collection - collecting information using methodology designed.
3. Analysis - Analysing the information and interpreting results.
4. Interpretation - Identifying and implementing recommendations.

As always, time spent planning the process is a good investment, and should help you to minimise the extra work by building evaluation activities into existing work systems and procedures i.e. use evaluation forms after training sessions/ events. Have feedback on satisfaction levels as a regular part of volunteer supervision. Keep records of clients supported, volunteer hours gifted etc. Not only will this help make evaluation a more manageable task, but it should also lead to a more valid and reliable process. That is why this chapter will focus particularly on the first of the four steps to a successful evaluation outlined above.

Planning an Evaluation

The first thing to realise is that it is neither possible nor particularly useful to evaluate every detail of your volunteer programme. It is vital that evaluation remains a means to continually refine and improve the volunteer programme, and does not become an end in itself. You must be able to identify why are you undertaking the evaluation in the first place. Who is it for? You may wish to measure what resources are available in order to make a realistic decision on what to cover in the evaluation e.g. Who will be involved?, How much time will they have?, and What other resources will they have access to.

Begin by drawing up a framework that will set the **scope** (range of stakeholders to include) and **scale** (range and type of areas to include) of the evaluation and help you decide what you need to do. To keep focussed on what is important and avoid getting lost in a maze of detail, begin planning your evaluation by looking at the **overall aims and objectives of the volunteer programme**. Think about your key

stakeholders- the groups that volunteering is making a difference to. The exact target groups for each organisation will differ but will broadly fall into the following main groups i.e. beneficiaries/ services users, volunteers, organisations and the wider community.

Set out the **key outputs** of the activity/ programme for each of these key stakeholders. *The products or services that volunteering in your organisation leads to.* e,g. The number and demographic make-up of young people that attend a drugs / alcohol awareness programme.

What are the key **outcomes** that you are interested in measuring? *The short to medium term changes change, benefits, learning or other effects that happen as a result of volunteering.* E.g. self reported confidence of young people to say no to negative peer pressure.

What is the **impact** from the volunteer programme? *These tend to mean the broader and longer term changes that happen due to a programme.* E.g. Reduction in alcohol / drug related incidents in a community.

It is sometimes difficult to measure things that we are interested in. This is sometimes the case for volunteering- where softer outcomes such as increase in confidence, self worth, quality of life are important key desired changes. Often these outcomes are measured by asking people directly. This is called **self reporting**. An **indicator** is a measurable quantity which 'stands in' or substitutes, in some sense, for something less readily measurable e.g. diversity of people attending a group event as a measure of a groups ability to build community cohesion.

Practice Exercise

An example evaluation planning Framework is available on page 25. Complete a plan for each stakeholder you are interested in including as part of the evaluation. Key considerations are outlining the key objectives, setting out the outputs/ outcomes or impact that can determine if objectives are met; the tools / sources needed to capture data to evidence outputs / outcomes or impact; time frame for data collection and person responsible.

Data Collection

When you think about the type of information that will help you to determine what difference your programme is making. Consider the appropriateness of **qualitative** and **quantitative** measures as part of your research design. Data collection tools often incorporate a mixture of both types of approach.

- **Quantitative research deals** with numerical information, answering questions such as:
  – How many?
  – When?
  – Where?
  – How often?

– **Qualitative research** deals with information which can not be quantified, answering questions such as:
  – Why?
  – What ?
  – How?

It is also important to ensure that the things you are evaluating are both **specific** and **measurable**.

Collecting information directly from your key stakeholders to help you to fully understand the outcomes that are being achieved is called **primary research.** There are a range of tools that you can use to collect data, these include carrying out surveys, focus groups and interviews.

Guidance on how to use common data collection tools are available from the Additional Research Resources Section of the Volunteer Now website.

In some instances there can be existing information gathered that can be used to support your evaluation. It can be available through both internal and external sources. This is called **secondary research**.

Often data is collected as part of a project's funding requirements i.e. monitoring returns. **Record analysis** can be conducted on this data to support an evaluation i.e. number of young people attending a drug / alcohol awareness training; number of males & females, age categories etc.

Using this process to set the framework for evaluation allows you and the other stakeholders in the programme to decide what needs to be measured and evaluated. Ideally the framework should be drawn up in consultation with volunteers, service-users, staff and funders, so that everyone's interests are represented. Setting the framework in this way can be quite a complicated process the first time, but you should be able to use it for a number of years, making changes to particular aspects as your volunteer programme changes and develops. The core aims of your programme are likely to remain fairly consistent over time, while the core activities, outcomes and indicators may change from year to year.

Once the evaluation framework has been agreed it should start to become clear what you will need to do to carry out the evaluation. This **planning process** will clarify what needs to be gathered, how, by whom and when. Sometimes you will need to gather information specifically for the evaluation but, remember, often, relevant information is already being generated as a result of the very activity you are trying to evaluate. So as part of your evaluation planning process identify existing sources of information to avoid duplication and minimise the amount of primary research that needs to be done.

For instance, evidence of an increase in enquiries about volunteering from targeted groups might be found by comparing records of volunteering applications received this year with last year. However, even if you only currently monitor applications by gender, ethnicity, disability etc., you may need to start to record other factors such as employment status, depending on who your target groups are.

The key to a robust, insightful evaluation is to develop a plan before the activity / programme even begins.

EXAMPLE Evaluation Plan (go to page 23-24 for background and instructions)

Activity / Programme being reviewed: 6 Week Drug and Alcohol Programme for young people
Stakeholder: Young People
Overall Project Aims: Developing drug and alcohol awareness for young people

Set out the key objectives of the activity / programme for the stakeholder	Outcomes and /or Impact i.e. key changes, learning or other effects	Sources to evidence outcomes / impact i.e. Primary research- describe tools; Record analysis of existing monitoring data?	Time Frame for collecting data. Person(s) Responsible
Increase young people's awareness of the risk of alcohol and drugs	Ability to describe risks of alcohol and drugs.	Pre and post Evaluation form at beginning and end of the programme.	Jan - Mar 2013
Develop skills to address peer pressure	Confidence in saying no to peer pressure.	Feedback Forms after each session	After each session- John
Develop young people's personal development	Increased confidence, self esteem, self worth.

Increased awareness of personal safety | Focus Group | End of Programme – March 2013 |

Information should be gathered as the work is going on, rather than trying to do so retrospectively which can cause problems, especially if you have not been collecting key information that can help evidence delivery of key objectives. However, as well as planning what information you need to collect, you will need to decide:

- how best to collect it;
- who will be responsible;
- when each piece of information will be available.

ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

When all the relevant information has been gathered, you will be ready to begin the actual evaluation - that is, making judgements about how well you have done. Evaluation almost inevitably requires you to work with large amounts of information, and it can be difficult to make sense of what you find. It is helpful to approach this part of the process in two distinct phases:

1. Analysing - collating, categorising and summarising the 'raw data' in order to make it usable in making judgements about the achievements / outcomes / impact of the programme. This task should be done by someone who is familiar with the information, has the ability to sort and order information and to express quantities of information in a way that facilitates understanding (e.g. using charts and graphs or compiling statistics).

2. Interpreting - comparing the information against the original objectives or targets and making statements about the achievements of the programme. This task requires a good working knowledge of the programme itself and the wider organisational context; the ability to identify strengths/weaknesses and barriers/contributors; a degree of objectivity; and openness to unanticipated results. You will almost certainly need to seek the views of others in this task.

The final step of the evaluation process is to identify and implement recommendations for changes. It is this final step that makes evaluation something more than just a paper exercise. Remember...

- Be realistic - your recommendations are not a 'wish-list'. As with most things, you will probably have to prioritise so do not expect to do everything.
- While your recommendations should obviously try to address weaknesses, do not forget to highlight your successes. Building on existing strengths can also bring real and cost-effective improvements to how you involve volunteers.
- Take account of all the resources needed to implement your recommendations not just the financial costs. Who will take responsibility for putting the changes in place, and who will monitor their progress?
- Who should be informed of these recommendations? How will they be communicated to them? Bulky written reports are rarely the best way to communicate your success and your plans for the future - especially if you are addressing volunteers or service-users. For example, summarise key findings and include in a newsletter.

Volunteer Impact Assessment Toolkit

Measuring the impact of volunteering activities is vital. There is an increasing demand for organisations to evidence the impact and outcomes from their work. However, many volunteer involving organisations are working with limited resources and find it difficult to carry out evaluation work alongside their main activities, but know it's important! There are a wide range of 'off the shelf' measurement tools on the market. The Volunteer Impact Assessment Toolkit is a resource specifically for measuring the impact of volunteering. The Toolkit provides pre-designed, customisable tools i.e. questionnaires and topic guides which organisations of all sizes can use to measure the impact from volunteering and therefore evidence what is being achieved. Click here for more information.

6. And finally...

Hopefully the issues raised in this workbook will help you form a clear picture of what difference volunteering has in your organisation and where it fits into the bigger picture. At this stage, you may feel that you have more questions than answers, but the procedures outlined should help you to find those answers, albeit in the medium to long-term rather than straightaway. It is important to take this longer view of volunteering and realise that, like any other area of your organisation's work, it must be planned for, properly resourced and managed and scrutinised to ensure success.

Developing volunteering

So, where is volunteering going in your organisation? What are the current strengths and weaknesses in the things you do and how you do them? Many organisations assume that developing volunteering is mainly about recruiting more volunteers, but this could be a backward step if their roles are not properly thought out or if there are insufficient resources to manage their involvement properly. So it may be useful to finish by thinking about what developing volunteering might mean in your organisation and what you would need to do. For instance, it may mean:

- More diversity in volunteer pool - Look at your recruitment procedures.
- Improving the experience of volunteering - Review your volunteer management procedures.
- Increasing the range of services provided by volunteers - This may involve providing training opportunities for existing volunteers rather than simply recruiting more.
- Improving the quality of service - Again, training may be the key but the quality of support and supervision will also be vital.
- Involving volunteers at different levels in the organisation - This may require the development of new roles for volunteers or even a review of organisational policy.
- Improving organisational awareness of the value of volunteers - This will require a sustained effort from all those involved with volunteering, but evaluating and publicising volunteers' work can be a good start.

These are only a few suggestions. You may be aware of other issues for your organisation. However, this series of workbooks covers most of the key areas of volunteer management and should provide a useful resource if you feel your volunteering programme is ready to move on.[6]

Good luck!

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[6] Volunteer Now also produces a wide range of publications on other aspects of volunteering and can provide advice and training to meet your organisation's specific needs. Contact details are at the back of this book.

Appendix I

Standards relevant to volunteer management

There are two complementary standards, both important for those who work with volunteers and have an interest in improving practice - **National Occupational Standards for Managing Volunteers and Investing in Volunteers.**

NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS FOR MANAGING VOLUNTEERS

The National Occupational Standards for Managing Volunteers have been developed and agreed by a group of national organisations with expertise and experience in volunteer management, including the Volunteer Now in Northern Ireland.

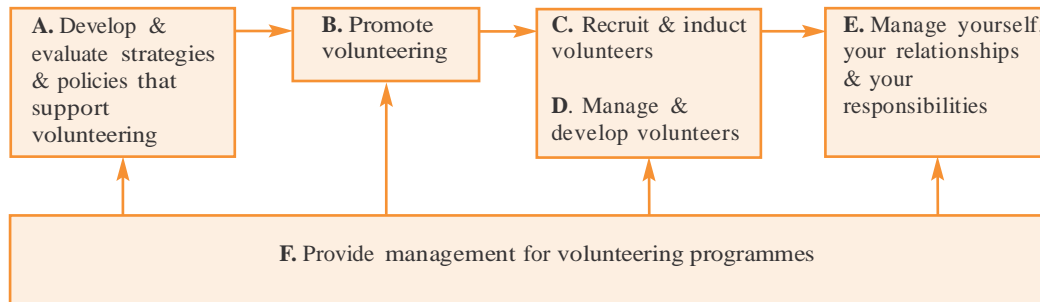**What are occupational standards and what do they describe?**
Occupational standards define a framework of good practice in the way people work, based on the functions of their job. They describe:

- The **main roles or functions** that can be part of your job
- The **specific activities** involved within these roles
- The **standards of performance** expected when carrying out these activities
- The **knowledge, skills and understanding** which you will need to meet the performance standard

What are the national occupational standards for volunteer managers?
The National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Managing Volunteers specify the standards of performance that those recruiting and supporting volunteers should be working to across the UK. They also describe the knowledge and skills that managers of volunteers need in order to perform to the required standard.

The occupational standards define the whole spectrum of activity required to develop and implement a volunteering strategy within an organisation effectively. They are based around 5 key areas, each with their own units of competence.

| **A.** Develop & evaluate strategies & policies that support volunteering | → | **B.** Promote volunteering | → | **C.** Recruit & induct volunteers

D. Manage & develop volunteers | → | **E.** Manage yourself, your relationships & your responsibilities |

F. Provide management for volunteering programmes

These standards are for you if you perform, manage or support any of this work, either as a volunteer or as part of your paid work. Whatever the circumstances, you should find these standards relevant. They have been designed primarily with those working in the voluntary and community sector in mind but should also be appropriate if you work in the public sector, such as in a hospital or school. You are not expected to be carrying out every activity described in these standards - there are rarely two volunteer management roles that are exactly the same so the NOS do not intend to provide a single template job description. What they do is describe the functions, activities and tasks that **can** be part of volunteer management.

The benefits of national occupational standards to those who manage volunteers include having a:-

• Clear description of the work standards you need to meet

• Statement of knowledge and skills required to meet each standard

• Tool to help you plan your current career development

• Qualification structure to support your career development

• Heightened awareness of your job role and responsibilities

• Chance to obtain objective appraisal and feedback from your manager

• Better understanding of how to transfer your skills from one situation to another

• Sense of achievement from a job well done

• Greater confidence to do your job well.

Volunteer involving organisations can also use the standards to ensure that those involved in the management of their volunteers are competent and have the knowledge and skills to do so effectively and appropriately.

Full text and further information about the standards can be downloaded free of charge from www.skills-thirdsector.org.uk Follow the link for National Occupational Standards and then Managing Volunteers.

INVESTING IN VOLUNTEERS

Investing in Volunteers is the UK quality standard for the involvement of volunteers within an organisation. It is designed to help volunteer-involving organisations review and improve their volunteer management. It is a nationally recognised award that allows organisations to publicly demonstrate and promote their commitment to volunteering. Investing in Volunteers complements National Occupational Standards by providing a motivating framework for reviewing and improving how **your organisation** attracts, values, supports and develops volunteers.

The Investing in Volunteers standard clearly lists the organisational practices and procedures that should be in place to effectively manage volunteers. Whether an organisation chooses to go through the assessment process or not – the Investing in Volunteers Quality Standard is an invaluable tool that all volunteer involving organisations should refer to. Those organisations not yet ready to commit to Investing in Volunteers can still use the standard as a **self-assessment tool** to benchmark the organisation and drive up performance, and as a resource **for developing knowledge, good practice and learning** within the organisation.

Organisations that achieve the Investing in Volunteers standard will be able to prove to funders, stakeholders, volunteers and service users that the contribution of volunteers is valued and that they are well-managed. This means organisations can demonstrate that they meet these *Nine Indicators*:

• There is an expressed **commitment** to the involvement of volunteers, and recognition throughout the organisation that volunteering is a two-way process which benefits volunteers and the organisation.

• The organisation commits appropriate **resources to working with volunteers,** such as money, management, staff time and materials.

• The organisation is open to involving **volunteers who reflect the diversity of the local community**, and actively seeks to do this in accordance with its stated aims.

• The organisation develops **appropriate roles for volunteers** in line with its aims and objectives, and which are of value to the volunteers.

• The organisation is committed to ensuring that, as far as possible, **volunteers are protected** from physical, financial and emotional harm arising from volunteering.

• The organisation is committed to using **fair, efficient and consistent recruitment** procedures for all potential volunteers.

• Clear procedures are put into action for **introducing new volunteers to the role, the organisation,** its work, policies, practices and relevant personnel.

• The organisation takes account of the varying **support needs of volunteers**.

• The whole organisation is aware of the need to give **volunteer recognition**.

For those organisations that want to be assessed against the Standard, Volunteer Now offers a tailored package of support and assessment to help the organisation through a 6 step process of accreditation.

Check out www.investinginvolunteers.org.uk for a copy of the Standard and for information on how to register to start the assessment process and costs. If you have any queries regarding the Investing in Volunteers Standard please email investinginvolunteers@volunteernow.co.uk

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Governance Best Practice

The Code of Good Governance is a best practice document, it sets out the standards for all governing committees/boards in the Voluntary and Community Sector in Northern Ireland. It is endorsed by the Charity Commission and Department for Social Development NI. The Code of Governance covers 7 key principles:

1. Leadership
2. Responsibilities and obligations
3. Effectiveness
4. Reviewing and renewing
5. Delegation
6. Integrity
7. Openness.

The principles provide a valuable checklist for Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations in complying with their statutory responsibilities and meeting best practice.

Resources to Support the Code

A range of resources have been developed to support the implementation of the Code:

- DIY Committee Guide; this is an online governance resource with a range of information mapped against the seven key principles www.diycommitteeguide.org

- Governance health check A self assessment tool developed as a practical resource to assist committees/boards to work towards adhering to the principles of the Code of Good Governance. The aim of this health check questionnaire is to help committees/boards review their governance arrangements, check that they have appropriate systems in place and identify areas where they could improve. It is a best practice tool - it is not mandatory. However, this resource can also help committees/boards of any size to demonstrate their good governance practices to their stakeholders, beneficiaries and funders alike. Available to download from http://www.diycommitteeguide.org/resource/governance-health-check

Appendix II

Useful contacts and publications on diversity

The organisations listed below can provide advice on particular aspects of diversity and inclusion. However this list is not exhaustive and there are many more organisations who have expertise in other areas.

For information on **volunteering** contact:

Volunteer Now
Tel: 028 9023 2020
Email: policy@volunteernow.co.uk
Web: www.volunteernow.co.uk
Volunteer Now delivers services across NI.
Click here for a list of offices and contact details.

For information on **disability issues** contact:

Disability Action NI
Portside Business Park
189 Airport Road West
Belfast, BT3 9ED
Tel: 028 9029 7880
Email: hq@disabilityaction.org
Web: www.disabilityaction.org

For information on involving people from **black and minority ethnic communities** contact:

Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM)
1st Floor
Ascot House
24-31 Shaftesbury Square
BELFAST, BT2 7DB
Tel: 028 9023 8645
Web: http://www.nicem.org.uk/

For information on **older people** contact:

The Unlocking Potential Project
Age NI
3 Lower Crescent
Belfast BT7 1NR
Tel: 02890 245 729
Web: http://www.ageni.org.uk

For information on involving **young people** and the voluntary youth sector contact:

Youthnet
5th Floor
14 College Square North
Belfast BT1 6AS

Tel: 028 9033 1880
Email: youthnet-ni@dnet.co.uk
Web: www.youthnetni.org.uk

For information on **sexual orientation** contact:

The Rainbow Project
Belfast LGBT Centre
1st Floor
9-13 Waring Street
Belfast
BT1 2DX

Tele: 028 9031 9030
Email: info@rainbow-project.org
Web: http://www.rainbow-project.org

NOTES

For information and support on **Sight loss** contact:

RNIB
105 Judd Street
London
WC1H 9NE

Tel: 0303 123 9999

Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk
Web: www.rnib.org.uk

For information and support on **disability** contact:

ADAPT NI
Cathedral Quarter
Managed Workspace
109-113 Royal Avenue
Belfast

Tel: 028 9023 1211
Email: info@adaptni.org
Web: http://www.adaptni.org/

Volunteer Now Publications

Volunteer Now has developed a range of publications and information sheets to support volunteer involving organisations to encourage diversity.

Available to download from the publications section of www.volunteernow.co.uk

VOLUNTEER NOW
connect · build · change

Tel: 02890 232 020

Email: info@volunteernow.co.uk

www.volunteernow.co.uk