

RESOURCE GUIDE 1

QUALITY AREA 1: VISION FOR VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is embedded within the overall vision, values, culture and aims of the organisation and its impact is recognised and communicated. Organisations understand why they involve volunteers.

This Resource Guide will explore good practice in relation to an organisation's vision for volunteering. It will explore the following standards:

- 1.1 **Volunteering is planned and reviewed in line with the organisation's vision, strategy, and values**
 - 1.1.1 *Why do I want to involve volunteers?*
 - 1.1.2 *What can volunteers do in my organisation?*
 - 1.1.3 *How will I resource and support volunteering?*
 - 1.1.4 *Keeping it under review*
- 1.2 **Volunteering is valued as part of the culture of the organisation and the benefits of volunteering are understood and communicated**
 - 1.2.1 *Develop clear concepts and values for volunteering*
 - 1.2.2 *Ensure valuing volunteers is part of the culture*
 - 1.2.3 *Communicate and promote benefits of volunteering*
- 1.3 **The impact of volunteering in contributing to organisation aims is understood and communicated**
 - 1.3.1 *What type of impact can you measure?*
 - 1.3.2 *How can you measure the impact of what volunteers do?*
 - 1.3.3 *What do I do with impact information?*
- 1.4 **Volunteer involvement is reflected in management, financial and resource planning**
 - 1.4.1 *Management*
 - 1.4.2 *Finances and Resources*

1.1 Volunteering is planned and reviewed in line with the organisation's vision, strategy, and values

Volunteers are an important resource and like every resource their involvement needs **planned** in advance and **reviewed** over time to make sure it is achieving what it set out to achieve and is still relevant and effective. Depending on the size of your organisation, plans for volunteer involvement could be included in briefings about activities, project plans, business plans or strategic plans. Where possible volunteers could be involved in the planning process and in larger organisations there may also be a need for trade unions to be consulted. When **planning** to involve volunteers an organisation should answer a number of questions as outlined in- see [Recruitment Plan for Volunteers Information Sheet](#).

Resource Guide 1 will start to help you address these questions.

1.1.1 Why do I want to involve volunteers?

You need to think about how involving volunteers could fit with your organisation's **values**. Are volunteers' part of your **strategic direction** and can you see how involving them could help you fulfil your aims and objectives? Organisations often report that volunteers bring **special qualities** to the role that paid staff cannot offer. Most state that even if they had all the money in the world, they would still involve volunteers! See [Resource Guide Introduction](#) (section A.4 and B.1).

1.1.2 What can volunteers do in my organisation?

You might find it very easy to think of a list of tasks that need done in your organisation, however it is good to think **creatively** about meaningful activities in which volunteers could become involved and enhance the work of your organisation. By thinking about the **vision** of your organisation you could develop a range of volunteering options that would maximise the number and 'types' of people who would consider volunteering with you while extending the breadth of things you could offer. If there are paid staff in the organisation, do be mindful of where volunteers fit in relation to their roles and consider how volunteers could complement the work of the staff. You may find it useful to read the following- see [Volunteers and Paid Staff: Exploring the Issues](#).

It is helpful, regardless of the task or other roles in the organisation, to create a **description of the activity** you want carried out and the qualities or skills that volunteers might need to get the role done. Start by identifying a clear **purpose** for the role- it is vital that the work you ask volunteers to do is meaningful and brings clear and identifiable benefits to the service users, the community or the environment. While most people have a number of motivations for volunteering in the first place, it is also good to be able to list what the role offers volunteers to ensure that they keep coming back! Just being able to make a list of what is involved in terms of tasks, time, location, practical things like who volunteers will be working with and what support or training they can expect, is a very helpful exercise to offer clarity to everyone in the organisation. You will find a template for drawing up a volunteer role description and volunteer specification here- see [Developing volunteer roles](#).

Remember that time is a valuable commodity. Research commonly identifies **flexibility** and **variety** as two of the key things that people want from volunteering. Try to avoid the habit of thinking about voluntary work within the limitations that dictate how paid jobs are organised and make the most of the uniquely flexible approach that volunteers can bring. Try to offer *variety* through short-term volunteer assignments with a limited commitment, as well as ongoing volunteer roles needing a longer commitment. Many people who initially volunteer for a one-off event or short-term assignment are prepared to make a longer commitment to the organisation once they get involved.

1.1.3 How will I resource and support volunteering?

Before going any further in the planning process, it is important to give thought to how volunteering can be **resourced and supported**. Volunteers may be cost-effective, but they are not free, so make sure costs for volunteers are included in budgets and funding applications. Costs include **out of pocket expenses** for travel, phone calls etc, training, protective clothing, tools, and may also include funding for a dedicated person to manage and develop volunteer involvement- see [Resource Guide 1](#) (section 1.4); and [Resource Guide 2](#) (section 2.3).

1.1.4 Keeping it under review

Part of the planning process also includes building in how to **review** volunteer involvement including processes and systems. A time frame should be agreed, and methods developed for asking volunteers for feedback, finding out what is going well and what is not going so well. It is good to bring volunteers together to have conversations about this, but surveys and suggestion boxes are also a good way of giving volunteers the opportunity to review a range of things! You should get useful information on the impact of what they are doing but also on the effectiveness of policies and procedures- see [Resource Guide 1](#) (section 1.3); and [Resource Guide 5](#) (sections 5.3 and 5.4).

1.2 Volunteering is valued as part of the culture of the organisation and the benefits of volunteering are understood and communicated

The **benefits** of involving volunteers need to be recognised by all those involved in an organisation (including beneficiaries) and a clear **value for volunteers** and what they bring should be part of the **culture** of the organisation. Consider how you can do the following:

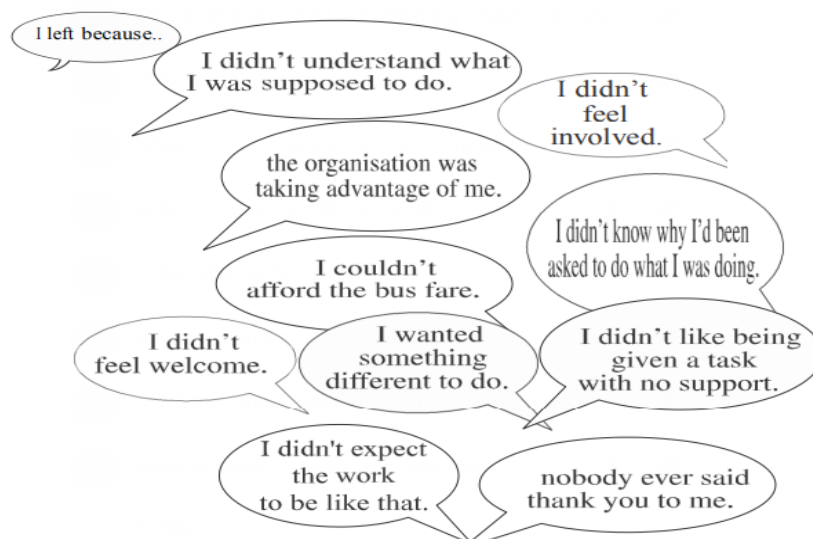
1.2.1 Develop clear concepts and values for volunteering

Volunteering needs to be grounded in well thought through concepts and key values agreed by all involved. It is helpful to think about things you value in a paid work setting or what would make a good work experience, e.g. working conditions, the work itself, the processes or procedures, relationships with others. In developing your values, remember to consider how these things will also be important if you are a volunteer.

See [An Introduction](#) (section A.4 and B.1).

1.2.2 Ensure valuing volunteers is part of the culture

For people working with volunteers, understanding of volunteering will be in huge detail, but for those who don't have direct contact with volunteers, people should know that volunteers are part of the culture, understand why they are involved and what they contribute. A clear value statement outlining the principles upon which volunteer involvement is based will help. For more information on what this could look like- Go to our [Volunteer Policy Framework](#) (see Values section).



1.2.3 Communicate and promote benefits of volunteering

It is important to make sure everyone within the organisation (and outside it) knows the benefits that volunteers are bringing to the organisation. This includes communicating it to volunteers themselves, other people within the organisation, service users, members, the wider community, other partners and stakeholders, or the public. There should be input about volunteers' contribution in any type of communication used by the organisation, e.g. staff and trustee inductions, annual reports, website, talks, promotional materials, social media.

1.3 The impact of volunteering in contributing to organisation aims is understood and communicated

Being able to promote how volunteers are contributing to an organisations' aims and objectives is really important. There is an increasing demand for organisations to evidence the impact and outcomes from their work so organisations need to consider ways in which they can measure the actual difference or impact that volunteers are making.

1.3.1 What type of impact can you measure?

The impact of volunteering may include numerical information, such as the number of visits made to service users, number of activities that have been run, etc. However, it can also provide more qualitative information about how volunteers have made a difference, for example reduced isolation of people, better physical health, or a community area being improved. Don't forget the impact that volunteering can have on the volunteers themselves, e.g. increased social networks, new skills, improved emotional well-being.

1.3.2 How can you measure the impact of what volunteers do?

There are a range of ways to measure impact and it is important when choosing "off the shelf" impact measurement tools to ensure that volunteers' contributions will be captured. 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. It also includes the impact on the volunteers themselves- click here to find out more information on accessing [The Volunteer Impact Assessment Toolkit](#).

You can also use the following to measure the economic value of volunteers- have a look at our [Volunteer Investment and Value Audit](#).

1.3.3 What do I do with impact information?

You should promote impact information as widely as possible! Communication of the impact of volunteering might be to volunteers themselves, other people within the organisation, service users, members, the wider community, funders, other partners and stakeholders, or the public. You can do this in inductions, on your website, annual reports, social media posts, newsletters, infographics on a post card, case studies, funding applications - just about everywhere!

1.4 Volunteer involvement is reflected in management, financial and resource planning

Volunteer involvement is important, so it needs to be included in all areas of an organisation's planning process, and that includes management structures. Volunteers are cost-effective, but they are not free and so resources in terms of people and finances need to be put in place. Consideration needs to be given to:

1.4.1 Management

Like any resource, volunteers do need managed. Regardless of whether it is volunteers volunteering at the local parkrun or volunteering at the local Health and Social Care Trust, thought needs to be given to who will recruit the volunteers, who will train them and show them what to do, who will support them, etc. In many small organisations, it will be a volunteer who will support the other volunteers and in bigger organisations, it will be a paid post sometimes called a 'Volunteer Manager'. Quite often, responsibility for volunteers is tagged onto other people's roles which may not always allow for volunteers getting the attention they need. The following sample role description outlines the range of tasks that may need done to support volunteering well- see a [Sample Job/Role Description for a Volunteer Manager](#).

Even where the need for a volunteer manager role is recognised, there will be huge variety over the level or status of the role. Yet managing volunteers requires all the 'generic' management skills and competencies associated with any other management role. Managing people- whether paid or unpaid- is a complex process that requires a range of administrative, interpersonal and problem-solving skills. In fact, some might say that those who manage volunteers may require different or additional skills and knowledge in people management. This is because the relationship with volunteers differs in a number of important ways from that with paid staff.

The employer/employee relationship is based on two elements that, by definition, cannot be present in a voluntary relationship- obligation and remuneration. Without the 'carrot' of monetary reward or the 'stick' of a legally binding contract, those who manage volunteers need to be more flexible and resourceful in their approach to management as they strive to meet peoples' personal motivations and the organisation's objectives.

There is one final point to consider about the person who has responsibility for volunteering. In order to ensure that volunteering continues to be supported, recognised and developed, it is important that the person who is responsible for volunteers has input to the highest level of the organisation- whether it is the Team Leader, senior management or Board- so as volunteering is represented and actually talked about.

1.4.2 Finances and Resources

As has been said in this section volunteering is not free, it needs to be resourced. The previous paragraph has highlighted the importance of a people resource to be responsible for volunteer recruitment, support and development. Any volunteering activity will require funding to make it happen, so budgets and funding applications should always have volunteer costs listed, e.g. recruitment, training, equipment, uniforms, volunteer travel, refreshments, telephone costs, etc. This will also ensure that the organisation meets requirements to keep volunteers safe in line with its duty to care, managing risk and protecting people's well-being.

Provision of volunteer expenses is very good practice and makes volunteering inclusive for everyone. No matter how small or large, formal or informal your volunteering activity, there should be an agreed expenses policy that addresses reimbursement of volunteers' out-of-pocket expenses as a priority issue to ensure equity across the volunteer team. This should be accompanied with clear procedures that facilitate accessibility for all. It is also best practice to provide *actual* out of pocket expenses on submission of receipts. This will keep volunteers right if for example they are on unemployment benefits. There are some guidelines around reimbursement of actual expenses in our [Volunteers and Expenses Information Sheet](#).

More information about provision of out-of-pocket expenses as opposed to paying lump sums can be found in our [Volunteers and the Law Information Sheet](#).