



**Wales Council for
Voluntary Action**

Supporting charities, volunteers and communities

**Cyngor Gweithredu
Gwirfoddol Cymru**

Yn cefnogi elusennau, gwirfoddolwyr a chymunedau

Recruiting volunteers

a manual of good practice

Contents

‘Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community and can take many forms. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain’

FROM THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR SCHEME, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES, 2000

WCVA represents, supports and campaigns for voluntary organisations, volunteers and communities in Wales

WCVA Head Office

Baltic House
Mount Stuart Square
Cardiff Bay
CF10 5FH

Tel: 029 2043 1700
Fax: 029 2043 1701
Minicom: 029 2043 1702
help@wcva.org.uk
www.wcva.org.uk

North Wales Office

13 Wynnstay Road
Colwyn Bay
Conwy
LL29 8NB

Tel 01492 539800
Fax 01492 539801
help@wcva.org.uk
www.wcva.org.uk

Mid Wales Office

Ladywell House
Newtown
Powys
SY16 1JB

Tel: 01686 611050
Fax: 01686 627863
help@wcva.org.uk
www.wcva.org.uk

WCVA Helpdesk 0870 607 1666

Cefnogwyd gan
Supported by



March 2006
ISBN 1 903416 73 6
WCVA members £5.00
Non-members £7.50

Introduction	4		
Acknowledgements	4		
1 A question of context	5	5 A question of diversity	25
Know your organisation	5	What do we mean by diversity?	25
Why do you want volunteers?	5	Why diversity matters	26
Know your existing volunteers	6	Assessing and monitoring diversity	27
What do people think of your organisation?	7	How to increase volunteer diversity	28
		Diversify roles and opportunities	28
		Identify and remove barriers	28
		Target recruitment at underrepresented groups	29
		Develop a positive organisational culture	30
		Develop support systems	30
2 A question of preparation	8	6 A question of choice	32
Get your house in order	8	A two-way process	32
Clarify volunteer roles	9	Using selection criteria	32
Develop a strategic plan	10	A selection process	33
Step 1 set realistic targets	10	Collecting volunteer information	34
Step 2 decide who to reach and how	11	Vetting procedures	35
Step 3 draw up a plan	12	Saying ‘no’	36
		Afterword	37
3 A question of approach	14	Appendix 1	38
General approaches	14	A model volunteering policy	
Targeted approaches	15	Appendix 2	42
Information distribution	15	Legal issues	
Direct mailing	15	Appendix 3	47
Newsletters and e-groups	16	The Investing in Volunteers Standard	
Website	16	Appendix 4	50
Word of mouth	16	Managing Volunteers National Occupational Standards	
Developing links	17		
Talks and events	18		
Recruitment campaigns	19		
Spontaneous approaches	20		
4 A question of communication	21		
Volunteer motivation	21		
Potential barriers	21		
Effective recruitment messages	21		
Adapting the message	22		
Good design	22		
Appropriate language	22		
The right emphasis	22		
To suit the occasion	23		
Make it easy to respond	23		
The messenger and the message	24		

Volunteers are the backbone of our society. Many organisations simply would not function without them: 90 per cent of voluntary organisations in Wales are entirely volunteer led and managed. In other cases, volunteers complement and enhance the work done by paid staff. Either way, the maintenance of a steady and appropriately balanced volunteer team is a constant challenge.

Turnover or 'loss' of volunteers is inevitable - and is not necessarily a bad thing: volunteers may move on for positive reasons such as finding paid work, and a regular intake of new volunteers helps to keep an organisation fresh and vibrant. There may be new opportunities to consider, involving volunteers in short term or group tasks. As anyone with responsibility for managing a programme involving volunteers knows, volunteer recruitment needs to be continually on the agenda. If only there were a simple 'quick fix' solution that would bring in the volunteers we need! But there isn't. What works for one organisation is not necessarily going to work for another.

This book is about questions and key principles; it does not offer easy answers. Organisations need to address questions and to apply principles to their own context and the practical tasks suggested in each chapter are designed to encourage this. It may be useful as a tool for planning and as a framework for professional development. Alternatively it may be used as a guide to dip into for ideas or information.

The contents of this publication draw on the experience of organisations in Wales during a three-year lottery funded *Promoting Volunteering* project. Where case examples have been used, the names of organisations and individuals have been changed to preserve anonymity.

Further information about the project is available on request from:

WCVA
Baltic House
Mount Stuart Square
Cardiff Bay
CF10 5FH

Tel 029 2043 1700
email volunteering@wcva.org.uk

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the many individuals and organisations who have contributed in different ways: through their participation in workshops, training events, Volunteers' Week and the Promoting Volunteering project. It is their gathered experience which has culminated in this publication.

Thanks also to colleagues who have supported and assisted the process of writing, editing and production, and who have been generous in their encouragement.

This publication would not have been possible without financial support from the Big Lottery Fund.

Fiona Liddell
WCVA
March 2006

Know your organisation

This may seem an obvious starting place! The point is that a guide like this aims to be relevant to many kinds of organisation. You, the reader, will know what is unique about your particular organisation, why it exists, what values it most deeply espouses, its story to this point, the challenges and hopes that it faces and the local and national landscape in which it functions.

All of this provides the context for exploring how to successfully recruit volunteers.

Why do you want volunteers?

Firstly, why involve volunteers at all?

In the case of most voluntary organisations, everyone is a volunteer! For the remaining 10 per cent or so who employ paid staff, the question needs more thought.

Volunteers may bring value for money but they do not come 'cost free'. The greatest value that volunteers bring to an organisation may not be counted in economic terms at all: perhaps it is the friendship they can offer to beneficiaries, for example, their connections with the wider community or the credibility that comes from doing a job by choice, and for no financial reward.

Unless you know why your organisation involves volunteers and what 'value' volunteers bring, you are unlikely to inspire others to come 'on board'.

Secondly, what do you want volunteers to do?

There may be core activities, which you rely on volunteers to fulfil. Are there additional tasks or roles for one or more volunteers, supposing one or more people with the right skills and interests were to come your way? You might want to think in terms of one-off activities as well as regular tasks, and build up a kind of 'wish list'. Can you explain and justify each of these roles in terms of the overall vision and purpose of your organisation?

Possible reasons for organisations with paid staff to involve volunteers:

- to bring a range of perspectives and backgrounds to the organisation
- to extend a service
- to concentrate on particular activities or issues
- to work flexibly, in different locations and at irregular times
- to increase credibility with the community, donors, clients or other stakeholders
- to pioneer new ways of working; to provide evidence to support funding applications
- to be the human face of the organisation

If your organisation employs paid staff, you will need to decide what it is right and proper for paid employees and for volunteers to do. Does everyone understand how the roles of volunteers and paid staff complement one another, and who is accountable to whom?

A residential charity employed a warden, who lived on the premises. The warden's wife naturally got involved in the day-to-day life of the centre on a voluntary basis, for example greeting visitors, tending the garden and serving in the shop.

Sometimes the warden's wife would convey information or requests to domestic staff on behalf of visitors, on matters of catering or housekeeping. On one occasion a staff member was unhappy about a request that had been made. She felt awkward: it was not easy to challenge the boss's wife, and yet if the request did turn out to be misguided, who 'carried the can' then?

Know your existing volunteers

Your existing volunteers are a valuable mine of information. Understanding who they are, why they are with you and what volunteering has meant to them will help you to attract others.

A look at the overall profile of volunteers in terms of their age, background, language and so on will also show you where the gaps are. You may want to address these by targeting recruitment toward specific kinds of people (see chapter 2).

A helpline organisation conducted a survey of existing volunteers. The results provided a valuable overview of the mix of people who currently volunteer, their inspiration and motivations and the ways in which volunteering has benefited other areas of their lives.

Volunteers were asked what they would say to encourage others to give their time; their responses have inspired a new range of promotional posters and postcards.

The survey found that working was no barrier to volunteering as many volunteers were in full time jobs. Distance was no major barrier either, with one in seven volunteers travelling more than 20 miles to their place of volunteering.

Almost one in four volunteers was recruited by word of mouth and a further one in four had responded to reports in the local media.

What do people think of your organisation?

Some organisations are fortunate to have a strong and positive 'brand' image. Others, for example those who work with a marginalised client group or an unpopular cause, have to work with public perceptions that are often negative. The challenge for recruitment then lies in:

- addressing popular fears and assumptions by presenting relevant positive information
- identifying and targeting those who are likely to have a greater empathy for the cause

Either way, gathering information - directly by surveys, focus groups or chance conversations, or indirectly by looking up relevant research carried out by others, will help you make decisions about where to recruit and what messages to get across.

Practical tasks:

- 1 Ask individual members of staff, members of the management committee and volunteers why the organisation involves volunteers. Write down their answers.
What do you think are the most important reasons?
Have a look at the list of reasons given in this chapter. Are any of these also true for your organisation?
- 2 Make a list of the main tasks that have to be carried out within your organisation.
Which need to be done by a paid employee?
Which could involve volunteers working with an employee?
Which can be undertaken by volunteers?
Does your analysis suggest any new ways for involving volunteers?
- 3 Conduct a survey of existing volunteers to find out what they get out of the experience. Remember to ask volunteers' permission to quote their comments in your promotional material.

Key points:

- The secrets of successful recruitment are specific to your organisation. You need to discover what works for you.
- Ensure that the organisation as a whole knows why you involve volunteers and how they contribute to the organisation's main purposes.
- Your existing volunteers are a source of valuable information, which will help you in planning recruitment.

2 A question of preparation

Get your house in order

If a friend calls round to my house I am usually happy for them to come on a 'take me as you find me' basis. But the more visitors I am expecting the more I need to think about practicalities such as parking, catering and how I will ensure that no-one feels left out. What's more, if the friend who called round then came to stay on a long term basis, I would want to come to some mutual agreement about bathrooms, mealtimes, household expenses and the like.

There are practicalities to consider when involving volunteers and it is helpful for everyone to know where they stand.

Use the checklist to identify whether your organisation is ready to welcome volunteers.

A volunteer policy should set out procedures for recruiting, supporting and protecting volunteers. A model policy is given in Appendix 1.

Information for volunteer enquirers would include the type and range of voluntary work available, the application and selection process and any essential requirements such as preliminary training, criminal record checks or vehicle ownership. This may be covered in an initial interview or provided in an information pack.

Preparing for volunteers - checklist:

- ✓ clarify budget and staff resources for volunteer management
- ✓ define broad aims of volunteer programme
- ✓ outline specific role descriptions
- ✓ develop a volunteer policy
- ✓ set up a system for payment of expenses
- ✓ check that adequate insurance cover is in place
- ✓ carry out risk assessment of key volunteer roles
- ✓ check that volunteers' personal data is kept in accordance with data protection legislation
- ✓ prepare staff, clients, existing volunteers to welcome new volunteers
- ✓ prepare appropriate information for volunteer enquirers
- ✓ clarify arrangements for interview, selection, induction and any initial training
- ✓ review systems of supervision and support

More about the recruitment and selection process is included in chapter 6.

Clarify volunteer roles

A volunteer role description helps to clarify exactly what you need a volunteer to do and what the boundaries are, for example in terms of time, geography or limit of responsibility. Write or revise volunteer role descriptions for each main area of volunteer work.

Identifying the role and the qualities required:

Title: Give the role a clear and descriptive title
Purpose: What is the main purpose and context?

	The volunteer role	The volunteer
Main tasks:	What do you want done?	What skills, experience, attitudes or qualities are required?
Time and place:	Set hours or flexible? Location of work?	Estimate min/max time commitment Are there access implications?
Working with:	As a team or alone? Accountable to?	Do you need a reliable team member? ...or someone who can work independently?
Support:	Induction, training, support and supervision. Is there a trial period? Is equipment provided? Are expenses paid?	Do you need someone who will ask for help when they need it? Is training or supervision compulsory? Does a volunteer need to supply materials or equipment?
Benefits:	What will a volunteer get out of this?	What might motivate someone to do this?

The next step is to determine what qualities and attributes someone would need to have in order to fulfil each role. Be realistic. You may dream of someone with 'top notch' administrative skills who is brilliant on the computer, but the job may be adequately done by someone who has an organised approach and basic computing literacy. Keep a 'bottom line' approach: specify minimal criteria in order to be as open and accommodating as possible to the different needs and abilities of volunteers, while at the same time not compromising your core standards.

Keep an eye open for opportunities to respond flexibly. If a volunteer does not fulfil all essential criteria, for example, could the role be shared or adapted?

We began by concentrating on the needs of the organisation in order to define the task. Now we are beginning to formulate a picture of the kind of person who might have the abilities and the interest in undertaking that role. This is the springboard for developing a recruitment strategy.

Develop a strategic plan

The problem with volunteer recruitment in practice is that either:

- good intentions get overtaken by the pressing events of the day - and we do nothing or
- we get overwhelmed with activity but never feel we are doing enough

Step 1: Set realistic targets

Your annual workplan or grant application may commit you to recruiting a given number of volunteers in a year. These sometimes daunting figures are best broken down into smaller targets that you can begin to work with. The targets you set may be influenced by the timing of training courses, by questions of diversity or by the changing requirements of volunteer projects.

Targets should include a target date. By working with perhaps two or three short-term targets at a time you can gradually address a range of priorities over a longer period of, say, two to three years.

A strategy helps to identify a reasonable, focussed and balanced amount of recruitment activity. It is activity which can be recognised and supported by the organisation, and not left to the whim of an individual. It can be monitored and, whatever the outcome, the organisation can learn from it.

Example recruitment targets:

- to recruit three new volunteers to help serve refreshments and two to join the maintenance team, by the end of the year
- to recruit in the next three months, one female and one male volunteer to work with identified volunteers with learning disabilities
- to recruit during Volunteers' Week, three volunteers aged 25 - 45 years who can give at least one hour a week as a befriender
- to recruit eight volunteer sports coaches (18 - 25 years) to start training in September
- to recruit one or more volunteer administrators to provide a minimum seven hours administrative support per week
- to recruit at least two female volunteer leaders to start in the autumn
- to increase the number of BME volunteers by 20 per cent by next March
- to increase the number of volunteers with disabilities by 10 per cent in two years

Step 2: Decide who to reach and how

You know how many volunteers you want and by when. You have prepared volunteer roles and thought about the attributes and qualities of a potential volunteer. For this step it is best to get others to help you: volunteers, staff colleagues, supporters or committee members.

Some techniques are suggested to get you thinking creatively.

Ask yourselves:

- What kind of person could do this?
- And where would we find such a person?

Two exercises to get you thinking

A Post-it pool

Start with one clear question on which you need fresh ideas, eg, what kind of person might be interested in X? Or how might we reach young people with an interest in Y?

Write as many ideas as you can on separate post-it notes.

Arrange similar suggestions together and think about the merits and implications of each group of ideas. Decide which are worth pursuing.

B Mind mapping

The purpose is to highlight the strengths and opportunities in your organisation and in your local context that could assist recruitment.

Start with a large blank piece of paper and a felt pen.

Write up the name of your organisation and of your community and build up a 'mind map' of strengths and opportunities. It might look something like this:



Are there any opportunities that you had not thought of?

In the example above, for example, you might consider:

- getting your trustee to improve your profile in the local media
- approaching the camera club with a view to developing visual publicity material
- including questions on volunteering in the survey of supporters
- publicising new opportunities for volunteers on the volunteering website
- thinking about how to make an impact at the summer show

Step 3: Produce a plan

Having gathered ideas and prioritised some strategic approaches, you are ready to pin down a few actions and dates. Do not be over ambitious, but try to include more than one approach - perhaps some general and some more specific approaches. (*Recruitment methods are discussed in chapter 3*).

Different promotional methods reinforce one another. It may be the combination, rather than any single method, which is successful.

A volunteer centre had an information stand in the town centre during Volunteers' Week. It also had a regular 'slot' on the local radio each morning, highlighting the benefits and opportunities of volunteering and referring to the location of the information stand.

During the course of the week, a number of enquirers approached those at the stand saying something like 'I heard you on the radio this morning and thought I'd come to find out more...'

Marketing specialists talk of the 'marketing mix' to describe the total 'package' of product, price, place and promotion. In the case of volunteer recruitment we also need to consider four elements:

- the volunteer role
- benefits and requirements of the post
- the location - where are you trying to recruit?
- promotional methods and messages

Ultimately you need a plan which makes sense for your organisation and makes sense to the people you want to attract.

To take an extreme example, it would seem odd for a low budget, community based organisation to send out glossy literature about local volunteer opportunities to contact names on a national database. On the other hand, a carefully worded invitation to representatives of selected organisations to attend an introductory evening, or a house-to-house distribution of flyers in a local residential area might be worth considering.

Your plan may look something like this and could be produced as a table in Word or as an Excel spreadsheet:

Example recruitment plan:

Date	Action	Who responsible?	Outcome	Cost

Write into the action column the most obvious milestones, such as when key events are to take place, when publicity material needs to be produced and when to target media publicity.

Around this, add in other activities that may help achieve your target, such as general publicity, making contacts with community leaders and groups, revising information packs or preparing other material. You may want to assign these activities to a month rather than a specific date.

Use the column 'cost' for budgeting and monitoring expenditure. In the column 'outcome' record information such as the number of enquiries or the number of participants at an event. By using the table as a working tool in this way, it becomes the basis of an evaluation report at a later date.

Developing a strategic plan:



Practical tasks:

- 1 Try out one of the techniques described under Step 2 .
What are the advantages of involving others in this kind of thinking?
- 2 Make a list of all the people, or kinds of people, who have a role to play in recruiting volunteers for your organisation.
Do you think there are some who might be able to play a bigger part than they currently do?

Key points:

- Get basic policies and systems in place before getting volunteers on board. A happy and well-run organisation is itself attractive to volunteers.
- Aim for a mix of recruitment methods and approaches over the year. Be prepared to try something new, as well as what you know has worked for you in the past.
- Have some agreed targets and plans. You may want to change them along the way, but they will at least provide a common focus and a momentum for action.
- Involve others in recruiting new volunteers, as far as you can.

3 A question of approach

General approaches

A baseline level of promotional activity builds up awareness of your organisation in the community. Often it is aimed at a wide and unspecific audience. It may involve broad messages about your organisation, its work and how people can support it or benefit from it.

Public relations (PR) work supports your recruitment activity: people will know of your organisation, and will probably have views about it, when you more directly raise the possibility of volunteering.

Do not be tempted to think that these broad approaches are all that are needed: people do have an uncanny way of interpreting what they see and hear as being relevant to other people and not to themselves!

A volunteer centre used to pay for a double page feature article in the local paper during Volunteers' Week, giving information about volunteering opportunities with different organisations in the area. At a cost of around £2,000, this consumed virtually the entire Volunteers' Week budget.

One year they instead sent a press release with information about local volunteer award winners and details of the services of the centre. The paper followed up the lead and produced a double page feature, with photographs - at no cost.

The centre had money that year to organise a volunteer 'thank you' event for the first time. Though primarily for volunteers, this was not also without its PR value!

General approaches to recruitment:

- Include information about volunteering in all your organisation's leaflets, displays, website and other publicity materials.
- Brief all colleagues who attend public events or speaking engagements and supply them with volunteer recruitment literature.
- Ensure that your organisation's annual report does justice to the contribution made by volunteers and illustrates volunteer activity over the past year.
- Prepare your staff, management committee members and volunteers so that they can speak with knowledge and conviction.
- Hold public events / open days, when people can find out what you do.
- Build relationships with local media. Invite them to events and keep them informed of what you are doing.
- Aim for regular coverage in the local press: send press releases (eg, announcing new developments) or letters to the editor (eg, expressing thanks for public support).
- Attend selected events, eg, fairs, shows, so that you are seen to be interested and involved in your community.
- Send regular information to your volunteer centre about volunteering opportunities. Ask the centre to publicise them on the volunteering website www.volunteering-wales.net.
- You may want to respond to requests to talk to community groups.
- If you produce a newsletter for volunteers, make it more widely available, eg, on the website, or by leaving copies in public places.
- Take photographs of volunteers in action. Use them (with volunteers' permission) in displays, publications and on the website.
- Get yourself listed in directories and on websites, especially where this is free!

Targeted approaches

Recruitment material - in written, spoken or visual form - is best put together with specific target groups in mind. Information will be more relevant, recruitment messages more specific (see chapter 4) and the style and tone of communication will be more credible.

It is more important to have a range of simple, well-prepared material aimed at specific sectors of the population, than to have attractive and sophisticated material which attempts to communicate with everyone.

Information distribution

It should be possible to identify appropriate channels for disseminating information to the target group you aim to reach.

For example:

- a student volunteering organisation includes information in the university handbook which is given to all new students;
- a charity which specifically welcomes asylum seekers as volunteers includes information in the welcome pack given to asylum seekers arriving in Wales;
- an organisation which encourages older volunteers includes information in pre-retirement packs given out by a major employer;
- an organisation concerned with recycling distributes flyers along with recycling bags used by the local council in its doorstep recycling collection service.

In order to monitor which channels of communication are effective, you can add a code on the reply form to identify the information source, for example WP on forms included in a welcome pack, LC on forms distributed in leisure centres, and so on.

'when you send a message to everyone in general you often end up speaking to no-one in particular'

RICK LYNCH, US AUTHOR AND TRAINER ON VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

Direct mailing

At its simplest, direct mail might involve writing to people who already have some contact with your organisation: those on the general supporter mailing list, for example, or those who attended a particular event. Research has shown that those who have an existing link with your organisation are three times as likely to respond to your mailings as those who are 'cold contacts'.

It might involve reaching further afield: writing to local businesses in the search for a volunteer treasurer, for example. Or it might involve acquiring new lists of people to contact, such as households in a given post code area where there are one or more residents over 50 years.

Direct mail does have a poor reputation in some quarters. Don't abuse it, and be sure to stay within the law. If you keep a database you may be required to register as a data user with the Data Protection Register (DPR). Call the DPR on 01625 545740 to obtain all the information you need.

Members of the public can register with the Mailing Preference Service (MPS). If you use an acquired mailing list, you should check it against the MPS register and remove the names of those who have expressed that they do not want to receive unsolicited mail.

Information about the Mailing Preference Service is on the website www.mpsonline.uk. There is a charge for organisations to access list information (currently £50 + VAT for a one-off, regional list).

The website also includes details of similar registers for people who do not want unsolicited e-mails, faxes or telephone calls.

Newsletters and e groups

If you have something to offer that might appeal to people who are members of other networks or organisations, find out if you can contribute something to their in-house newsletter or e-publication.

Use your existing contacts: if, for example, you want to write a piece in the local church magazine and one or more of your volunteers are members, then work with them in composing something suitable, if possible sending it in their name(s).

Website

A well-designed website, with plenty of links and easy navigation, naturally provides targeted communication by allowing website visitors to select information which interests them, and in the order in which they want to see it.

There are websites where the section 'want to volunteer?' consists solely of a link to download an application form! Most website visitors who are thinking of volunteering are likely to have questions they would like answered first. They will be interested to hear about what volunteers have done and what difference this has made to the organisation, to the wider community and to volunteers themselves. More website visitors might be open to consider volunteering for the first time, if approached in the right manner.

Word of mouth

A high proportion of volunteers are recruited because somebody asked them. What is more, research suggests that a significant proportion of people who do not volunteer, would consider doing so if somebody did ask them!

The degree of success depends to some extent on the personality and approach of the person who is asking.

A volunteer centre held an information stand and display in various towns during Volunteers' Week. No volunteers at all were recruited in Pwllheli (on a very wet day); three or four were recruited in Caernarfon. But in Dolgellau and Bangor, 29 people were recruited. On both these occasions a volunteer called Ben was present. The success is attributed to him. Angharad of the volunteer centre says 'he is an ordinary guy, with an easy-going manner. He got talking with people easily. His enthusiasm for his own work as a volunteer just shines through.' Unless people came with a specific idea of where they wanted to volunteer, they mostly signed up to Ben's organisation!

You may be able to mobilise staff, trustees, members and existing volunteers to approach people they know, and to invite them to volunteer. Encourage them to be positive in their approach. An opening line of 'I don't suppose you'd be interested but...' is likely to be a non-starter, whereas 'I've been thinking, you would be just the person...' might be considered more seriously.

Recruiting by word of mouth is not a substitute for normal selection procedures. In effect, you are inviting people to apply in the usual way.

A direct invitation is one of the most successful approaches to recruitment, and is also cost-free. The main drawback is that the circle of people invited tends to mirror those already 'on board'. In chapter 5, we discuss the value of widening the diversity of volunteers. Alternative methods need to be deployed, in addition to recruitment by word of mouth, in order to encourage interest from a wider range of people.

Recruiting by word of mouth:

- be enthusiastic and sincere
- be clear about what you want people to do
- be honest about what the work entails
- explain what training or supervision is provided
- say what you feel the benefits of the role might be
- say why you are asking this particular person - what makes them a good person for the role
- remember that you are offering someone a positive opportunity, not grovelling for favours
- if someone says 'no', it is not a failure - they will probably be pleased to have been asked

Developing links

An approach to a local organisation such as a club, college or day centre can lead to a creative partnership with new volunteers getting involved either on a group basis or as individuals.

In this case, the initial approach is made to someone who has authority within the organisation. They are the 'gatekeeper' to potential volunteers. They need to understand what you are offering and to see clear benefits for their own client group. If you win the support of the 'gatekeeper', they will best advise you on how to communicate directly with the potential volunteers, and who is best placed to do this.

An ecumenical church project based on a decommissioned lightship in Cardiff Bay needs regular maintenance work done on the ship. This is usually carried out by a small, regular team of volunteers. The ship also needs complete repainting once in a while.

Contact with the rehabilitation team at nearby Cardiff prison resulted in a team of prisoners coming to paint the ship as a one off project. Not only has this saved the project a great deal of money and time, but the chance to work with the prisoners was worthwhile in its own right.

From the prisoner's perspective, volunteer work on the ship gave them valuable experience and a chance to play a positive part in a local community.

The prison continues to provide prisoner volunteers to help with manual work on the ship on a regular basis.

Talks and events

Giving talks or presentations in the community may be in the interest of general PR. If it is to be an effective component of a recruitment strategy then the following questions need to be addressed:

- Who do you most want to speak to? Can you actively seek opportunities to meet particular groups?
- What do you want people to do -focus on one or two specific roles rather than persuade people to 'volunteer' in a general way.
- What questions and concerns is this group likely to have? Be sure to address these.
- If people are interested, what is the next step, eg, to speak to you, fill in a questionnaire, sign a list or attend a briefing session?
- How will you communicate your recruitment message? Is it the substance of your talk, in literature handed out afterwards, or will you invite people to sign a list and contact them afterwards?

Similarly, if an event is planned with recruitment in mind, the same questions apply. At public events such as a show, fête or information fair, you need to be able to get across your message in around 15 seconds. Aim to generate a desire to find out more, rather than overload people with information.

Handing out a 'freebie' - a postcard, bookmark, sticker or whatever - can provide opportunity to engage in conversation and gives people your contact details to take away.

An organisation which promotes sporting activities for young people, runs family fun nights in order to give new people a taste of what being volunteer might entail - as well as to give everyone a good time. Recruitment rates from these events are high.

An advice organisation holds four or five information sessions a year. A video of a client interview is shown and explained, and application packs are distributed. Anyone interested is invited to a personal interview and given a date to begin training. Volunteers are always recruited at least two at a time, so that there is peer support.

Recruitment campaigns

A campaign may simply involve intensifying activities which are carried out at low level throughout the year.

For example, two to three months before a scheduled training course for new volunteers, an organisation distributes more leaflets, more posters and issues a press release. Speaking engagements are scheduled to fall within this period as far as possible. This may happen several times a year, so that recruitment activity peaks and falls in a cyclical fashion.

A one-off campaign may be undertaken in order, for example, to get a new volunteer programme off the ground. It needs to be well researched, well planned and well supported.

An organisation which provides voluntary opportunities for the over 50s, recruited volunteers with success for a new Cars for Carers scheme.

The idea arose because carers were in need of transport for essential journeys. It was also known that older volunteers were being rejected as drivers for a community transport project, on the grounds of age (for insurance reasons); they were feeling frustrated. After successfully securing insurance for older drivers, a pilot study was undertaken with a special grant from the local authority.

Carer representatives helped develop the joint scheme, which was launched with a radio jingle and advertised by presentations to groups, mailings to organisations and by word of mouth. Fifteen drivers and three non-driver volunteers were recruited and funding was obtained for a paid co-ordinator. There are plans to extend the scheme to other areas.

A campaign may promote and boost support in an area. It helps to have the support of the whole organisation, and other key members of the community too.

A community organisation in Wrexham serves the local estate of some 14,500 people. Andrea, newly appointed volunteer co-ordinator, was keen to introduce the new team and to regain momentum which had been lost during the changeover of staff.

A walkabout week was held, knocking on over 3,500 doors and handing out information packs to promote learning and volunteering opportunities. If there was no reply a return visit was arranged. All staff and volunteers were involved, along with police and housing officers closely associated with the project. Articles in the press reinforced the campaign.

Eleven volunteers were recruited. The training team also recruited new course members and the youth outreach project gained new recruits. 'It was a huge amount of work' said Andrea. The support of the chief executive was crucial. She reminded us all that this was everyone's business, not just the volunteering team's. We're planning to cover the rest of the estate bit by bit'.

4 A question of communication

Spontaneous approaches

Opportunities sometimes present themselves in unforeseeable ways. A topic under discussion in the media may be a matter on which you have something helpful to contribute, for example, or a local school or business may decide to 'adopt' your cause for a year.

Such opportunities call for quick and flexible thinking, and perhaps an adjustment of the priorities in your recruitment strategy.

A volunteer sent a letter to the readers' page of Women's Weekly magazine. It was a response to a published letter from an older reader who complained of having nothing to do. The volunteer explained about the work she did through an organisation which specialises in volunteering opportunities for older people. She challenged the reader to do the same and gave a contact number. The head office (which had no knowledge of this correspondence), was surprised to be inundated with telephone enquiries from nearly a thousand people. Many volunteers were recruited, allowing the work to expand into new geographical areas.

Taking things further:

Check out the Media Trust Cymru section of the website www.wcva.org.uk for tips on how to write a press release, design newsletters and leaflets and how to work effectively with the media. The website also includes a database of media contacts in Wales.

Practical tasks:

- 1 Think of an organisation to which you are committed, as a volunteer or active supporter.
Draw a line representing your life and mark on it any significant steps in the development of your commitment to this organisation. For example, occasions or periods when you have benefited or been influenced by it, or participated in its work. What has been the relative importance for you of
 - a. personal contacts
 - b. literature
 - c. practical involvement?
- 2 Collect a selection of promotional literature produced by other organisations. If you were thinking of volunteering, which would make the most impact on you, and why?
Show your samples to selected individuals of different age, educational, social or cultural background. Find out what they react to positively. What do they find off-putting? Do their responses tell you anything about how to target different audiences?

Key points:

- The variety of methods and approaches described are tools. Some will suit your circumstances and serve your purpose better than others.
- A combination of approaches is likely to be the best.
- Effective recruitment does not have to cost the earth, but it does require time and careful thought.

Volunteer motivation

Volunteers may be motivated by altruism, boredom, a desire for skills and experience or for other personal reasons. Some are suggested below. For many, there will be a mixture of motivating factors. Which are likely to be the strongest, in the case of people you are trying to attract? The aim is to communicate with people in ways which are relevant to what really motivates them.

Why people volunteer:

- to show commitment to a cause or client group; to be an agent of change; to be an advocate or watchdog
- to help people; for the sake of someone they know; as a family tradition; to set a good example
- to give professional skills or experience; to develop or maintain skills
- to explore a possible career; to gain accreditation or experience
- to feel good; to gain status; to gain inside knowledge or access to services
- to make friends; to work as a team; to have fun; to be with a different group of people; to get to know their community; to do something with a friend or family member
- out of duty; to repay a debt
- to do something other than the usual daily occupation; an excuse to do something which is enjoyed; for a healthier lifestyle; as therapy
- to get out of the house; to give structure and routine; to give meaning or purpose; to escape; to keep busy
- because it was convenient; because they were asked; because of who asked; because they were in the right place at the right time; because there was no-one else to do it

Potential barriers

It is worth thinking also about what might put volunteers off, for example:

- misconceptions about the cause or client group
- feeling inadequate or ill-equipped for the task
- not knowing what would be expected
- practical barriers such as physical access or personal needs
- concerns about the commitment of time expected
- not sure if this is the right thing
- not clear how to take things further
- too many unanswered questions

Effective recruitment messages

An effective recruitment message includes four key elements:

- 1 **the vision**
Why does your organisation exist? How is it making the world a better place?
- 2 **the 'roadmap'**
What will the volunteer be doing? How does this make a positive difference to your cause?
- 3 **hopes and fears**
Address the concerns or fears a volunteer is likely to have, say how a volunteer might benefit from getting involved.
- 4 **invitation to act**
Make it clear what you are asking the person to do next (eg, ring a given number, come to a meeting, sign up or log onto a website).

Adapting the message

Good design

If you are using posters or leaflets to convey the message, you will need to be short and 'pithy'. Remember that you communicate by visual images and design, as well as in words. (*Practical Task 2 at the end of chapter 3 may have got you thinking about this already*).

Someone with expertise in design will be able to help you create publicity material in which the text, visual imagery and even the feel and shape of the publication combine to create a strong and unified message. You may decide to involve a professional designer, if you can afford to. Alternatively, the organisation REACH (www.reach-online.org.uk) may be able to put you in touch with a volunteer who has the expertise to help.

REACH recruits and supports people with managerial, technical and professional expertise and places them in part-time, unpaid roles with voluntary organisations that need their help. There is no charge for the service.

Either way, a designer can only work with the brief they are given. Make sure that they fully understand the ethos of your organisation and what it is you want to get across.

Rather than try to design a single leaflet for all purposes, you may want to produce one general purpose high quality leaflet describing, for example, 'the vision' and 'the roadmap' as described above. Supplementary leaflets could be produced in-house and used in conjunction with this, giving information which is more specific to different volunteer roles and target groups.

Appropriate language

Speak the language of your target group. Simple and direct language is the best, using attention-grabbing words such as 'help', 'you', 'easy', 'discover', 'make a difference'.

The cause that you are promoting, and even the concept of volunteering itself, may mean different things to people of different cultures and backgrounds. Try to explain your message in language that will make sense, and avoid jargon.

The right emphasis

People will respond best to recruitment messages which reflect their own attitudes and motivations; some of the commonest fears and motivators have already been noted, at the start of the chapter.

The emphasis and order of the four elements of the message outlined above can be varied according to the target audience. For example:

Those motivated mainly by...	are likely to respond to appeals that focus on...
belief in a specific cause	the organisation
empathy	the beneficiaries
the chance to learn or use skills	the volunteer role

Take a further example: for those who lead busy and pressured lives, time is a precious resource. The decision to offer their time is a generous gift. It may be that by volunteering they can secure a regular time to do something which they really enjoy. For others on the other hand, finding something to fill their time can be a problem. It may be that volunteering can provide meaningful purpose, new friends and a structure to the day.

The emphasis of an effective message to these two groups would be considerably different, because the motivation for volunteering is different.

Adapt to suit the occasion

In the context of a presentation or event there are additional possibilities for communicating the basic elements of your recruitment message. A quiz, stories, pictures, visual objects, interviews, dramatic presentation, letters from beneficiaries or a group learning exercise, such as a case study discussion or problem solving exercises, - all can be used to bring your message to life.

Remember that people take in information in different ways: in pictures or in words, for example. They also respond to different kinds of information: to emotional content or logical reasoning, for example. Reinforce basic messages in different ways so as to 'touch' as wide a spectrum of the audience as possible.

Be sure to make it clear what you want a volunteer to do, and how this relates to the overall purpose of the organisation

Recruitment messages to avoid:

'There's nothing to it - anyone could do it'

'We're desperate, we'll take anyone'

'We'll cast our nets as usual and see who turns up'

'You're a treasurer/Welsh speaker/black person...we need you'

'I'm tired of doing this - anyone else prepared to do it?'

'I don't suppose you'd be interested...'

'I've been doing this a long time and am good at it - but if anyone else thinks they can do it better, I shan't stand in their way.'

Make it easy to respond

It would be unrealistic to expect people to make the leap from having never heard of your organisation to signing up as a volunteer straight away.

If your message makes sense, people may want to explore the idea further. Make it easy for people to express and explore their interest without forcing them to make a commitment. It may be easier to sign up for an introductory evening, for example, than to sign up as a volunteer.

Making it easy to respond also means having the right material to hand. It is not enough to vaguely invite someone to 'get in touch if you want to know more'. Better to ask if they would like to leave you their name and address and be contacted by you next week. Or at the very least to leave your name and telephone number and give them an application form to take away.

5 A question of diversity

The messenger and the message

It has been said 'the messenger is the message'. Certainly you will make an impression on people. When you speak, your attitudes and enthusiasm come across as part and parcel of your message.

You may want to think about how you can make best use of other staff, management committee members, supporters, volunteers or clients in communicating recruitment messages. Or how local personalities who are known to support your cause might help. The same words from their lips rather than yours will have a different impact. Different perspectives can be presented by quotations or stories if they cannot be represented in person.

Good recruiters will generally be those who are:

- **satisfied** with the organisation and with their role within it
- **enthusiastic** about what the organisation does
- **articulate** - able to express themselves well

Practical tasks:

- 1 Think of someone you know, who represents the kind of person you would like to recruit.
Write a recruitment message of no more than 100 words, including the four elements outlined in this chapter.
With the same person in mind, what do you think might strengthen the message? eg, visual material, personal examples, factual information.
- 2 Make a list of all the positive things that come to mind when you think of your existing volunteers and what they do. Special people or events, anecdotes, personalities and qualities, examples of positive impact...anything at all.
Keep these in your mind and use them as examples as you seek new volunteers. If you are inspired and enthusiastic, it will come across!

Key points:

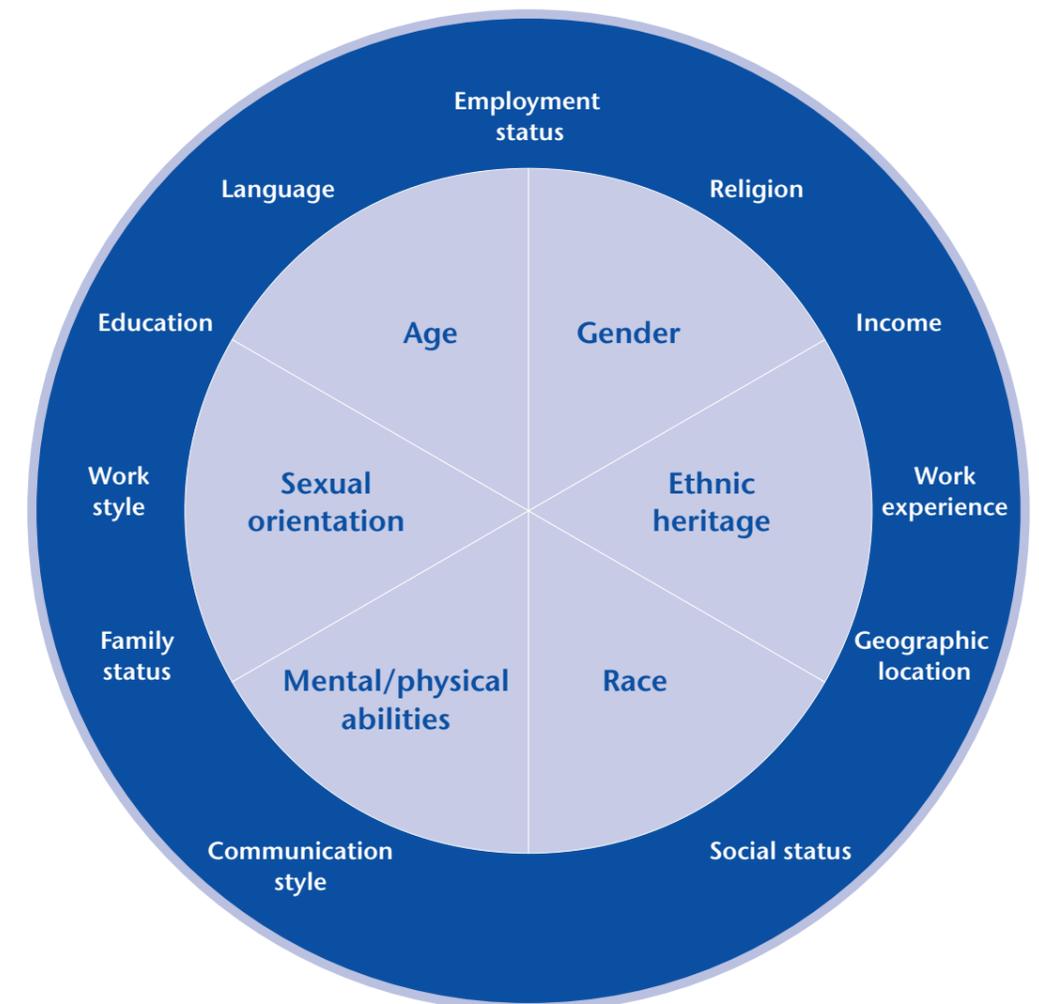
- Recruitment messages include four basic components: a vision, a 'roadmap', fears and benefits and a call to action.
- Understanding what is likely to motivate or to put off the people you hope to attract will help you communicate in a way they can respond to.
- People take in and respond to information in different ways. Use a variety of ways of getting across your message, so as to appeal to as wide a sector of your audience as possible.

What do we mean by diversity?

Diversity is about creating an environment in which all can thrive. It means celebrating difference, treating people fairly and recruiting on merit.

Equal opportunities legislation aims to prevent discrimination on the grounds of certain attributes: gender, marital status, disability, race, and from 2006, religion, sexual orientation and age. Diversity is a broader issue which takes into consideration the need for balance and variety with regard to a much wider range of attributes.

The Diversity Wheel



Adapted from Marilyn Loden in Implementing Diversity. McGraw-Hill 1996

Why diversity matters

In its outline of the Voluntary Sector Scheme (2000), the National Assembly for Wales affirms:

- that everyone has a right to participate in the life of their community and to society in general through volunteering;
- that volunteers should reflect in respect of age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, language and religion the communities and the people they serve;
- that volunteering should be available to all people in society and special measures should be taken to include those who are vulnerable to social exclusion such as those from ethnic communities, those who are disabled and those with learning difficulties;
- that funding and grants schemes should require organisations to demonstrate an effective policy for involving volunteers from a cross section of society, as appropriate to the nature of their organisation;
- that unnecessary barriers should not deter people from volunteering.

The main argument for promoting diversity amongst volunteers, as outlined above, is one of social justice. Other reasons include:

- to be more responsive to beneficiaries/ the local community
- to gain new ideas and fresh approaches
- to demonstrate openness and welcome in a visible way
- to be more adaptable to changes required in the future
- to be attractive to a wider spectrum of potential volunteers
- to increase the fundraising and support base

Assessing and monitoring diversity

The first step to increasing the diversity of volunteers is to identify where the 'gaps' are, in two possible ways:

Firstly, you can compare the diversity of the local population with that of volunteers. The National Assembly for Wales' Statistical Directorate pages (www.wales.gov.uk/keypubstatisticsforwales) and the website www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk allow you to search and view statistics from a variety of official sources.

Compare the profile of your volunteers with that of the population you aim to represent. This may be the whole population in a geographical area or, for example, those of a particular age range. This will help to identify where there is under-representation and may inform decisions about where to target recruitment activity.

Secondly, you can conduct a survey of your volunteers - or examine volunteer records if the information is already available - to assess the balance in terms of specific characteristics which are important to your work or the credibility of your image. You may, for example, need volunteers with a range of skills and experience, or it may be important that you have volunteers from different sectors of the community. You can identify where the 'gaps' are, and bear this in mind in your recruitment strategy.

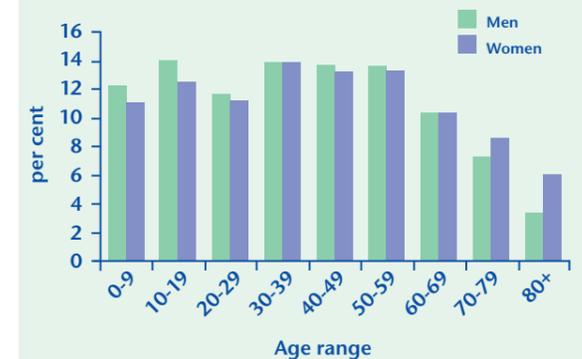
Collect relevant information about your volunteers in a consistent manner, for example as part of the recruitment process, so that you can monitor the changes in the diversity over time.

Sample population statistics:

Total population in Wales 2003	2.938 million
Men	48.5%
Women	51.5%
One or more skills in Welsh - males	27.1%
One or more skills in Welsh - females	29.7%
Ethnicity other than white: British	4%
Adults of working age with disability	23%
Adults of working age unemployed or inactive	29.5%

From: A Statistical Focus on Diversity in Wales. National Assembly for Wales 2005

Age distribution of men and women in Wales



How to increase volunteer diversity

There are few restrictions as to who can volunteer for your organisation. Appendix 2 offers some guidance on legal issues concerning certain groups of people.

Diversify roles and opportunities

A diversity of volunteer roles might include:

- activities involving specialist skills and more generalist roles
- regular, short term and also occasional tasks
- tasks for which a volunteer may be 'on call'
- opportunities for groups and for individuals
- tasks that can be done from home
- 'hands on' tasks and thinking/writing tasks
- a range of core roles and a 'wish list' of new possibilities

If you know that you are under-represented with respect to young people, or men, for example, think about the kind of opportunities you could develop which would be more attractive to them in terms of the type of activity, time of day, length of commitment and so on.

One organisation, for example, attracted more young and male volunteers simply by extending the opening hours of a drop-in centre into the evenings, as they often preferred to work evening shifts.

An environment organisation found that by developing a new programme of volunteering activities around Wales it could attract volunteers of different age groups and ethnicity, including a good representation of people with disabilities and Welsh speakers. Volunteers were recruited by working with organisations such as youth services, as well as by advertising through the traditional networks.

Volunteer opportunities included short term, residential projects which individuals, families or groups could sign up to, and one-off projects that appealed, for example, to new graduates with a few months on their hands.

Identify and remove barriers

The best way to identify barriers is to talk to people. If you want to be proactive in finding out what stops people from even approaching you, get advice from those who are well placed to help - a local ACCESS group will help in assessing the barriers for disabled people, for example.

Alternatively you could undertake a survey. This opens the way to make contact with different people within the community and invites their views. If you embark on a survey of this kind, be sure that you are able to commit time and resources to act on its findings, and remember to inform those you have consulted of the changes you have made.

If, for example, you were to find that the main reason that young parents gave for not getting involved had to do with lack of time, could you help to 'make time' by offering childcare provision or by offering volunteer work that coincides with local playgroup hours?

Project co-ordinators of a walking project were unsure whether the role of volunteer walk leader could be successfully undertaken by prospective volunteers with poor literacy skills. The training, for example, involved extensive reading and the administration and monitoring requirements all demanded literacy skills.

The parent organisation advised co-ordinators about how to adapt ways of working so as to include these volunteers. Illiteracy was not seen as a barrier by training provider Fitness Wales: 'We often get students with special needs on our courses' said Mari of Fitness Wales. 'The course is about dealing with people and leading a safe walk. The tutor always talks through the material shown on an overhead, so all the main points are covered orally. Volunteers are given a training manual to use as a back up. We can arrange for people to have a copy in advance so that they can familiarise themselves with it prior to the course. For those who have some reading

ability but are slow and need to take it at their own speed, this helps. We have a large print manual for people with visual impairments.'

To cope with the administrative demands of leading walks, registration and documenting risk assessment could be delegated or done using a dictaphone. The local co-ordinator could shoulder more responsibility for ensuring that the necessary paperwork is intact.

Target recruitment at under-represented groups

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 discussed ways of developing recruitment approaches and messages which are aimed at a particular target group. You may find it useful to revisit these chapters with a target group in mind.

An organisation which recruits and trains volunteers to work in the substance misuse field has been committed from the outset to recruiting a broad base of volunteers, in the belief that treatment services are more effective if they represent the full diversity of their client groups.

A BME volunteering co-ordinator was appointed to recruit and support volunteers from ethnic minorities. A previous survey among BME communities provided a basis for developing new plans and for seeking funding for this post. Equally important, it established positive relationships and credibility with BME communities. The work developed and three years on, the first BME substance misuse referral project in Wales was opened.

Develop a positive organisational culture

Questions of diversity and inclusion apply also to the staff community, to those who serve on committees and to members and beneficiaries of organisations. A desire to broaden diversity is likely to change an organisation in many ways. Indeed this is to be expected, if diversity is to be more than mere tokenism.

Sensitivity is required to ensure that existing staff and volunteers accept the need for change and are not unnecessarily alienated.

It may be helpful if the whole organisation is able to look at the ways in which it unwittingly excludes people from participating and at ways in which it can be more accessible to all.

An organisation working with older people contacted Swansea Bay Racial Equality Council and was given the names of local elders to contact; people of influence within local Asian communities.

But care of the elderly was not seen as an area of need by the Asian communities, because older people are traditionally cared for within the family.

However, a working partnership developed with Suzi, a Development Officer with the Racial Equality Council and she was appointed a trustee. Through her influence, the organisation began a new project aiming to reduce salt intake by Asian elderly people. This was a recognised concern among professionals working in the field.

Articles about the project were published in more than one language and Suzi began to hold local surgeries for Asian families, where she was an effective advocate.

Two years' later there were two staff members from BME communities and two BME volunteers.

Develop support systems

All volunteers should receive appropriate levels of support. It may be necessary to ensure additional support mechanisms to cater for those with special needs. Good communication and early discussion of any difficulties encountered can prevent minor problems becoming major issues.

About 70 per cent of volunteers at a community partnership project in North Wales have mental health or learning difficulties. The project has appointed a volunteer support worker and now offers a weekly support group which aims to increase self esteem and provide informal support.

Practical tasks:

- 1 Look at the 'diversity wheel' depicted at the beginning of this chapter. Draw one of your own, noting the attributes and qualities which you think are important to ensure diversity within your own organisation.

Put a circle around any which you feel are under-represented.

If possible, check your response by examining information about your volunteers and relevant population statistics.

- 2 Think about the way your organisation promotes volunteer opportunities, recruits and inducts new volunteers.

How could you adapt your usual materials and procedures to welcome someone with

- i) visual impairment?
- ii) restricted mobility?

Key points:

- A commitment to increase diversity is a commitment to create an environment where all are welcome and can play their full part in the organisation.
- Statistical information is available to help identify where there is under-representation among your volunteers.
- Ways of increasing diversity among volunteers include widening the range of opportunities, targeting recruitment, identifying specific barriers, providing good support and creating a positive organisational culture.

6 A question of choice

Where the culture or the context is informal, much of the information in this chapter may not be relevant. In general, the higher the risks associated with involving volunteers in a particular role, the more formal and rigorous the process of recruitment might need to be. For example, volunteers who are the 'public face' of an organisation represent a higher risk than do volunteers who help out in a group activity.

Having decided what kind of recruitment process is appropriate, it is important to treat all enquirers fairly and consistently, in accordance with principles of equal opportunities.

A two way process

Everyone has something to offer and something to gain by volunteering. That does not mean that everyone is equally suitable for every volunteer role.

There needs to be opportunity both for the volunteer and for an organisation to explore whether and how they can work together for mutual benefit. This involves a process of information exchange, listening, assessing and discussing.

Using selection criteria

We discussed in chapter 2 how to define volunteer roles and the personal qualities required to do the job. It was our starting point for planning how to market the volunteer opportunity in the best way.

This same 'volunteer specification' is the basis for selecting volunteers. It defines any minimal criteria that potential volunteers must fulfil. There is no point in setting requirements higher than absolutely necessary. This only puts up barriers to prevent a wider range of people from getting involved and is likely to compromise principles of equal opportunities and diversity.

Selection criteria can be used like a series of filters:

First level The most obvious and easily defined criteria should be spelt out from the start - in your advertisement, leaflet or information pack. For example, you require volunteers to own their own car, to be available at specific times, or to be on e-mail. It should be noted that people who do not meet your requirements at this level may nevertheless be excellent for a different kind of volunteering role within the organisation.

Second level Criteria which require more judgement are best assessed later in the process; for example, personal qualities such as reliability, being non-judgemental or the ability to keep confidences. Decide how you will assess each of the essential qualities, for example, in interview, or by references.

Third level Formal screening or 'vetting' procedures are best left until last (see below). They are only carried out on otherwise suitable volunteers. You should be clear as an organisation what information revealed at this stage would be grounds for turning down a volunteer for a particular role.

A selection process

Selection procedures and the timescale of the process will depend on the nature of the organisation, whether volunteers are recruited in groups or individually, at set times of the year or on a continuous basis and so on.

It will depend also on the nature of the volunteer role. If you are investing considerable time and money into training volunteers, for example, there may be advantages to having a longer time for mutual exploration and assessment before a commitment is made.

The diagram below sets out some methods that can contribute to a process of selecting volunteers. Not all of them will be appropriate to every role or organisation, and in some cases the sequence of events will be different. However done, the process should be consistent for any given volunteering role, and made clear to volunteers from the outset.

Further information about selection methods, including how to conduct a successful interview, can be found in *The complete volunteer manager*, (WCVA 2004) available from WCVA Helpdesk 0870 607 1666.

Outline of a selection process



Collecting volunteer information

Volunteering should be as accessible to as wide a range of people as possible. In order to assess whether you are being as inclusive as you would like and in order to target under represented groups you need to collect consistent information from volunteers.

At the very least you will need to collect and monitor basic information about:

- age
- gender
- ethnicity and
- registered disability

This kind of information is usually required by funding bodies.

Volunteers could be asked to provide the necessary information by completing a volunteer registration form. If a more informal approach is adopted, the information may be obtained by interview, with the interviewer recording the information on a standard form or database.

You will also need to record:

- volunteer contact details
- emergency contact details and
- relevant health information.

You may also want to record additional information such as volunteer interests, languages spoken and availability.

It may be appropriate, for example where a volunteer will have considerable responsibility, or where you are monitoring the involvement of ex-offenders as part of an equal opportunities policy, to ask a volunteer to declare any previous 'unspent' convictions at some point during the registration process.

However, it must be noted that an ex offender is no longer legally required to disclose to organisations convictions that have become 'spent' unless the position is listed as being exempt under the Rehabilitation of Offender's Act. Such positions include those working with children and vulnerable adults.

Information revealed through criminal records checks must be treated sensitively and confidentially, and considered in perspective when making a decision about the suitability of a volunteer for a particular role (see appendix 2 for guidance.) The WCVA Criminal Records Unit is able to offer advice and information (Helpline 0870 241 6557).

The storage and use of personal information is covered by the Data Protection Act 1998. Take care to ensure that access to personal information is restricted and that the information is only used for the purpose for which it was gathered -such as monitoring and administration.

Vetting procedures

These final checks, including criminal records checks, are but one small step in a process of selection. They should not be regarded as adequate screening in isolation. We know, for example, that around 90 per cent of child abusers have no criminal record.

Criminal Records checks

If a volunteer is working with children and/or vulnerable adults then you are entitled to know about their criminal convictions. In some posts this is a mandatory requirement, in all others it is recommended as best practice.

Different levels of checking are available:

Standard disclosure - for people who will have regular contact with children or vulnerable adults. It provides details of spent and unspent convictions, cautions, reprimands and final warnings held on a national police database. It also checks against lists held by various government departments of those who are banned from working with children or vulnerable adults.

Enhanced disclosure - for people who will be regularly caring for, supervising, training or being in sole charge of children or vulnerable adults. Information is the same as for a standard level disclosure but may also include additional or 'soft' non-conviction information held by local police forces.

The WCVA Criminal Records Unit offers an advice and support service to voluntary organisations in Wales. It can advise you as to what checks are necessary for volunteers in which roles, how to go about getting the checks you need and your obligations in terms of data protection and confidentiality.

The WCVA Criminal Records Unit Helpline number is 0870 241 6557 or e-mail cru@wcva.org.uk.

Application for a criminal records check must be made as a CRB registered body or through a CRB registered umbrella body. The WCVA Criminal Records Unit acts as an 'umbrella' registered body for voluntary organisations in Wales. There is no charge for checks on volunteers.

When the checks are completed, you need to satisfy yourself that any information revealed does not preclude the volunteer from the intended role. A policy on involving people with criminal convictions will help you to clarify, before the occasion arises, what are the relevant convictions that may preclude someone from volunteering in a particular role, who makes the final decision in cases that are not straight forward and how confidentiality is preserved.

Appendix 2 includes more information on involving people with criminal convictions.

References

A standard letter to referees can be designed so as to specifically seek information that will help you in deciding the suitability of a volunteer for a particular role. You may want a general character reference. You may also be looking for evidence that a volunteer has specific personal qualities.

Other checks

Other kinds of check may be necessary for particular roles, for example:

- Inspection of driving licence and insurance certificates for volunteer drivers.
- Assessment of the roadworthiness of a volunteer driver's vehicle, such as evidence of recent service by a reputable mechanic.
- Where health and fitness are relevant to the work, a doctor's reference might be sought.
- Where a volunteer has a medical condition you may also need, with permission, to get a doctor's reference.

Saying 'no'

There may be times, after following selection procedures, when you simply have to say 'no' to a potential volunteer. Failure to do so may be:

Harmful to the volunteer

For example while volunteering can be therapeutic, its primary purpose is not as therapy and it is not a substitute for treatment. If a volunteer is placed in a role for which they are not suited, they are effectively being set up to 'fail'.

Harmful to others

Organisations have a duty of care toward others. This includes taking all reasonable steps to ensure that the public, clients and staff are protected from anyone who might abuse their trust.

Harmful to the organisation

If a volunteer is placed in a role for which they are not suited, it is also unfair on the organisation - whose reputation and image may suffer as a result.

Care should be taken to use legitimate reasons for not selecting a volunteer. If in doubt, obtain further information about the volunteer, for example from a professional case-worker or a previous employer, or ask a colleague for a second opinion.

Anyone who is turned down for a volunteering role should be told honestly of the reasons why. You may be able to find an alternative, meaningful role for them within your organisation. If you are unable to do so, refer the person to the nearest volunteer centre. It is advisable to keep a note of the steps you have taken so that your decisions, if challenged, can be substantiated.

Practical tasks:

- 1 Look at one or two volunteer roles and note the criteria which are necessary for a volunteer to be able to satisfactorily perform each one.

Thinking through your volunteer recruitment process, can you identify at which point each of the criteria is assessed?

- 2 Now imagine you are a volunteer applying for one of the roles you have identified.

Make a list of the questions you might and the kind of information you would want. Thinking through your recruitment process as before, can you identify at which point the required information is provided?

Key points:

- Selection is a two-way process in which the volunteer and the organisation each gather information and explore possibilities before making a commitment.
- Organisations need to take steps to avoid recruiting volunteers to roles for which they are not suited.
- Selection processes should be appropriate to the role, rigorous enough to allow the volunteer and the organisation to make the right choice but not so bureaucratic or formal as to be intimidating.
- Everyone applying for the same volunteering role should be subject to the same selection procedures. The process should be made known from the outset.

Attracting and recruiting new volunteers involves a considerable amount of time, imagination and effort. What happens then is of the utmost importance, in order for the investment to reap its mutual benefits.

This book does not cover how to maintain effective relationships between volunteers and the organisations with which they work.

Induction, training, support and supervision all have their place in ensuring that volunteers know what is expected of them and are equipped and motivated to fulfil their role.

For some volunteers, the opportunity to make contributions to the wider work of the organisation, for example by being consulted on matters that affect the future development of the organisation, will encourage a sense of belonging and commitment. For some, the opportunity to gain new experience, develop new skills and take on new levels of responsibility will be important.

Some useful guidance can be found *The complete volunteer manager*, (WCVA 2004) available from WCVA Helpdesk 0870 607 1666, and on the website www.wcva.org.uk/volunteering.

The *Investing in Volunteers* quality standard defines principles of good practice in volunteer management. There are also National Occupational Standards for Volunteer Managers which set out the skills and competencies which may be required to fulfil a volunteer management role. Extracts from these two documents which are relevant to volunteer recruitment are included in Appendix 3 and 4 respectively. The full documents can be accessed via the website www.wcva.org.uk/volunteering.

In time, volunteers move on; some to further training, employment or to volunteer work elsewhere. Others have to give up because of other commitments or constraints. Some may simply lose interest.

Whatever the reason, it is worth taking the opportunity to invite feedback from a volunteer before they leave. They may be willing to share experiences, express feelings and offer ideas and criticisms, sometimes with greater openness and honesty precisely because they are on the point of leaving it all behind.

This feeds into the cycle of recruitment, providing you with valuable insights into the experience of a volunteer. A satisfied volunteer may be willing to write a letter or an article which you can quote to encourage new volunteers.

A model volunteering policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1** Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) represents and campaigns on behalf of the voluntary sector and volunteering in Wales. It has over 1,800 members and works with organisations in the voluntary, statutory and private sectors in the development and promotion of volunteering.
- 1.2** This policy sets out the broad principles for voluntary involvement in WCVA. It is of relevance to volunteers, staff, members, and trustees of the organisation.
- 1.3** The purpose of this policy is to ensure cohesion and consistency to all the elements in WCVA that affect volunteers.
- 1.4** This policy is endorsed by the Board of WCVA and will be kept under review to ensure that it remains appropriate to the needs of WCVA and its volunteers.

2 Commitment

The organisation:

- 2.1** Values the unique and valuable contribution made by volunteers and is committed to working in ways which encourage and support volunteers.
- 2.2** Is committed to involving volunteers in appropriate positions which would benefit the organisation, volunteers, members, users of services and the wider community.

3 Statement of values and principles

The organisation:

- 3.1** Appreciates that volunteering is enjoyable and can change and enrich the lives of individuals.

- 3.2** Recognises that volunteering has the capacity to build skills and confidence and contributes to individuals' personal development.
- 3.3** Respects volunteers in both listening to and learning from what they have to say- feedback from volunteers is always welcome.
- 3.4** Acknowledges volunteering is of wider benefit to society.
- 3.5** Values volunteering as an inclusive act of participation.
- 3.6** Recognises that volunteering has an important role to play in helping people who are excluded from society to participate and become active members of their communities.
- 3.7** Recognises that volunteering is at the heart of the emerging civil society agenda and that through volunteering people can influence decisions.
- 3.8** Distinguishes volunteering from employment and puts its flexibility and informality to best effect to complement the work of paid staff.

4 Definitions

- 4.1** A volunteer is someone who, without expectation of financial compensation beyond the reimbursement of expenses, performs a task at the request of and on behalf of the organisation.
- 4.2** The definition of volunteering used by the Welsh Assembly Government in the Voluntary Sector Scheme is:
'Volunteering is an important expression of citizenship and an essential component of democracy. It is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community and can take many forms. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain.'

- 4.3** Volunteering is a legitimate activity that is supported and encouraged by the organisation and is not intended to be a substitute for paid employment. The role of volunteers complements but does not replace the role of paid staff.
- 4.4** Steps will be taken to ensure that paid staff, especially those directly involved in volunteer placements, are clear about the role of volunteers and that good working relationships are fostered between paid staff and volunteers.
- 4.5** Volunteers will not be utilised during times of industrial action to do the work of paid staff.
- 4.6** The volunteer role is a gift relationship, binding only in honour, trust and mutual understanding. No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, can be imposed on volunteers to attend, give or be set a minimum amount of time or carry the tasks provided. Likewise the organisation cannot be compelled to provide regular work, payment or other benefit for any activity undertaken.
- 4.7** Although volunteers offer time freely and willingly and without binding obligation, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged- both what the organisation expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of the organisation.

5 Recruitment and selection

- 5.1** The organisation is committed to equal opportunities and believes that volunteering should be open to all regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, ability, religion, political beliefs. The acceptance of volunteer assistance for a particular role is made on merit, the sole selection criterion being the individual's suitability to carry out agreed tasks.

- 5.2** The organisation implements a fair, effective and open system in the recruitment and selection of volunteers and treats all information collected in the process confidentially.
- 5.3** The organisation will have a designated volunteering officer who has overall responsibility for the management and welfare of the organisation's volunteers. Either the volunteering officer or designated officer who is a member of staff will be allocated to and responsible for the day-to-day guidance of each volunteer.
- 5.4** Volunteers have a clear and concise description of their role and tasks. These are established by the designated officer after discussions with the volunteer. Volunteers will be properly briefed about the activities to be undertaken and given all the necessary information to enable them to perform with confidence.

6 Training and development

- 6.1** All volunteers will be made aware of and have access to all relevant the organisation's policies including the volunteering policy, health and safety policy and the equal opportunities policy.
- 6.2** All volunteers will receive a copy of the organisation's volunteer policy.
- 6.3** On commencement of voluntary activity, volunteers will be given all the necessary information required to complete their role during an induction process.
- 6.4** The development of training and support for volunteers is a high priority for the organisation in order to equip them with the necessary information and skills to carry out their tasks.
- 6.5** All training offered to volunteers will be relevant to their role in order to equip volunteers with the information and skills they need.

6.6 Volunteers' training needs will be identified and training will be arranged and/or delivered by the designated officer.

6.7 Training on 'working with volunteers' will be available for staff and volunteers involved in volunteer management, supervision, support and training of volunteers.

7 Support and supervision

7.1 The organisation acknowledges the need for a clear, consistent organisational framework for voluntary involvement.

7.2 Each volunteer will have a designated member of staff to guide and advise them in their tasks. Volunteers will be informed of whom to approach for support and have regular access to that person.

7.3 The designated officer will support volunteers and give day-to-day help on any issue related to the voluntary work.

7.4 Regular supervision meetings will be available for volunteers to discuss any problems or issues that may arise.

7.5 The frequency, duration and format of this support and supervision is agreed between the volunteer and his/her designated officer.

8 Expenses

8.1 The organisation recognises that payments of expenses are important from an equal opportunities perspective and vital in ensuring that all individuals have access to voluntary opportunities.

8.2 The organisation's volunteers are able to claim reasonable out of pocket expenses, subject to the production of receipts as evidence of expenditure.

8.3 The organisation has a consistent approach to the reimbursement of expenditure

incurred by individuals upon the affairs of the organisation. The rates of reimbursement apply to volunteers, staff, board members and grant panel members and are those approved by the Inland Revenue.

8.4 The organisation will ensure that all volunteers are aware of the procedure for claiming expenses including all other information relating to this.

9 Conditions of service

9.1 The organisation's liability insurance policies include the activities of volunteers and liability towards them.

9.2 The organisation does not insure the personal possessions of volunteers against loss or damage.

9.3 The organisation recognises that volunteers may cease their involvement at any time. Exit interviews are offered to ascertain why a volunteer is leaving, share any learning points and establish whether they may want to be involved again in the future.

10 Security and confidentiality

10.1 The organisation will advise volunteers of the need for confidentiality where they have access to sensitive information.

10.2 The designated officer will hold a record of names and addresses of all registered volunteers for the purposes of security and health and safety.

10.3 There may be instances where additional information may be kept such as training undertaken or for the purpose of equal opportunities monitoring. These records can be seen by volunteers at any time.

10.4 This information and all other personal data is subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and will be treated in accordance with the organisation's data protection policy. Volunteers are informed of their rights, under data protection legislation, to have access to personal data

11 Settling differences

11.1 The organisation aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. The organisation seeks to ensure that volunteers' views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly, and aim for a positive and amicable solution based on the organisation's guidelines for settling differences.

11.2 The designated officer is responsible for handling problems regarding volunteer complaints or conduct and these should be reported to him/her. In the event of a problem, all relevant facts should be obtained and acted upon as quickly as possible. The organisation will endeavour to resolve the problem in an informal manner.

12 Rights and responsibilities

12.1 The organisation recognises the rights of volunteers to:

- know what is expected of them
- have clearly specified guidelines of support
- be shown appreciation
- have safe working conditions
- be insured
- know what their rights and responsibilities are if something goes wrong
- be paid expenses
- be trained
- be free from discrimination
- have the opportunity for personal development

• To ensure that they and all others working with and dealing with the organisation are free from discrimination on grounds of race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, political beliefs, religion, physical or mental disability, class, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital or parental status.

And in return it expects volunteers to:

- be reliable
- be honest
- respect confidentiality
- make the most of training and support opportunities
- carry out tasks in a way which reflects the aim and values of the organisation
- work within agreed guidelines and remits
- respect the work of the organisation and its members and not bring it into disrepute
- to comply with the organisation's health and safety policy
- to comply with the organisation's equal opportunities policy
- to comply with the organisation's data protection policy

Publication date: November 2005

Legal issues

Children and young people

Young volunteers

There are no age restrictions on children or young people volunteering although children under 16 years cannot participate in house to house fundraising without adult supervision. You will need to consider the following:

- Get written parental permission for volunteers under 18 years.
- Check that your insurance policy has no age restrictions. Change it if necessary.
- Produce an information sheet for parents and others, outlining your duty of care to young people.
- Work in groups with two or more adults present, with an appropriate balance of men and women.
- Get criminal records checks for staff and volunteers working unsupervised alongside children or young people.
- Ensure regular support and supervision.

Child protection policies

Organisations that involve, or are seeking to involve young volunteers are advised to have a child protection policy in place. This would cover:

- procedures to ensure the safety of children during day to day activities
- the recruitment and selection of adults working alongside young people and
- how complaints or concerns are expressed and dealt with.

The NSPCC Full Stop campaign includes resources which will assist the development of a child protection policy. (See below for contact details)

Protecting from harm

It is an offence for any organisation to offer employment involving regular contact with children under 18 years to anyone who has been convicted of certain specified offences, or included on lists of people considered unsuitable for such work, held by the Department for Employment and Schools and the Department of Health.

Specified offences include murder or manslaughter, rape, grievous bodily harm and a number of sexual offences involving children. It is also an offence for people convicted of such offences to apply for work with young people.

Your procedures should allow people to 'opt out' or 'deselect' themselves at any time during the recruitment and selection process.

Taking reasonable steps

Organisations are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure that unsuitable people are prevented from working with children. Here are some 'reasonable steps':

- Define the role, and assess the risks involved. What sort of person are you looking for?
- **Publicity**
Publicise the responsibilities and requirements of volunteers. If a criminal records check is needed, state this clearly on advertising material.
- **Application**
Give potential volunteers a copy of your child protection policy and your policy on involving people with criminal convictions, along with their application form.

• Declaration

Ask applicants to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be unsuitable to work with children and to declare any past criminal convictions or cases pending against them. Organisations should make it clear that such information will be dealt with in a confidential manner and will not be used to discriminate against applicants unfairly.

• Interview

Involve at least two representatives of the organisation in interviewing the volunteer. You should explore with the potential volunteer their reasons for wanting to do this work, their relevant skills and qualities and prior experience of work with children. Take the opportunity to highlight your child protection policy and ensure that the volunteer has the ability and commitment to meet the requirements of the policy.

• Identification

Obtain two forms of identification, e.g. birth certificate, passport, driving licence or utility bill.

• References

Get two references from people who are not family members. One should have first hand knowledge of the applicant's previous work with children, where applicable. You get more accurate information if you ask specific questions. In particular, referees should be asked to confirm that they have no concerns about the applicant working with children.

• Trial period

Include a trial period - the length of which should be stipulated at the time of appointment. During this period, keep a close eye on the work of the new volunteer and assess his/her ability in relation to working with your client group.

• Induction

This should include familiarisation with the child protection policy, introduction to staff, volunteers, children, parents, carers etc.

• Records

Details of the recruitment and selection procedure should be recorded. In particular, keep a note of any matters arising during the trial period and any training needs identified.

For more information:

WCVA Criminal Records Unit
Helpline 0870 241 6557
cru@wcva.org.uk

NSPCC Training and Consultancy
Unit 1 Cowbridge Court
60 Cowbridge Road West
Cardiff
CF5 5BS

training&consultancywales@nspcc.org.uk
www.nspcc.org.uk

Vulnerable adults

If you work with vulnerable adults either as volunteers or as clients, the 'reasonable steps' outlined above are applicable.

You will need to have a written policy on the protection of vulnerable adults, covering the basic points as outlined under Child protection policy above.

Older volunteers

There is no need for an upper age limit to volunteering. If your insurance company specifies an age limit, eg, for volunteer drivers, shop around to find a company that will cover older people.

Volunteers should be deployed on the basis of ability to perform a task, rather than on the basis of age. Some volunteer roles may need to be adapted to take account of reduced faculties or a decline in health or energy, to suit individual cases.

For more information:

Age Alliance Wales
Ty John Pathy
13/14 Neptune Court
Vanguard Way
Cardiff
CF24 5PJ

Tel: 029 2043 1538

Refugees and asylum seekers

Asylum seekers are prohibited from paid employment but they and family members are permitted to volunteer and to receive reimbursement for genuine out of pocket expenses. Care should be taken to ensure that the activity is genuinely voluntary and does not amount to employment or to job substitution.

People who have refugee status, or who have 'exceptional leave to remain', are permitted to do any type of work including voluntary work.

For more information:

Welsh Refugee Council
Phoenix House
389 Newport Road
Cardiff
CF24 1TP

Tel 029 2043 2971

Displaced People in Action (DPIA)

CSV House
Williams Way
Cardiff
CF10 5DY
Tel 029 2041 5700

Volunteers from outside the UK

There are no restrictions for people from the following countries:

Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland.

Many people arriving in the UK from elsewhere can only volunteer if they have permission to work. This is because the visa grants 'permission to do paid or unpaid work', and volunteering is seen to be part of unpaid work for immigration purposes. Some overseas students are unable to work, others are limited to 20 hours in term time.

The only - and welcome - exception to this rule is in the case of asylum seekers, who are not allowed to do paid or unpaid work, but who can volunteer.

For more information:

Home Office Immigration and Nationality Directorate www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk

People claiming Job Seeker's Allowance

Claimants are permitted to volunteer provided that they are:

- actively seeking work
- available for a job interview at 48 hours' notice
- available for work with one week's notice
- easy to contact whilst volunteering
- receiving out of pocket expenses only

Volunteers should be advised to inform Jobcentre Plus about their volunteer work. It can be helpful to provide volunteers with a letter confirming the last four of the above points.

Payment for expenses can be given in advance. Receipts, tickets etc should be kept by the organisation as evidence of expenditure and any unspent portion of the expenses advanced should be returned or deducted from a future payment.

For more information:

The Department for Work and Pensions Leaflet JSAL7 promotes volunteering to JSA claimants and briefly summarises JSA rules.

People claiming Incapacity Benefit

Some unpaid work might raise questions about a volunteer's incapacity. Check with the local Benefit Agency before commencing any voluntary work. It may be helpful to provide a letter explaining the nature of the work undertaken, underlining the flexibility of volunteering and the ability of the organisation to accommodate to the specific needs of the individual.

It may also be useful to get a letter, with the volunteer's permission, from a doctor, confirming that volunteering will be good for the volunteer.

Ask the Benefits office for a letter confirming that benefits will not be affected by volunteering.

People with a criminal record

Having a criminal conviction does not automatically preclude a person from volunteering. Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, some convictions are considered to be 'spent' after a certain period of time, after which they should not normally be considered.

Information about obtaining criminal records checks, eg for volunteers whose roles involve substantial contact with children or vulnerable adults is included in Chapter 6. Volunteers seeking this kind of work are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act and all previous convictions need to be taken into consideration when considering their suitability for the role.

The decision whether or not to engage a volunteer with a history of criminal conviction will need to be made on the basis of:

- how relevant is the conviction to the volunteer's intended role
- how serious an offence and how long ago it occurred
- the background to the offence, and whether there is evidence of a pattern of offending
- the degree of supervision that will be given
- in the light of all information about the volunteer and the intended role - how great a risk is involved.

In cases of uncertainty, further information can be obtained by discussion with the prospective volunteer and by contacting relevant professional workers (eg, a probation officer). Could the volunteer role be adapted, or alternatives found?

Organisations are advised to have a clear policy about involving volunteers with criminal convictions - including how confidentiality is preserved and who makes the decision in cases which are not straight forward.

For more information:

WCVA Criminal Records Unit
Helpline 0870 241 6557
cru@wcva.org.uk

The Criminal Records Bureau website
www.crb.gov.uk

Appendix 3

People with mental or physical disabilities

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 gives guidance on the measures that employers are expected to take to accommodate people with disabilities. Whilst the law does not cover volunteering, this provides a basis for good practise.

Ensure that adequate support is given and that out of pocket expenses are paid. Treat people on the basis of expressed needs, rather than on the basis of labels or assumptions.

Data Protection

For more information:

Information Commissioners Office
2 Alexandra Gate
Ffordd Pengam
Cardiff
CF24 2SA

029 2089 4929

email: wales@ico.gsi.gov.uk

www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk

*For other information and advice:
WCVA Helpdesk 0870 607 1666*

The Investing in Volunteers Standard

Extracts from the standard which are relevant to volunteer recruitment are reproduced below. The standard includes ten key indicators and a total of 55 different good practice areas.

For more information visit the website www.investinginvolunteers.org.uk

Indicator no 1: 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

- 1.1** The organisation has a written policy on volunteer involvement, based on equal opportunities principles, which sets out the procedures for recruiting, supporting and protecting volunteers.
- 1.2** Where the organisation has policies that relate to the involvement of human resources (eg, equal opportunities, health & safety, confidentiality, discipline, grievance procedures, etc.) volunteers should either be included or should have their own equivalent policy.
- 1.3** The organisation adopts appropriate procedures for regularly reviewing the volunteering policy and its implementation.
- 1.4** People at all levels of the organisation (such as management committee, management, staff, volunteers, clients, supporters) have been informed of, and can articulate the organisation's reasons for involving volunteers.

Indicator no 3: The organisation is open to involving volunteers who reflect the diversity of the local community, in accordance with the organisation's stated aims, and operates procedures to facilitate this.

- 3.1** Information about the organisation and ways in which volunteers can be involved is made as widely available as possible.
- 3.2** Analysis of the diversity of the local community compared to the volunteer team is undertaken.
- 3.3** Staff and volunteers are open to diversity among co-workers.
- 3.4** Images and/or descriptions of the organisation reflect the diversity of the local community, and are appropriate to the objectives of the organisation.
- 3.5** The organisation is open to involving volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities, and commits the necessary resources.

Indicator no 4: The organisation develops appropriate roles for volunteers in line with its aims and objectives, and which are of value to the volunteers and create an environment where they can develop.

- 4.1 A 'task description' is drawn up for each voluntary role.
- 4.2 The organisation sets out the necessary skills, attitude, experience and availability needed to do the work.
- 4.3 If feasible, a variety of tasks is available which will attract a range of people, while still meeting the needs and aims of the organisation.
- 4.4 Where possible, tasks are adapted to suit the needs and interests of individual volunteers

Indicator no 5: The organisation is committed to ensuring that, as far as possible, volunteers are protected from physical, financial and emotional harm arising from volunteering.

- 5.1 An assessment of potential risk to volunteers is conducted when designing volunteer roles.
- 5.2 Appropriate insurance guidelines and cover for volunteers are set up.
- 5.3 There is a clear policy on the reimbursement of legally allowable expenses which is rooted in the organisational ethos, and which takes account of the organisation's financial situation.

Indicator no 6: The organisation is committed to using fair, efficient and consistent recruitment procedures for all potential volunteers

- 6.1 Selection procedures are standardised, appropriate to the volunteer role(s) and include agreed timescales.
- 6.2 People interested in volunteering are provided with clear information about:
 - the type of voluntary work available
 - the application and selection process
 - whether there is any compulsory training
- 6.3 At some stage during the recruitment, potential volunteers are given:
 - a summary of the organisation's expectations of volunteers
 - what volunteers can expect from the organisation
- 6.4 The organisation:
 - has clear criteria in terms of skills and abilities needed against which it assesses volunteers' suitability for particular roles
 - asks only for information needed in order to make a placement and this is recorded in a consistent manner
- 6.5 Feedback is given to volunteers whose applications are turned down.
- 6.6 At some point in the recruitment procedure time is given to explore the individual's reasons for volunteering.
- 6.7 Where appropriate, potential volunteers are given further opportunities to find out more about the voluntary work before committing themselves.

Indicator no 7: The organisation takes a considered approach to taking up references and official checks which is consistent and equitable for all volunteers, bearing in mind the nature of the work.

- 7.1 The organisation's procedures for taking up references is based on the nature of the organisation's work and the roles volunteers will be undertaking.
- 7.2 The organisation's procedures for taking up references are uniform for all prospective volunteers applying for a particular role.
- 7.3 The organisation's approach to the use of official checks takes into account the relevant Government guidelines, and the roles in which volunteers will be placed.
- 7.4 The organisation has considered which types of convictions/disciplinary actions may or may not be relevant to the voluntary work being undertaken.

Appendix 4

Managing Volunteers - National Occupational Standards

The Managing Volunteers National Occupational Standards comprise 40 performance standards covering six practice areas. The knowledge, understanding and skill required to meet each of the standards is outlined.

The extracts below relate to the recruitment of volunteers. To see the full document, visit www.voluntarysectorskills.org.uk.

B1.1 Promote volunteering to key people in your organisation

To perform to the standard you need to:

- 1 identify the role of volunteers within your organisation's strategies and plans
- 2 communicate the role of volunteers and the contribution they can make to the organisation's goals to key people in your organisation in ways that gain their understanding, enthusiasm and support
- 3 identify, quantify and communicate the contribution that volunteers make to your organisation's goals

B1.2 Help members of your organisation support volunteers

To perform to the standard you need to:

- 1 help members of your organisation
 - understand their attitudes to volunteers and the reasons for these attitudes
 - think creatively about how volunteers can make effective contributions.
 - adopt attitudes that support volunteers in making effective contributions
- 2 communicate clearly to members of your organisation
 - the roles and responsibilities of volunteers
 - their roles and responsibilities in supporting volunteers

- 3 provide appropriate opportunities for members of your organisation to develop the competences they need to support volunteers effectively
- 4 encourage behaviour that helps and discourage behaviour that hinders volunteers in making effective contributions

B1.3 Identify and reduce barriers to volunteering in your organisation

To perform to the standard you need to:

- 1 monitor the impact of your organisation's structures, policies and practices on volunteering
- 2 monitor the level of support volunteers receive from members of your organisation
- 3 analyse monitoring information to identify and prioritise any issues that prevent volunteers from making their full contribution
- 4 work with relevant people to identify and recommend improvements to your organisation's structures, policies or practices or the support volunteers receive to ensure volunteers are able to make their full contribution

B2.1 Promote volunteering to potential volunteers

To perform to the standard you need to:

- 1 involve relevant people and use creative methods to identify:
 - the types of people who may wish to volunteer
 - ways of accessing potential volunteers
 - the key motivations people may have for wishing to volunteer
- 2 use appropriate cost and time-effective communication methods to access groups of potential volunteers
- 3 help potential volunteers clearly to understand:
 - the importance of volunteering in meeting the organisation's goals
 - how people with diverse abilities, styles and motivations can make valuable contributions as volunteers
 - the volunteering opportunities available and what is involved
 - the commitment they need to make as volunteers
 - the potential benefits of volunteering and how volunteering can meet their needs and expectations
- 4 provide factual evidence to illustrate how volunteers have contributed in the past and how they have benefited personally from doing so
- 5 provide opportunities for people to investigate volunteering opportunities further and make a commitment to becoming a volunteer
- 6 refer people to other volunteering organisations where appropriate
- 7 evaluate and analyse the response to your promotional activities and use this information to improve future activities

C1.1 Select advertising media to recruit volunteers

To perform to the standard you need to:

- 1 identify advertising media that are appropriate for reaching diverse groups of potential volunteers
- 2 identify the budget available for recruiting volunteers and select the most appropriate advertising media in order to reach potential volunteers cost-effectively within the budget
- 3 select advertising media that comply with relevant legislation and your organisation's policies
- 4 get help from competent specialists to identify and select appropriate advertising media where necessary
- 5 monitor and evaluate the responses from different advertising media and use this information to improve your selection of media in the future

C1.2 Draw up and place advertisements to recruit volunteers

To perform to the standard you need to:

- 1 draw up clear, concise and interesting advertisements that cover the following items, as appropriate:
 - your organisation's goals and the importance of volunteering in achieving them
 - the volunteering opportunities available
 - the roles and activities involved
 - the knowledge, skills, experience and personal qualities required
 - the geographical location(s) of the volunteering opportunities
 - the time commitment required of the volunteers
 - the potential benefits of the volunteering opportunities for volunteers

- what people have to do to apply to become a volunteer
- what people have to do if they want further information

- take account of any special needs of potential volunteers when drafting advertisements
- check that advertisements comply with relevant legislation and your organisation's policies
- place advertisements in the sections of advertising media that are most likely to reach potential volunteers
- get help from competent specialists to draft and place advertisements, where necessary
- ensure systems are in place to deal with responses and any queries from advertisements and to help respondents decide whether to volunteer
- monitor and evaluate the responses to different types of advertisements and use this information to improve your drafting of advertisements in the future

C2.1 Help to identify the need for volunteers

To perform to the standard you need to:

- identify roles in which volunteers could make an effective contribution to the organisation's goals

identify how volunteer roles complement and add value to the work of other volunteers/paid staff
- identify the potential benefits of volunteer roles to volunteers
- help to identify the knowledge, skills, experience and personal qualities required for volunteer roles

C2.2 Discuss volunteer roles with volunteers and help to assess their suitability

To perform to the standard you need to:

- help potential volunteers clearly to understand:
 - the volunteer roles you are recruiting for and the activities involved
 - how the volunteer roles contribute to your organisation's goals
 - the commitment they would need to make
- help potential volunteers to articulate their motivations for volunteering and understand how volunteer roles could meet their needs and expectations
- provide sufficient information to potential volunteers to allow them to assess their suitability for volunteer roles and whether the roles will meet their needs and expectations
- help to assess potential volunteers' knowledge, skills, experience and personal qualities
- recommend roles for potential volunteers that provide a good fit with their knowledge, skills, experience and personal qualities and meet their needs and expectations
- record information accurately and treat all information confidentially

C3.1 Specify volunteer roles and the knowledge, skills and experience required

To perform to the standard you need to:

- identify the contributions that volunteers can make to your organisation's goals
- identify roles that are suitable for volunteers with a diverse range of abilities, styles and motivations
- identify the potential benefits of roles to volunteers

- ensure that roles for volunteers do not undermine or substitute the work of paid staff and vice versa
- prepare role descriptions for proposed volunteer roles that clearly
 - identify the role's purpose, responsibilities and requirements and working relationships
 - define the limits of the volunteer's role
- prepare person specifications for proposed volunteer roles that clearly identify the knowledge, skills, experience and personal qualities required
- ensure that role descriptions and person specifications comply with relevant legislation and organisational policies

C3.2 Assess with volunteers their suitability for volunteer roles

To perform to the standard you need to:

- help potential volunteers clearly to understand
 - the volunteer roles you are recruiting for and the activities involved
 - how the volunteer roles contribute to your organisation's goals
 - the commitment they would need to make
- help potential volunteers to articulate their motivations for volunteering and understand how volunteer roles could meet their needs and expectations
- provide sufficient information to potential volunteers to allow them to assess their suitability for specific volunteer roles, whether the roles will meet their needs and expectations and what support and supervision they may require
- assess potential volunteers' experience and the extent to which they possess the knowledge, skills and personal qualities required for the role

- use assessment methods that enable you to identify suitable volunteers based on fair and clearly-stated criteria
- take up references to validate your assessment of potential volunteers' knowledge, skills and personal qualities where appropriate
- check potential volunteers' qualifications, where these are requirements for the volunteer role
- check to see whether potential volunteers have criminal records if they will be working with children, vulnerable adults or other people at risk
- decide whether potential volunteers are suitable for volunteer roles based on a fair and accurate assessment of sufficient evidence and inform them promptly of your decision
- provide appropriate feedback to potential volunteers who are unsuitable for a specific role and refer them to alternative volunteering opportunities where possible

C3.3 Place volunteers

To perform to the standard you need to:

- involve relevant people appropriately in matching volunteers to suitable volunteer placements
- provide fair and equal access to volunteering opportunities to all volunteers with the appropriate knowledge, skills, experience and personal qualities
- place volunteers in roles that provide a good fit with their knowledge, skills, experience and personal qualities and meet their needs and expectations
- refer volunteers to alternative volunteering opportunities if those immediately available are not suitable

C3.4 Enter into volunteering agreements with volunteers

To perform to the standard you need to:

- 1 enter into volunteering agreements that are appropriate to the level of risk involved in the volunteer role and the level of commitment being made by the volunteer
- 2 ensure volunteering agreements clearly state:
 - the volunteer role and the activities involved
 - the code of conduct expected of volunteers
 - the training, support and supervision the volunteer can expect from your organisation
 - the out-of-pocket expenses that will be reimbursed by your organisation
 - any organisational policies that are relevant to the volunteer role
- 3 inform relevant people promptly about the outcome of the recruitment process
- 4 record information accurately and treat all information confidentially
- 5 comply with legal requirements and organisational policy throughout the recruitment process