

Module 1: Introduction to Management of Volunteers

This module will give you insight into the principles behind good practice in managing volunteers and how you can develop yourself in the role of manager of volunteers. Managing volunteers can be different to managing paid staff. Even if you are an experienced manager, there are issues to do with working with volunteers that you may want to reflect on.

Learning Outcomes:

- Be able to identify key principles and processes involved in managing, leading and motivating volunteers
- Understand the principles that underpin Continuing Professional Development

What is a volunteer?

Volunteers are especially prevalent in the voluntary and community sector where they play a variety of roles from supporting environmental projects to helping combat isolation. A volunteer is someone who:

- Gives of their time for no financial gain.
- Gives of their time and energy to partake in activities that benefit society, the community, the environment, or an individual outside of their immediate family.
- Gives of their time freely and by choice.

So, as you can see, volunteering is primarily guided by three characteristics:

- The absence of financial gain
- Carrying out activities that benefit others
- Choice.

Why do organisations choose to use or not use volunteers?

Using volunteers is not a decision that should be taken lightly. There should be a commitment from all levels of the organisation – staff, senior management, and trustees. The use of volunteers will have an impact on how the organisation works and, indeed, different organisations will have different approaches to the involvement of volunteers. As a manager of volunteers, you will be tasked with managing volunteers on a day-to-day basis, but you need to understand your organisation's volunteer policy and why your organisation is using volunteers. It is also useful to consider why an organisation might not use volunteers.

An organisation may use volunteers because:

- It cannot meet its organisational objectives with its paid staff.
- It believes that volunteer contributions can help the organisation achieve its objectives and increase the capacity of the organisation.
- It has been set up as an organisation that helps beneficiaries by using volunteers.
- It has trustees (trustees will always be volunteers).
- It may be a volunteer-led organisation with no paid staff.

An organisation may not use volunteers because:

- It is already meeting organisational objectives with its paid staff.
- It does not have the capacity to manage volunteers effectively.
- It is unaware that volunteer contributions can help the organisation achieve its objectives.

Why do people volunteer?

In order for us to best understand how to manage volunteers, we need to understand the motivations behind volunteering and allow potential volunteers the opportunity to express their key motivations. With this knowledge, we can match people to volunteering opportunities more effectively and appropriately and better support them in their placements. Doing so respects the volunteers, helps retain them, and ensures that their contributions are of value to the organisation.

Below are examples of the types of people that typically volunteer:

- Unemployed people
- Older people
- Those who want to 'give something back' (these are long-term volunteers – people who always volunteer)
- Those who want to do a specific task (short-term volunteers)
- Someone who has taken a break from work to, for example, have children, and wants to gain skills/confidence to re-enter the workplace (transitional volunteers)
- Professional such as accountants/solicitors who want to give their time to certain groups (professional volunteers)
- Carers
- People who are unable to work as a result of health problems.

Can you add any more to this list? As you will see, there is not one set profile of a volunteer – they come from a diverse range of backgrounds and have diverse reasons for volunteering. Volunteering is no longer done solely by those wishing to give of their time for an altruistic purpose, but it now includes those who wish to use the experience to help them move into employment and employed people who volunteer as part of a corporate social responsibility programme.

What is management?

We can't talk about managing volunteers without talking about management. Similarly, it is difficult to talk about management without talking about leadership as well. As such, we will consider the concepts of both leadership and management and what they involve.

One of the UK's leading professional management organisations, The Chartered Management Institute, defines management as being:

Management

"The efficient and effective use of resources to achieve results with, and through, the efforts of other people."

In her book, *Just About Managing*, Sandy Adirondack says:

Leadership

"Leadership, however, is rooted in individuals rather than in organizational structures. It cannot be written into procedures or job descriptions. It refers to an ability to inspire others, to get others to take decisions or carry out work not because they have to but because they want to."

From these two quotes we can see that management involves looking after resources whilst leadership is more to do with motivating, providing direction and taking an organisation forward. The question, though, is how does all of this relate to the role of a manager of volunteers?

What is involved in the management of volunteers?

Managers of volunteers across the world have different responsibilities and work with volunteers in different ways, but we can look at some general principles and activities.

Effective volunteer management requires a planned and organised process similar to that required for any organisational project or effort. It involves commitment from all levels of an organisation – from trustees, senior management, all staff, and all volunteers. It requires policies, processes, procedures, systems and structures that are understood by all.

The main organisational elements that relate to volunteering include:

1. Development and evaluation of strategies and policies that support volunteering
2. Promotion of volunteering
3. Recruitment, placement and induction of volunteers
4. Management and development of volunteers
5. Management of self, relationships and responsibilities
6. Providing support to volunteers

As a manager of volunteers who manages volunteers on a day-to-day basis, you will be mostly involved with points 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. As such, these areas will be discussed in more detail below.

Promotion of Volunteering

This involves:

- Using effective communication methods
- Helping volunteers understand the nature of volunteering and commitment needed
- Providing opportunities for people to investigate opportunities
- Advertising for volunteers.

Recruitment, Placement and Induction of Volunteers

This involves:

- Specifying volunteer roles
- Recruiting volunteers
- Working with volunteers to assess their suitability for the roles
- Entering into volunteering agreements
- Inducting volunteers.

Management and Development of Volunteers

This involves:

- Leading and motivating volunteers
- Supporting and supervising volunteers
- Supporting the development of volunteers' knowledge, skills and competence

- Enabling learning through demonstrations and instruction and group learning
- Maintaining records of volunteers
- Managing volunteer expenses
- Helping address problems affecting volunteers.

Management of Self, Relationships and Responsibilities

This involves:

- Managing and continuously developing your own capacity for managing volunteers
- Managing and continuously developing others’ capacity for managing volunteers
- Developing productive working relationships
- Contributing to the maintenance of a healthy and safe working environment.

Does your work involve any of the above responsibilities?

Task: Complete the self assessment below to analyse what your role involves. Is there anything that you are not doing that you could be doing to improve the way you work with volunteers?

Input your responses into the table below (N.B. this task is not compulsory):

Area	Do You:	Yes/No	Comments
Promote volunteering to potential volunteers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Using effective communication methods 2. Helping volunteers understand the nature of volunteering and commitment needed 3. Providing opportunities for people to investigate opportunities 4. Advertising for volunteers. 		

Recruitment, placement and induction of volunteers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Specifying volunteer roles 2. Recruiting volunteers 3. Working with volunteers to assess their suitability for the roles 4. Entering into volunteering agreements 5. Inducting volunteers. 		
Management and Development of Volunteers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leading and motivating volunteers 2. Supporting and supervising volunteers 3. Supporting the development of volunteers' knowledge, skills and competence 4. Enabling learning through demonstrations and instruction and group learning 5. Maintaining records of volunteers 6. Managing volunteer expenses 7. Helping address problems affecting volunteers 		
Management of self, relationships and responsibilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Managing and continuously developing your own capacity for managing volunteers 2. Managing and continuously developing others' capacity for managing volunteers 3. Developing productive working relationships 4. Contributing to the maintenance of a healthy and safe working environment. 		

Doing all of the above will give you a good basis for leading and motivating volunteers and being an effective manager of volunteers.

Now think about the skills, experience, knowledge, and personal qualities you need to be a good manager of volunteers, bearing in mind that some of these will be the generic qualities of a manager and others may be specific to the management of volunteers.

The following are some suggestions. Do you agree with these suggestions? Can you think of other relevant skills and experience?

Skills Needed	Experience Needed
Setting objectives Planning Communicating Time management Stress management Prioritising Involving others Risk management Information management Leadership Balancing competing needs and interests	Working with others Managing others Working in the voluntary sector
Knowledge Needed	Personal Qualities Needed
Diversity and equality Human resource management Legislation Resource management Information and knowledge management Communication	Patience Empathy Ethical mindset Friendly Good listener

Continuing Professional Development

Having looked at the role of a manager and, more specifically, manager of volunteers, and having identified the skills, experience, knowledge and personal qualities needed to be an effective manager, we are now going to look at how we can keep these skills, experience and knowledge up to date and enhance personal qualities. In other words, we are going to look at Continuing Professional Development; this is often referred to as CPD.

The Chartered Management Institute defines Continuing Professional Development as being “about planned self-development which embraces both personal and professional aims and is intended to impact on performance.” As such, the CMI points out that the ‘P’ in CPD could stand for ‘Personal’ or ‘Performance’ depending on how that learning is applied.

A personal/professional development plan results from establishing what you want to achieve or where you want to go in the short or long-term, and identifying the need for enhanced skills, knowledge or competence.

In an ever changing and ever more challenging world, we can no longer rely on initial training to carry us through employment. It becomes increasingly more important to think about whether our current skills are sufficient to achieve our personal and work objectives in the foreseeable future. If there are gaps, then we can begin to do something to address those gaps and possibly consider any future requirements of our work roles.

From a knowledge point of view, it is important to stay up-to-date with changes in legislation and regulations affecting the sector in which we work. It is often also a

requirement of different occupations or professional bodies to complete a certain amount of CPD each year. To take advantage of the benefits of changes in technology we need to learn new skills and acquire knowledge about such changes.

Often managers of volunteers have become so by chance and have not had experience of specific training in volunteer management. Also, it is important to continuously develop knowledge, skills and competence in managing volunteers.

It is important that you continuously reflect on your own knowledge and skills, comparing these with the demands of your job and identifying ways you can continue to grow. This involves seeking honest feedback from other people – which could be both positive and negative – and accepting criticism in a constructive way. It should also involve your taking part in a range of development activities.

Possible development opportunities include:

- Development opportunities and resources in your organisation
- External courses
- Coaching and mentoring
- Conferences and seminars
- Carrying out personal research
- Placements and secondments
- Work shadowing
- Reading literature
- Subscribing to websites that cover management and volunteer issues as well as other issues of interest
- Arranging team days where you can share knowledge
- E-learning
- Distance learning
- Learning through reflection and evaluation
- Subscribing to professional magazines.

What makes good CPD?

In order for CPD to have the most benefit to the person and the organisation, it should be carried out in line with:

- Organisational context
- The vision and objectives of your organisation
- Organisational policy and procedures in terms of personal development
- Team/department context
- Team/departmental development needs
- Personal work objectives
- Requirements of your work role both now and in the future

- The limits of your responsibilities
- Your career and personal goals and values
- Industry/sector requirements for Continuing Personal and Professional Development
- Set requirements for the development or maintenance of knowledge, skills and understanding.

Good CPD should also:

- Increase self confidence, self awareness and knowledge
- Be ongoing as a means of continuous improvement
- Be varied
- Be recorded and evaluated.

As a manager of volunteers, you need to have a good understanding of yourself and the impact – both practical and emotional – that you have on others. This applies to volunteers as well as the other people you work with. This knowledge is key to helping you manage your relationships, your work and your own development. You must also be good at managing your time effectively and flexible in responding to change.

It is important to consider those values that drive you as these determine the aspects of a job or career that provide the most motivation and fulfilment for you. Understanding these values can help you make career and work choices that are right for you.

Consider how your values relate to your work role and professional development. They may give you an indication of what areas you would like to develop from a personal or professional point of view.

Learning Styles

When considering your own learning and development needs, you may like to think about the ways that you prefer to learn. We all learn in different ways and there are myriad theories about this. You may like to investigate some of these for yourself. Understanding the methods of learning that work the best for us helps us to choose the most suitable method for self development. In reality we probably use a range of approaches to learning, relying mainly on one or two. This will also apply to your work with volunteers and we will discuss the importance of this in Module 6.

For more information on learning styles, see the Learning Styles document located in the Learning Zone.

So what do you think your own development needs are? What would you put on a development plan? From whom do you get feedback? Once you have successfully identified your development needs you will be ready to start formalising these in a development plan.

It is useful to consider some key features of a personal and professional development plan. Here are some suggestions as to what makes up a good plan. The plan should:

- Be discussed with those that you report to and it should be approved by them
- Be consistent with your identified needs
- Set objectives which are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound)
- Include learning activities that will address identified gaps in your knowledge, understanding and skills
- Describe any resources that are required, including time, finance or support
- Be realistic and achievable in terms of your potential and circumstances
- Record activities undertaken
- Be regularly reviewed and updated
- Be a live document that helps you to guide your learning
- Reflect priorities identified earlier.

Now you might want to think of your development needs as a manager of volunteers and complete a CPD Plan. You will find a CPD Plan template located in the Learning Zone.