Managing and Developing Volunteers

Volunteers should be seen as part of the team and have the same rights and responsibilities as paid staff members.

Remember
- Treat volunteers as professionals.
- Integrate them fully into the team on equal terms with paid staff.
- Give them the opportunity for annual performance reviews.
- Value their contribution and recognise it.
- Say thank you!

An organisation that develops its staff and volunteers, builds on good practice, learns from evaluation of its operation and employs quality management methods. Strive to become a ‘learning organisation’ where increasing your skills and admitting where you need support is a positive action.

To start this process you need to identify
- What is the post holder required to do?
- What skills and knowledge are necessary?
- What skills and knowledge does the post holder already have? (Acquired Previous Experiential Learning - APEL)
- What gaps are there?

Don’t tell a new volunteer they ‘need training’. This often offends, but offer them the opportunity for ‘development of their skills and knowledge’. Always take into account prior experience and learning and agree a development plan based on identified needs.

There is only one thing worse than training someone, for them to leave – and that is not to train them and have them stay!

Don’t forget training develops skills and knowledge of individuals as well as developing your organisation. There may also be health and safety implications to training.
Developing relevant induction programmes for all employees, trustees and volunteers

- Ensure that all new candidates take part in any internal programmes that address the ethos, aims and objectives of organisation. This will help to ensure that they act in the best interest of your organisation and do not ‘go off in a tangent’ to your needs.

- If your volunteer is a trustee their responsibilities, accountability and liabilities should be made clear to them.

- Induction should also cover structure & operation of the organisation together with internal and external relationships.

- Ensure health and safety issues are covered on the first day e.g. fire exits.

- Cover all the logistics and practicalities such as refreshments and toilets asap – it can be embarrassing to have to ask. Also make sure they are welcomed and introduced to all other members of the team.

You will need to discuss their role and gather some information from them. The induction should have been prepared in advanced and needs to be tailored to your needs. A starting point could be a staff/ volunteer induction from. http://www3.hants.gov.uk/community-support-service/how-to-do.htm

You could also have a look at our sample trustee welcome pack http://www3.hants.gov.uk/community-support-service/how-to-do.htm which again would have to be tailored to your needs.

Identify suitable sources of development/training

- Individuals learn in different ways so you should try to offer a wide range of development opportunities this might include in-house training, sharing of skills and shadowing, which could be a very cost effective development tool.

- Externally sourced training courses are also valuable, especially in specialist subjects such as health and safety. These are often provided at a small or no cost to voluntary organisations http://www3.hants.gov.uk/community-support-service/how-to-do.htm

How can you check if the training plan is effective?

It is important that you review and evaluate how effective a training plan has been. You could start this achieved by the line manager and volunteer/ employee agreeing objectives before training, and reviewing after training to ensure
objectives were met. This could be based around personal development plans and job descriptions which should be reviewed at least one a year. If the role of an employee or volunteer has changed this will potentially impact on the training and development they need.

If you are evaluating the training and development of the board of trustees the development could be evaluated against trustee roles.

These reviews should then lead to action plans to address and training and development needs. There may be time and budget restraints that restrict what can be achieved. If this is the case the action plan will indicate how these may be overcome e.g. shadowing rather than going on a course, prioritising what is essential, desirable or developmental and maybe spreading the training over a longer timescale.

N.B. you will need to define essential, desirable and developmental. Essential will be around a task that is core to their role or a health and safety issue. Desirable may be something that will make individuals more efficient, but is less linked to their every day work. Developmental will be something that interests the individual, may not have a direct link to what they are doing now, but will help them on a personal development level.

**Next Steps**

If you already have a plan

- Review it against the needs of the organisation, staff and trustees
- Update all staff and volunteer development plans as appropriate

If you do not currently have a plan

- Agree steps to review all job descriptions
- Identify developmental needs of staff and volunteers
- Review Trustees’ understanding of roles
- Identify developmental needs – Don’t forget to take account of APEL