

# RESOURCE GUIDE 6

## QUALITY AREA 6: VALUING AND DEVELOPING VOLUNTEERS

*Volunteers are valued and there are opportunities for volunteers to develop and grow through their experience.*

This Resource Guide will explore good practice in relation to valuing volunteers and opportunities to develop them. It will explore the following standards:

- 6.1 **Volunteers feel their contribution is meaningful and rewarding**
- 6.2 **Volunteers feel valued by and a part of the organisation**
- 6.3 **The experiences, attributes and competencies that volunteers bring are recognised and they have opportunities to develop them**
- 6.4 **Volunteers have the opportunity for connecting with and learning from other volunteers where appropriate**
- 6.5 **Volunteers' future aspirations are supported where appropriate**

### 6.1 Volunteers feel their contribution is meaningful and rewarding

It is important that volunteers get some kind of satisfaction from being involved in a volunteer activity, and this will encourage them to keep coming back. This can relate more to whether they feel that they are making a difference and how it fits with their own motivation, rather than the external appreciation given by others- see [section 6.2](#).

Organisations need to consider the different factors that make roles meaningful and rewarding. This can be thought about in tandem with the volunteers' motivation for getting involved in the first place- [An introduction](#) (section A.3). For example, some volunteers may be carrying out their commitment for a specific cause or issue, while for others it might be more about "giving back" or about the connection in their communities.

Volunteers should be asked if they think their contribution is meaningful to them and if they feel it is making a difference to the organisation's aims or mission- this can be collected through the recruitment process, and through ongoing methods such as surveys, volunteer meetings, or one-to-one communications- see [Volunteer Satisfaction Survey Example](#).

Sharing impact information from service users is also a good way of showing volunteers how much their contribution matters- see [Resource Guide 1](#) (Section 1.3).

Organisations can even design roles and systems taking into account this knowledge to maximise volunteers' experience, commitment, enjoyment and retention- see [Developing Volunteer Roles](#).

## 6.2 Volunteers feel valued by and a part of the organisation

Appreciation and recognition can be expressed formally and/or informally, but it is important that no matter the size of your organisation or regardless of the volunteer activity, that some form of recognition is carried out. Volunteers should always feel valued and a part of the organisation.

This may include volunteer awards, e.g. [The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service](#), celebrating [Volunteers' Week](#), certificates, social events, thank you cards, notes and day-to-day thanks. It is important that organisations understand the different ways in which their volunteers want to be acknowledged but also what would make volunteers feel a part of the organisation. Sometimes just inviting volunteers to meetings, taking part in consultations, having representation, or just effective communication can make a volunteer feel really valued and a part of the organisation. For larger or national organisations, recognition from the board and management of the organisation can be important to volunteers, though it may be more relevant to ensure that they feel part of a team, which may be geographically based, role-based or theme-based.

See "[100 ways to say thank you to volunteers](#)" for some ideas on volunteer recognition.

## 6.3 The experiences, attributes and competencies that volunteers bring are recognised and they have opportunities to develop them

It is really important to find out from the start what experience, attributes and competencies volunteers are bringing to their role so you can use them or help the volunteers develop them. This will link also with the volunteers' reasons or motivations for volunteering- see [An Introduction](#) (section A.3).

Volunteers will come with different levels of skills and experiences. Some will want opportunities to have existing skills recognised and utilised, while others will want to develop their skills (younger volunteers, student volunteers, or those who are volunteering as a route to employment or increasing confidence for example). Developing skills and experience may be through formal training, inside or outside the organisation, but it may also be through taking online development or research, peer support, or shadowing other staff or volunteers. It may be practical skills, or "softer" skills such as an increase in confidence or listening skills. Adapting or creating new volunteer roles is also a way that volunteers can use and develop a whole range of skills- see [Resource Guide 3](#) (section 3.4).

Helping volunteers to get accreditation for competencies gained through training is also an important way of recognising and developing volunteers- see [Volunteer Training](#). It is also helpful to develop training plans for volunteers and document their attendance and achievements. This is helpful if a volunteer asks you for a reference when they are going for a paid job or another volunteering opportunity.

## 6.4 Volunteers have the opportunity for connecting with and learning from other volunteers where appropriate

Support between volunteers can be important to help volunteers feel connected socially, improve learning and skills, and increase satisfaction and commitment to the organisation. Some volunteering opportunities have a high level of connection already and will not require any further action. Where volunteers carry out activities predominantly individually, the organisation could offer opportunities such as meetings, forums, coffee mornings, buddying, or connecting online through phones or apps.

Not all volunteers will want to connect with others, and there can sometimes be poor take-up, but the organisation should be aware of where there is an appetite for this and work with volunteers to identify the most appropriate method. In some organisations, supporting and coordinating these opportunities could be a volunteer role.

## **6.5 Volunteers' future aspirations are supported where appropriate**

Being clear about a volunteer's motivation to volunteer has been a recurrent theme in these Resource Guides. It is helpful if you can support a volunteer, if indeed they are using volunteering as a means to help them in a future career for example. This may mean the organisation providing a reference or other evidence of volunteer involvement, where a volunteer has made a reasonable commitment.

Some organisations may want to do more about developing volunteers for future education, training or employment opportunities. This may be relevant to attract young volunteers looking for skills and experience for a career, or where service users progress into volunteering as part of their development.

Where the organisation cannot support volunteers' future aspirations because of the nature of the organisation, the role, or volunteers, it must make this clear to volunteers from the start so as there are no false expectations.