GOOD PRACTICE IN VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT
PART ONE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to part one of this course on good practice in volunteer management. In this section we’ll look at what good volunteer management is.

Let’s explore this from two angles, from the perspective of the volunteer and from the perspective of the organisation.

First let’s think about what a good volunteering experience would be from the perspective of the volunteer.

If you have ever volunteered or if you currently volunteer, what would a great volunteering experience feel like for you?

Some factors which could affect your experience might be:

1. How suited you feel you are to the volunteer role you will be taking on.
2. Whether you are supported to settle into the organisation, for example: being given an explanation of who you will be helping, being shown around where you will be volunteering and introduced to other staff and volunteers, understanding health and safety procedures and how to claim volunteer-related expenses without any fuss.
3. Having a regular named contact who you can go to for support.
4. Whether there is the possibility of training to support you in your role and help you develop.
5. The level of flexibility the organisation shows in terms of their ability to accommodate your other commitments, such as child care or a paid job.

These considerations are what we have identified as some of the crucial basics of a good volunteering experience. This means that these factors should also be at the heart of good volunteer management.

Let’s look at what makes a good volunteer manager in a bit more detail – these are five things that a good volunteer manager may do to make their volunteers’ experience positive and welcoming.
1. Clear roles

Recruitment actually starts with how volunteer roles are created and written. How well the volunteer understands the volunteer role on offer will depend on how clearly it has been written.

Well written role descriptions that outline the purpose of the role, how it supports the work of a team or organisation and the associated tasks, will make it easier for the volunteer to decide whether this is the right role for them.

2. A good induction

What would you consider important in terms of an induction? If you are volunteering with an organisation or changing roles within an organisation, knowing the team you’ll be in and being given a tour of the volunteering site will help you to feel empowered. This will make a big difference in how you interact with others and in your understanding of the work.

It is also the responsibility of the organisation to ensure that their volunteers receive a formal health and safety induction. For example if there were a fire, volunteers, just like staff, will need to know fire exits and assembly points.

If you are not operating in a building or perhaps where fire could be a high risk, there will be other health and safety considerations and it would be necessary to carry out a health and safety risk assessment to identify the risk and ensure that your volunteers are made aware of them and know what action to take should they arise.

Organisations have a legal duty on them to take responsibility for health and safety and this includes volunteers.

3. A named contact for support

Volunteers will be clearer about what they are being asked to do if they have a regular named contact they can go to for support. This will also help with motivation and help them enjoy volunteering with you.

From the point of view of the organisation, if you are managing more than a few volunteers, this will help in how you plan and organise the work and give you clearer oversight into progress or where further support to volunteer efforts may be needed. Which brings us nicely onto the next point...
4. Opportunities for training and development

Volunteers may be seeking to develop new skills or knowledge or re-develop existing skills or knowledge. They may volunteer with you because they wish to make a career shift or try out something new.

If you are able to offer them training or support to deliver their volunteering role more effectively, this too will have a positive bearing on their experience with you. There is nothing wrong with offering volunteers training or development to further their learning so they can better apply themselves to a volunteering role if the learning they will gain is relevant to their role. A volunteer will feel better motivated if by giving their time to you, you are able to develop their potential.

5. Understanding motivations and offering flexibility

People of all ages volunteer for all sorts of reasons, and some are very specific to a person’s lifestyle and individual circumstances. The level of flexibility an organisation shows their volunteers, whether to accommodate caring responsibilities or even other volunteering, is not only considerate, it shows that your organisation is well set up to cope with a flow of volunteers coming in and out of it.

Volunteers may leave or find their way back to you but there should not be any tone of obligation from the organisation. Being flexible and responsive to your volunteers will avoid guilt tripping them into staying with you if their needs have changed. There are also other risks involved with this, such as creating a sense of duty on the part of the volunteer which could potentially be very damaging for your relationship with the volunteer and your organisation’s reputation.

So in this section we have identified five ways to create a positive volunteering experience from an organisational perspective and we have asked you to consider this thinking about what would matter to you if you were a volunteer.

To help us reflect on how well we are doing and identify areas for improvement in our volunteer management, quality frameworks can help to support the development of good practice.

Investing in Volunteers is the UK wide quality framework for good practice in volunteer management. Over 800 organisations have achieved this quality accreditation throughout the UK, ranging from small volunteer-led community groups to large national charities with local branches.
that have thousands of volunteers. Volunteer-involving organisations developed nine indicators to demonstrate volunteer management good practice.

Let’s look at the first indicator:

An organisation must demonstrate commitment to the involvement of volunteers, and recognition throughout the organisation that volunteering is a two way process.

Think about what you have or do within your organisation in terms of policies, procedures or practice that could show this.

That’s it for part one. We’ve looked at:

1. creating well written roles, which means being clear about what the role is and what the role isn’t
2. the importance of induction and the legal obligation to take responsibility for making sure your volunteers are adhering to health and safety requirements
3. having a named, regular contact for your volunteers so that they know who to go to if they need to change their volunteering times or if they wish to read an organisational policy, for example, data protection
4. offering development through one-to-ones, training or other ways to learn – to help volunteers carry out their role well and to greater effect
5. being flexible and responsive if volunteers have other commitments and cannot necessarily fit in with your needs; showing a willingness to adapt to their needs.

Join us for part two of good practice in volunteer management, where we’ll look at the practical skills which a good volunteer manager needs.