WHY INVOLVE VOLUNTEERS IN YOUR ORGANISATION?

There are many reasons why volunteers can add value to your organisation:

- **Volunteers can contribute a variety of skills, experience and enthusiasm, which is particularly valuable for smaller organisations.**

- **Volunteers can help your organisation to reach more people, or offer more support or services to your users.**

- **Volunteers can raise awareness of your organisation and help to promote what you do.**

- **Volunteers can help to involve more diverse groups of people and encourage a greater sense of local commitment to your organisation.**

- **Volunteers can contribute a range of new ideas and views.**

- **Involving volunteers in your organisation may help attract funding.**

And providing volunteer opportunities helps people connect with others, learn new skills and gain confidence. It often helps them find routes to employment and can improve health and wellbeing too. So, investing in volunteers can add credibility to your organisation.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE HEALTH CHECK FOR VOLUNTEER-INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS

The Health Check for Volunteer-Involving Organisations considers the extent to which your volunteer roles support the overall purpose and direction of your organisation and involve volunteers in meaningful ways that reflect their abilities and needs. It also considers whether you allocate resources to volunteer involvement/development.

PLANNING TO INVOLVE VOLUNTEERS

Planning how you will involve volunteers in your organisation will ensure that you are able to make both the human and financial resources available to support your volunteers. Ideally, your planning should consider the entire volunteer management cycle and what might be required at each stage.

The first step in planning for volunteer involvement is considering how volunteers can add value to your organisation and the community you serve. Be clear about your reasons for wanting to involve volunteers and how and why volunteers will contribute to the overall aims and objectives of your organisation. Think about:

- What you are doing now and what you could do more of if you had the resources.
- What additional services your service users would like to see.
- Whether you are providing a range of opportunities to attract a diverse group of people.
- Whether your volunteering roles can be done by any willing helper or whether they require people with specific skills and experience.
- Whether there are opportunities available for groups as well as individuals.
- Whether there might be any roles for young volunteers or youth groups.

Define the roles and responsibilities that your volunteers will take on. By identifying the tasks you need completing, you will be more precise in informing the scope of your volunteering roles. Some roles may be internally focused, such as office administration support, or externally focused, such as direct client support. Volunteer involvement can be an important part of meeting funding, grant and sponsorship agreements so spending some time during the planning stage can be important to your organisation's strategic and operational objectives.

When considering your volunteer roles, don't create roles that may be too complex or time-consuming. Many people would love to volunteer but may struggle to fit a major volunteering commitment into their lives due to family or work priorities. Consider whether the role can be broken down into smaller tasks to suit part-time or short-term volunteers. Small volunteering tasks could suit someone who can only help out now and again or who may need to build confidence in their abilities, and could introduce a more diverse range of volunteers into the organisation.

Think about how often you may need tasks to be carried out. Some jobs may only need to be done once a year, some might not need the same person to do them every week, and some might be suitable for doing online from home outside usual office hours.

Consider what your organisation can offer to volunteers and what might make your organisation stand out from others as an attractive place to volunteer. For example:

- the opportunity to learn new skills or use existing skills

- the chance to meet new people

- provision of training opportunities and the chance to develop their CV

- the chance to make a real difference

- opportunities that give a sense of satisfaction;

- providing an opportunity to try out something that they may want to do as a career

- support to build confidence

Make sure that you have enough resources to support volunteers. Ensure that trustees, managers, staff and service users understand why your volunteers are there, and appreciate what they bring.

PAID VERSUS UNPAID WORK

In considering whether a role is suitable for a volunteer, you should take into account whether:

- There is a high level of responsibility associated with the role.

- The role is of key significance to your organisation.

- There are significant obligations associated with the role.

- The role will be carried out over a long period of time.

If any of the above apply, you may wish to consider creating a paid role. Volunteer roles should always be substantially different to the paid roles within the organisation.