

# Monitoring Diversity and Equality of Opportunity in Volunteering



A Short Guide for Volunteer Involving Organisations

Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

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## Introduction

This guide has been developed by Volunteer Now and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland to assist organisations seeking to promote equality of opportunity and diversity in volunteering.

Equality monitoring is an important supporting action outlined in **Promoting Equality and Diversity in Volunteering – A Guide for Volunteer Involving Organisations**<sup>1</sup>. The guidance set out over the following pages should assist volunteer involving organisations seeking to establish mechanisms to monitor equality of opportunity and diversity.

***Note** there is no legal requirement to collect this information for volunteers but it is considered best practice because it demonstrates a commitment to providing equal opportunities to all volunteers.*

## What is equality monitoring?

Equality monitoring is simply a data recording process that enables organisations to record sensitive information about a person's background and identity in a confidential and anonymous way.

It can allow volunteer involving organisations to capture an annual snapshot of what their volunteer population looks like in terms of factors such as sex, race and religion. This can then enable them to consider whether or not the diversity of their volunteer population fully reflects the diversity of the communities that they serve.

For further information go to the volunteer management publications section of [www.volunteernow.co.uk](http://www.volunteernow.co.uk)

## Why should organisations monitor volunteers?

Equality monitoring is an important means of demonstrating an established commitment to promoting equality of opportunity in volunteering opportunities. Monitoring is also the best way to determine the success or otherwise of policies and practices adopted for the purpose of maintaining or promoting equality. Some funders will also request equality and diversity data for volunteers.

Equality monitoring is not mandatory and indeed not every volunteer involving organisation will decide that they would benefit from introducing monitoring on any equality ground, perhaps because they are so small.

**Example:** A small charity currently has a total of 10 volunteers. It decides not to introduce equality monitoring for volunteers because the Management Committee agree that the subject pool is too small to collect any meaningful data and ensure confidentiality.

When large enough numbers are involved however, it can help in a number of ways such as by helping volunteer involving organisations to identify and remove potential barriers that make it harder for people from certain backgrounds to participate in volunteering.

**Example:** Equality monitoring might prompt a cross community volunteering project to identify possible reasons why it currently has so few male Protestant participants.

Furthermore, monitoring can assist organisations to develop solutions, such as positive action plans, or alternative policies and practices. This can provide evidence of whether or not these solutions are working.

**Example:** In an attempt to encourage more disabled people to participate in volunteering a volunteer involving organisation develops a supported volunteer project targeted at this group. Monitoring data then shows that the proportion of volunteers with a disability rose by 10% within a year of introducing the project.

## What grounds can be monitored?

The grounds that are monitored will vary depending on a range of factors including the size of the volunteer project, their aims and the purpose identified for monitoring on specific grounds.

It is up to each organisation to decide what should be monitored but typical grounds monitored in an employment context would include equality grounds such as Sex; Community Background; Disability; Race; Sexual Orientation and Age. However individual projects may identify other grounds that they feel would be useful to monitor.

**Example:** A volunteer summer camp project decides that it would be useful to monitor the dietary needs of all participants to establish the proportion of volunteers who are vegan. It then identifies that on average over 30% of participants are vegan which leads to a review of the current canteen menu.

## Qualitative v Quantitative Monitoring

Using a monitoring questionnaire such as the kind included as an appendix to this document is an appropriate method of collecting **quantitative** monitoring data. However, such questionnaires are unlikely to reveal any qualitative information about individual's attitudes or opinions.

**Example:** An organisation wants to be able to show that it is promoting equality of opportunity in volunteering. However the Management Committee decide that asking all volunteers to declare personal information about disability and sexual orientation would be too intrusive a method for their organisation.

Instead they develop links with a number of disability groups and organisations involved in promoting the rights of gay, lesbian and bi-sexual people. After initial meetings to explore how they might make volunteering more accessible for their stakeholders, contact is maintained on a regular basis both so that they can promote volunteering opportunities to their membership and be consulted on important decisions or policy changes.

Such opinions can be a useful source of information and can impact significantly on how an organisation promotes equality of opportunity. These can be collected in a number of different ways from a range of stakeholders such as: annual survey of opinions, exit questionnaires and / or external consultation on policies and practices.

## Is equality monitoring of volunteers required by law?

There is no legal requirement for volunteer involving organisations to undertake equality monitoring. However the Data Protection legislation places a responsibility on organisations that collect sensitive personal information to ensure that the information is:

- fairly and securely processed;
- relevant and used for limited purposes;
- accurate and up to date; and
- not kept for longer than is absolutely necessary.

The important thing to remember is that volunteer involving organisations must have identified why they are collecting personal data, how it will be stored and for how long. General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018 apply to volunteers in the same way as to others.

## Why should volunteers disclose personal details?

This is an important question to consider when developing a monitoring system. Some individuals may be reluctant to respond openly and honestly to questions which they perceive to be of an extremely personal nature. If they choose not to complete all or part of an equality monitoring form they should not be excluded from volunteering opportunities.





It is also important to be aware that there are particular sensitivities associated with several of the equality grounds and that these can hinder the effective monitoring of those grounds. The grounds of *sexual orientation, civil partnership status, disability and political opinion* are particularly affected by these sensitivities.

To address these concerns, it is important to establish and maintain an environment of trust which acknowledges that the collection of personal data is a highly sensitive issue and that it will be managed in a sensitive and secure way. Thus, a volunteer involving organisation should openly explain their reason for monitoring and should establish and maintain data protection safeguards.

It is good practice for organisations to highlight the existence of their data protection safeguards as this may encourage individuals to answer equal opportunities questionnaires.

For example, volunteer involving organisations should assure individuals that:

- it is not compulsory for them to answer questionnaires;
- their answers will not be used to make any unfair decisions affecting them;
- their answers will be held in the strictest confidence.

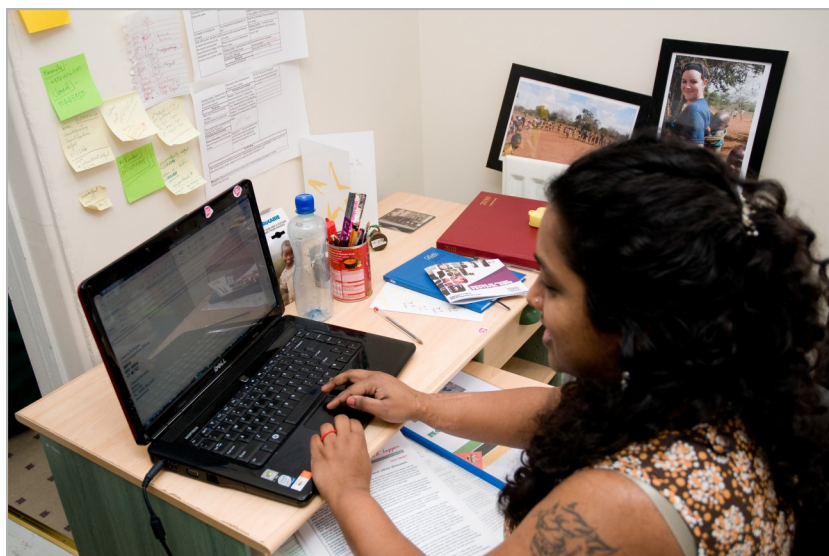
Furthermore, volunteer involving organisations should ensure that any information which they retain is accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date.

The Information Commissioner's Office <sup>2</sup> ("ICO") is the public authority responsible for enforcing the *Data Protection legislation* and is the best source of information and guidance about it and about taking steps to put in place data protection safeguards.

## Key steps to take when introducing monitoring

Before introducing equality monitoring of volunteers across any grounds a volunteer involving organisation should identify and agree the following:

- WHAT will you be monitoring and WHY?
- WHO will be the Monitoring Officer?
- WHERE will the information be stored?
- HOW will the information be collected & used?
- WHEN and HOW will the data be reviewed?



### STEP 1: WHAT Equality grounds to monitor and WHY?

The number of equality grounds that are monitored will depend very much on the reason identified for monitoring in the first place.

A volunteer project may be required to monitor on specific grounds for funding purposes or as a way of tracking the impact of actions aimed at encouraging more people from a specific background to volunteer. Whatever the reasons identified this should be set out clearly and communicated to all stakeholders.

<sup>2</sup> Information Commissioner's Website: [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)



**Example:** A scheme developed to encourage people from both sides of the sectarian divide to work together on an environmental project might decide that it would be useful to monitor the community background of volunteers in order to track progress of their main aim.

## **STEP 2: WHO will be the Monitoring Officer?**

It will also be important to appoint a **Monitoring Officer**. They will be the only person to see the monitoring forms and undertake the task of processing the information. The Monitoring Officer could be someone who works in the office or they could be a member of the Management Committee.

As far as possible volunteer involving organisations should ensure that the Monitoring Officer is:

1. Not involved in the role of arranging volunteer placements or in making significant decisions about individual volunteers.
2. Provided with the necessary support and training required to carry out the role effectively.

## **STEP 3: WHERE will the information be stored?**

Monitoring information should be stored in a secure way that is fully compliant with responsibilities under the Data Protection Act. Data on equality grounds should not be collected and then stored away without fully considering it and taking appropriate action. Organisations must use the information by analysing and reviewing it for the purpose of promoting equality of opportunity.

## **STEP 4: HOW will the information be collected and used?**

An example monitoring form has been included as an appendix to this guide. This includes recommended questions for all of the main equality grounds. However, as previously mentioned, **you should only include the questions relevant to the grounds that you have decided to monitor on.**

Volunteers (or potential volunteers) should be asked to complete the monitoring form at the same time as they are asked to complete an application or registration form prior to volunteering with your organisation.

They should be instructed to complete it, if they wish, after reading the guidance notes and then return it in a sealed envelope provided which should be marked **‘for the attention of the Monitoring Officer’.**

The completed form (remaining in the sealed envelope) should then be forwarded to the Monitoring Officer for processing. **At no time should this raw data be made available to anyone else, particularly anyone who may be involved in making decisions about individual volunteering placements or training opportunities.**

The information can then be added to existing data to provide an aggregate breakdown of all volunteers in relation to specific equality grounds. By doing this it will be possible to show the proportion of volunteers from specific backgrounds.

## **STEP 5: WHEN and HOW to review the Data Collected**

It is ultimately up to each organisation to determine when and how they will conduct reviews of the data collected. The precise way will depend on why monitoring has been introduced in the first place and the required outcomes that have been identified.

**Example:** Out of 100 volunteers 55 are Protestant, therefore 55% of volunteers are Protestant.

The data set identified as an appropriate comparator will also depend on what is being monitored and where the project is based. An extremely useful source of official statistics and social research on Northern Ireland's population and socio-economic conditions is the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency <sup>3</sup>.

An example monitoring review format has been included as an appendix to this guide. It follows a format similar to the Equality Commission's pro-forma review template for use by employers when conducting Fair Employment reviews.

**Please note that when preparing a review of monitoring data, it is important that the organisation should ensure that the format used is suitable for the specific needs of the organisation implementing the review.**

**Example:** A volunteer involving organisation monitors volunteers on the ground of disability and publishes the data in their annual report. Over the year they have identified that out of a total of 100 volunteers, 15 volunteers have physical disabilities, 10 have sensory impairments, 10 have learning disabilities and one volunteer has declared a mental health condition. To ensure that they meet commitments made regarding confidentiality they decide to report that in total 36% of volunteer current have a disability.

#### **Points to remember when conducting a review:**

- The primary purpose of a review is to enable the organisation to determine whether or not the diversity of their volunteer population fully reflects the diversity of the communities that they serve.
- Where a review indicates under-representation, this can help to determine what positive steps would be reasonable or appropriate to try to make volunteering more accessible.

- The most important thing to remember when preparing data for presentation to a wider audience is to ensure that characteristics relating to one individual cannot be identified.

## **Summary of Main Points:**

1. Equality monitoring is a process that enables organisations to record sensitive information about a person's background and identity in a confidential and anonymous way.
2. Monitoring demonstrates a commitment to promoting equality and can help to identify potential barriers that make it harder for people from certain backgrounds to participate in volunteering.
3. An organisation must have identified why they are collecting personal data on specific equality grounds, how it will be stored and for how long.
4. There is no legal requirement to monitor volunteers and volunteers do not have to answer monitoring questions put to them.
5. It is important to establish an environment of trust explaining why the information is being requested, how it will be used and that all answers will be held in the strictest confidence.
6. Before introducing equality monitoring of volunteers you should identify and agree the following:
  - WHAT will you be monitoring and WHY?
  - WHO will be the Monitoring Officer?
  - WHERE will the information be stored?
  - HOW will the information be collected & used?
  - WHEN and HOW will the data be reviewed?

<sup>3</sup> [www.nisra.gov.uk](http://www.nisra.gov.uk)

## **APPENDIX 1:**

### **Example Confidential Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form**

An example monitoring form has been included overleaf with suggested wording for questions relating to each of the monitoring grounds.

**Please note that when preparing a monitoring questionnaire for your organisation you should only include the questions relevant to the grounds that you have decided to monitor on.**

## Confidential Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form

### Guidance Notes:

\_\_\_\_\_ is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all and welcomes volunteers from all sections of the community.

In this questionnaire we will ask you to provide us with some personal information about yourself. We are doing this to demonstrate our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity in volunteering. The information that you provide will assist us to measure the effectiveness of our equal opportunity policies and take action to remove barriers to volunteering where necessary.

Your identity will be kept anonymous and your answers will be treated with the strictest confidence. We assure you that your answers will not be used by us to make any unfair decisions affecting you. To protect your privacy, you should not write your name on this questionnaire. The form will carry a unique identification number and only our Monitoring Officer will be able to match this to your name.

**You are not obliged to answer the questions on this form and you will not suffer any penalty if you choose not to. If you do not wish to answer a question simply leave it blank.**



**Age:** Please state your date of birth \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ // \_\_\_\_\_

**Community Background:** Regardless of whether they practice a religion, most people in Northern Ireland are perceived to be members of either the Protestant or Roman Catholic communities. **Please indicate the community to which you belong by ticking the appropriate box:**

Protestant       Roman Catholic       Neither

**Sex:** Please indicate your sex by ticking the appropriate box below:

Male       Female   
Other preferred term (please state)       Prefer not to say

**Sexual Orientation:** Please indicate if your sexual orientation is towards:

Persons of a different sex to me       Persons of both sexes   
Persons of the same sex as me

**Nationality:** Please state your nationality \_\_\_\_\_

**Ethnic Origin:** Please indicate your colour or ethnic or national origins:

White	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irish Traveller	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/>
Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black African	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Dependants:** Do you have dependants, caring responsibilities for others?

Yes       No

**Disability:** Do you consider that you are a disabled person?

Yes:  No:

**If you answered “yes”, please indicate the nature of your impairment:**

**Physical impairment:**  **Sensory impairment:**   
**Example:** limited mobility **Example:** hearing impairment

**Mental health condition:**  **Learning disability / difficulty:**   
**Example:** depression **Example:** Autism or dyslexia

**Long-standing or progressive condition:**  **Other (please specify):**   
such as cancer or epilepsy \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.**

**Reference number:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX 2:**

### **Example Equality Monitoring Review Format**

An example template for conducting a review of monitoring data has been included overleaf. For further information go to the volunteer management publications section of [www.volunteernow.co.uk](http://www.volunteernow.co.uk)

**Please note that when preparing a review of monitoring data for your organisation you should ensure that the format used is suitable to the specific needs of your organisation.**

# Example Equality Monitoring Review Format

## A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Organisation Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Monitoring Officer: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Total Number of Volunteers: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Period covered by this Review (please insert years):

from  to

5. Identify the monitoring grounds that this review will consider and the reason(s) identified for collecting sensitive personal data.

- |  | Yes                      | No                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 6. Has the Monitoring Officer received training in collating and reviewing equality monitoring data?           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Are you satisfied that best practice guidelines have been followed when collecting and processing the data? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Are you satisfied that no individual's personal responses could be identified when presenting review data?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**B. COMPARISON DATA** - Comparison data is the term used to describe the information about your local population that you have decided will be used to consider how similar / different your own monitoring data is.

1. Identify the region in which you operate:

2. For each monitoring ground please note below the statistical data identified for comparative purposes and the source of this data:

**Ground:**

**Details of comparison data:**

Repeat for each equality ground

## C. ASSESSMENT OF MONITORING DATA

### 1. Active Volunteers in 12 month period

**Table 1:** Total Number of Active Volunteers in 12 Month Period

<b>Year</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Comparison data</b>	<b>Difference at end of review period</b>
<b>Total Vols</b>					
<b>Male %</b>					
<b>Female %</b>					
<b>Etc %</b>					

**Commentary for table 1:**



### 3. Volunteer applicant and new start data.

**Table 3** provides a comparison between monitoring data collected from volunteer applicants and actual new starts. This is based on data collected from people who have expressed an interest in volunteering by completing an application form and subsequent registration forms completed on the first day of volunteer placement.

**Table 3:** Total Number of Applicants & New Starts

	Applicants				New Starts			Difference in
Year	1	2	3		1	2	3	
<b>Total Vols</b>								
<b>Male %</b>								
<b>Female %</b>								
<b>Etc %</b>								

#### Commentary for table 3:

## **D CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

- 1. Provide a summary of findings for each equality ground reviewed.**

<p><b>Equality Ground:</b></p> <p><b>Active:</b></p> <p><b>Leavers:</b></p> <p><b>Applicants / New Starts:</b></p> <p><b>Comment:</b></p> <p><b>Recommendations:</b></p>
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**Repeat for each equality ground**

**2. Provide a summary of recommendations / proposed actions.**

<b>Recommendations:</b>
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**This report was completed by the Monitoring Officer:**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Position:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
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**The action points have been agreed by the Management Committee:**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Position:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
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**Volunteer Now** is a regional to local organisation working to promote, enhance and support volunteering across Northern Ireland. Volunteer Now is about building stronger communities, connecting with individuals and organisations and changing lives.

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The **Equality Commission Northern Ireland** aims to advance equality, promote equality of opportunity, encourage good relations and challenge discrimination through promotion, advice and enforcement.

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