

opportunity knocks

opening doors for volunteers
with additional support needs





Published in February 2004 by
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ISBN 0-9546988-0-0

design

Gideon Electronics

photography

Hugh McElveen

printing

Holywell Press Limited

paper

Corona Offset, made from
100% recycled post-consumer waste

acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the contributions of many groups and individuals. We would especially like to thank the four volunteers who proved that supported volunteering works. We would also like to thank the volunteer-involving organisations and support agencies that took part in the four pilot placements for their time, ideas, enthusiasm and commitment. They include:

Cillian Russell, Emer McCarthy and all the staff and service users of Schizophrenia Ireland.

Áine Ni Áilleagan, Gillian Donovan, Damian Forkan and all at St John of God.

Maureen McGovern, Southside Partnership.

Ellen O' Leary, Focus Ireland.

Grace Sexton, Rowan Oberman, Elaine Nevin and all the staff and volunteers at ECO UNESCO.

Jimmy Blake and all the staff and volunteers at Airfield Trust.

Phil O' Reardon, Muriel Cummins, Aoife Keegan and all the staff and service users of Ushers Island Day Centre.

We would also like to thank all the organisations and individuals who gave their time in interviews and focus groups for their advice, guidance and support. We hope that we have accurately presented their experiences and opinions.

foreword

Opportunity knocks provides a welcome focus on the diversity of volunteers. This is an important focus in a society that is increasingly aware of its diversity and that is growing in its capacity to value and to celebrate this diversity.

Diversity has practical implications for organisations in terms of how they conduct their business and how they include the volunteers in their work. This is a diversity that demands a focus on equality. *Opportunity knocks* provides the template for organisations to respond effectively to this dual challenge and to achieve the real benefits that flow from the involvement of a diversity of volunteers.

An effective response to diversity requires organisations to be planned and systematic in their approach to equality. Commitment is required and needs to be expressed in equality policies. A capacity to implement equality policies is needed and must be built through equality and diversity training. Policies, practices and procedures for the organisation need to be reviewed for their impact on diversity and equality, and action plans to further improve this impact need to be developed. These are the foundations for organisations to include and benefit from a diversity of volunteers. They are the foundations that *Opportunity knocks* will assist in building.

Volunteering Ireland is to be congratulated for the development of this resource. Their commitment to equality and diversity in volunteering is important and will ensure *Opportunity knocks* will make the impact it merits.



NIAL CROWLEY

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, EQUALITY AUTHORITY

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Looks at why we need to make volunteering an inclusive and equal practice

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the basics

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*Everyone needs some support in order
to succeed*

— WEHMAN & BRICOUT, 1999

*I would not even describe it as supported
volunteering ... they are volunteers like
the rest of us*

— DIRECTOR
VOLUNTARY SERVICE
INTERNATIONAL



definition

Supported volunteering can be defined as:

the process of assisting volunteers with additional support needs in obtaining and maintaining genuine and meaningful volunteering placements through the provision of relevant supports.

introduction

Volunteering Ireland fundamentally believes in a society where all citizens have access to the same rights and civic responsibilities; an inclusive, democratic and just society. However, we recognise that certain individuals and groups of people do not have the same opportunities to participate in society as others. We believe that volunteering must be made accessible to all. We aim to smash the stereotype about who can volunteer. We argue that those traditionally perceived as the helped can actually be the helpers themselves.

There are three guiding principles to this handbook:

- 1 All volunteers need support, not just volunteers from socially excluded groups.
- 2 While some volunteers from socially excluded groups may require additional support in order to realise their full potential, the majority can be fully effective volunteers without any specialised supports.
- 3 The further segregation of volunteers with additional support needs through the provision of a separate service is not advocated. Instead, we should aim to acknowledge support needs and to develop appropriate supports in an inclusive way.

background

Volunteering Ireland is an independent organisation whose aims are to promote, support and facilitate voluntary action. We commenced our placement service in 1998. This service matches individuals who wish to volunteer with organisations that require volunteers. While implementing this service, it became apparent that there were certain individuals and groups of people who sometimes required additional support in order to volunteer, for example:

- People with disabilities.
- People with long-term illness.
- Homeless people.
- Members of the travelling community.
- New immigrants.
- People recovering from addictions.
- Long-term unemployed people.
- Ex-offenders.
- People who were excluded for some other reason.

During the period 1999-2002, we undertook some ad hoc and pilot work in the field of supported volunteering. In 2003, Fiona Baily was employed as a supported volunteering officer, to research the area of supported volunteering, undertake a further pilot placement project involving four volunteers with additional support needs and present the information gathered in the form of this handbook.

project placements

Andrew lives with a mental illness. He is a volunteer with the Ushers Island Day Centre for homeless men. He is a befriender to the men, organising and accompanying them on social outings. He is responsible for designing a newsletter chronicling these outings and including photographs and articles written by the men. He has also given creative writing classes to the men on an individual basis.

The men love to see Andrew coming ... his experiences have made him an extremely understanding volunteer, who is easy and comfortable around our clients.

— OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST
USHERS ISLAND DAY CENTRE

I volunteered because I wanted to try and make a difference in the lives of those people who like me, had experienced a mental illness ... those men may not have the same support and encouragement that I have ... I wanted to give something back. With this placement I gained confidence in my ability to be responsible, to mix with people and to do more challenging work. Now I am moving on to part time employment

— ANDREW

Valerie has a mild intellectual disability. She is volunteering with the environmental organisation ECO UNESCO as an office assistant.

Valerie is always in early ... she is very reliable ... she gets on and does the work ... we have no problems.

— TRAINING DEVELOPMENT MANGER, ECO-UNESCO

Valerie's confidence has increased a lot since she started volunteering ... she is well able to go in and out on her own now.

— KEY-WORKER, ST. JOHN OF GOD

I love it here ... I use the computer, organise the library, do mail outs. I am very happy here.

— VALERIE

Al is recovering from drug addiction. He volunteered as a painter and decorator with the Dublin Local Group of Voluntary Service International and as a gardener with Airfield Trust.

Al is a lovely person ... we really liked having him here... he is always welcome here.

— HEAD GARDENER, AIRFIELD TRUST

Through volunteering I can show that there is more to me, a recovering addict, than people think ... I enjoyed the responsibility, the feeling of working with others, the interaction, the sense of achievement ... it made me feel good about myself

— AL

Gerard has spina bifida and uses a wheelchair. He volunteered with the National Council for the Blind in their administrative department. He also gave computer classes to visually impaired service users.

Through taking on Gerard, we are becoming a more rounded organisation, with a more diverse volunteer force.

— VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR
NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND

I hope to benefit the people that I am volunteering for by sharing my own personal experiences ... I also hope to learn from them too.

— GERARD



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*Equality is the principle upon which
our society is based*

— MICHAEL McDOWELL
MINISTER FOR JUSTICE, EQUALITY
AND LAW REFORM



legislation and policy

WORLDWIDE CONTEXT

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations, 1948

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with a reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

The Universal Declaration on Volunteering, International Association for Volunteer Effort, 2001

This declaration supports the right of every woman, man and child to associate freely and to volunteer regardless of their cultural and ethnic origin, religion, age, gender, and physical, social or economic condition. All people in the world should have the right to offer their time, talent, and energy to others and to their communities, through individual and collective action, without expectation of financial reward.

EUROPEAN CONTEXT

The European Social Charter, Council of Europe, 1999

The Council of Europe was established in 1949; Ireland was one of the ten founding members. Its main role is to strengthen democracy, human rights and the rule of law in the member states of the European Union. Protecting social and economic rights is part of the work of the Council, which it does through the European Social Charter. The rights guaranteed by this Charter concern all individuals in their daily lives and include the right to be protected against poverty and social exclusion.

(Permanent representation of Ireland to the Council of Europe, 1999)

The Council recommends that resources and supports be given to vulnerable groups so that they can claim their social rights. Volunteering is a social right. As part of the International Year of Volunteers in 2001, the Council of Europe made a recommendation to member states to:

Adopt and promote, in accordance with their national traditions, dynamic policies favouring voluntary action which, inter alia: use various measures and incentives to encourage everyone and all sectors of the community – including the unemployed, the disabled, migrants, refugees and the excluded – to become involved in voluntary action.

(Council of Europe, 2001)

legislation and policy continued

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Charter for Effective Volunteering, Volunteering Ireland, 2000

Volunteering Ireland has devised a Charter for Effective Volunteering, which covers the rights and responsibilities of both the volunteer and the volunteer-involving organisation. Within this, it is stated that it is a volunteer's right:

To be treated fairly and not to experience discrimination

It is also an organisation's responsibility:

To ensure equal access and not to discriminate.

The Equal Status Act, 2000

This act promotes equality, prohibits discrimination, harassment, victimisation and covers people who buy goods, use services and facilities, obtain accommodation and attend educational establishments. Discrimination is outlawed on nine distinct grounds:

- 1 Gender.
- 2 Marital status.
- 3 Family status.
- 4 Sexual orientation.
- 5 Religion.
- 6 Age.
- 7 Disability (this is broadly defined; including people with physical, intellectual, learning, cognitive or emotional disabilities and a range of medical conditions).
- 8 Race.
- 9 Membership of the Traveller community.

If a volunteer-involving organisation provides training for its volunteers, for example, it could be argued that this organisation is providing a service.

Tipping the Balance: Report and Recommendations to Government on Supporting and Developing Volunteering in Ireland, National Committee on Volunteering, 2002

This report acknowledges the positive contribution of volunteering to social capital. Social capital can be described as the social networks or ties among individuals and communities enhancing democracy, social solidarity and economic effectiveness. Volunteering contributes towards social capital through developing and enhancing these social networks.

Following research on the trends and patterns of volunteering in Ireland the report concluded that the message of volunteering may not be reaching vulnerable or lower socio-economic groups and that they are less likely to volunteer.

People from disadvantaged groupings ... are more likely to be excluded from voluntary work and its benefits ... volunteering also extends a person's social and economic networks and without the opportunity to volunteer, marginalised people become ever more assigned to the periphery.

The report recommended that pilot projects be supported to encourage the involvement of volunteers from under-represented groups, in order to promote social inclusion and increase social capital.

National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2003-2005

This second National Action Plan was developed in order to combat poverty and social exclusion. The key objective of this plan is:

To build a fair and inclusive society and ensure that people have the resources and opportunities to live a life with dignity and have access to the quality public services that underpin life chances and experiences.

The Plan recognises the positive impact volunteering has on socially disadvantaged individuals, groups and areas.

... voluntary work can help to prevent vulnerable groups, such as the unemployed, becoming socially isolated and is an important means of beginning a return to work and achieving greater social inclusion more generally.

The Plan recognises that individuals from certain sectors of society are more likely to be excluded from voluntary work and also from the benefits involved. As a result of this, one of the tasks which the Plan outlines is to strengthen the supports to volunteering.

benefits to the volunteer- involving organisation

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

The benefits? There are too many to go through ... there are benefits to us, to our staff and to the participants ... we all get such a feeling of achievement.

— PROGRAMME DIRECTOR
READY FOR WORK PROGRAMME*, MARKS AND SPENCER

Volunteers are a positive contribution to any organisation. The following are examples of how volunteers with additional support can bring additional benefits.

INCREASED POOL OF VOLUNTEERS

There are 323,707 people with a disability living in Ireland.

— CENTRAL STATISTICS OFFICE, 2002

The rate of volunteering in Ireland is declining, albeit slowly. Ireland is currently experiencing many cultural, social and economic changes. Such changes in Irish lifestyles include the growth of double-income families, more time spent commuting and busier lives in general with less time for other activities such as volunteering. Studies and commentary have focused on growing consumerism, individualism and declining religiosity as having a negative impact on the number of Irish people volunteering.

Unemployment is high among socially excluded groups. The majority would like to find positive ways to spend their free time and are more often than not available for daytime voluntary activities. Instead of competing for the same few, over-committed members of your community, why not open up to this untapped pool of potential volunteers?

*Marks and Spencer offer two-week work placements to people affected by homelessness as part of the Ready for Work Programme in association with Business in the Community Ireland

SKILLS AND IDEAS

- Each year over 2,000 people with disabilities receive skills training through FÁS.
- There are over 800 people with disabilities studying in third level education institutions.
- Many students with disabilities complete second level education.
- Within this highly trained and educated pool of people, only a small percentage is employed.

(The Aisling Foundation, 2003)

Why did I volunteer to become an advocate? ... because I did not want to waste all my knowledge gained over the past few years of becoming and being disabled.

— VOLUNTEER, INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY

Not only does everyone have the right to volunteer; everyone has something to contribute as a volunteer. However, the skills and abilities of volunteers with disabilities and from other socially excluded groups are often not recognised or acknowledged. The lack of supports available to volunteers with additional support needs contributes to a lack of awareness of their talents and experiences.

Volunteers with additional support needs have often had life experiences they can use productively within an organisation. Some have employed personal assistants, which requires good organisational skills, while others have shown extraordinary strength, courage and determination in order to be in a position to volunteer. It is often a matter of looking beyond the disability/ additional support need and focusing on the ability.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

Direct contact with volunteers from excluded groups develops a greater understanding of social exclusion issues. Increased understanding results in increased confidence when dealing with such issues.

benefits to the volunteer-involving organisation continued

LOYALTY AND COMMITMENT

It is frequently found that, contrary to popular belief, volunteers with additional support needs are particularly committed to the organisation they volunteer with.

Volunteers with additional support needs are generally with us for the long-term, with the appropriate training and support, they are a great asset.

— VICE-PRESIDENT, AN TAISCE

The majority of people with disabilities will go out of their way to be self-sufficient, loyal and committed ... after all we have something to prove!

— HAWTHORNE, 2002

ENHANCED VOLUNTEER AND STAFF MORALE

Staff morale and commitment to the organisation has been found to increase when an organisation makes a visible commitment to recruiting people from diverse sectors of society (The Aisling Foundation, 2003).

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Organisations must not see equality legislation as a negative constraint, they are missing the point, being 'fair' does not harm business it only improves it.

— MICHAEL McDOWELL
MINISTER FOR JUSTICE, EQUALITY
AND LAW REFORM

In the USA, diverse organisational culture has been advocated as a key component to growth and effectiveness. Profit-making organisations are recognising difference and then using it as a tool to develop a learned and progressive organisation (Bruce, 2003). The same principles can be applied to volunteer-involving organisations.

Sticking with the same types of volunteers can result in a static organisation, closed to new ideas, creativity, responsiveness, and fresh approaches. By opening its doors to all types of volunteers, an organisation can have access to the widest possible range of skills and experience. Different people perceive situations in different ways and the more ways there are of looking at a problem, the easier it is to fix.

Opening up to different volunteers prevents organisations from getting into a rut.'

— VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR, SLÍ EILE

ENHANCED PUBLIC IMAGE

Organisations often have fears that engaging volunteers with additional support needs will compromise their credibility.

However, if an organisation is seen as more accessible and accepting it will do the opposite; it will attract a wider range of people as potential employees, volunteers, service users and supporters. Clear evidence of being an equal opportunities organisation projects a positive image and promotes an organisation as progressive.

...show that you are not just talking the talk but walking the walk too...

— OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST, ST. BRENDAN'S HOSPITAL

REPRESENTATIVE OF WIDER SOCIETY

Taking on volunteers from diverse backgrounds ensures that your work is relevant to and impacts upon all members of society.

Diverse organisations draw upon the widest possible range of views and experiences so it can listen to and meet the changing needs of its users, staff, volunteers, partners and supporters

— NATIONAL CENTRE FOR VOLUNTEERING, 2001

Society and life are very diverse ... anyone can have a disability or support need or know someone who does ... the workplace needs to reflect this diversity.

— ADMINISTRATOR, FRONT LINE

... having volunteers from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, makes our amenities more accessible to everyone ... which they are meant to be.

— GARDENER, AIRFIELD TRUST

We have Romanian volunteers who volunteer with Roma children on the streets of Dublin, they are in a better position to reach out to these children.

— CHILDCARE WORKER, IRISH SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO CHILDREN

benefits to the volunteer

FOCUS ON BENEFITS

The focus on benefits to the volunteer is particularly relevant to occupational therapists, key workers, social workers and other individuals and support agencies who work in areas of exclusion. Supported volunteering can only work if the excluded are aware of volunteering as an option.

People volunteer for different reasons; for work experience, to make new friends, to give something back, to feel needed and for fun. In turn, volunteering rewards all volunteers, not just those with additional support needs.

It is important to remember that the volunteer is the net giver; that although a volunteer may have a mental illness, they are contributing and doing good like any other volunteer ... when I asked service users why they may want to volunteer, the general response was ... "to help people who are less fortunate than myself".

— REHABILITATIVE SERVICES MANAGER
SCHIZOPHRENIA IRELAND

SELF-ESTEEM AND CONFIDENCE

Volunteering boosts self-esteem, self-confidence and increases overall life satisfaction. Helping is a vital part of being human. Those who work in the sphere of helping others report the sense of joy, usefulness, power and self-worth that comes from the act of helping.

Providing help to others is a self-validating experience. It shows people that they can make a difference in this world. Such effects are particularly relevant to individuals living on the margins of our society, who are more at risk of experiencing low confidence, a lack of power and feelings of uselessness (Caldwell, 2002). Volunteering challenges the volunteer's beliefs and assumptions in their own ability.

I really thought that I would not be able to do this, now I see that I can and I do not want to stop!

— VOLUNTEER, ECO UNESCO

POSITIVE IMAGES

People with disability or illness, homeless persons, new immigrants, members of the travelling community etc, by their presence as active members of society can challenge negative images society holds about such individuals and groups.

SELF-HELP AND EMPOWERMENT

Through volunteering, people on the margins can identify and articulate their needs and design ways to overcome their own disadvantage. Volunteering among excluded groups taps the desire to do something about an unsatisfactory situation. When traditionally excluded or discriminated-against individuals take on a contributory role, decision-making becomes inclusive and democratic.

Involving clients/service users empowers the people we serve and encourages them to see themselves as part of their own solution. They cease to become clients but community members with the ability to take care of their community.

— GILLIS, 2003

Individuals from excluded or disadvantaged communities, who successfully volunteer can *also* act as positive role models to others.

ROLE AND ROUTINE

People from excluded groups may be challenged by a loss of role in life. With a loss of purpose comes a loss of routine and high levels of inactivity and boredom. Volunteering can provide order, routine and structure to people's lives. Genuine and meaningful volunteering opportunities can provide a new role or replace a lost one.

When I was volunteering, I felt like I was an ordinary person again ... doing what other 'normal' people do...

— VOLUNTEER, SCHIZOPHRENIA IRELAND

Volunteering is an informal way of developing a formal approach to life.

— OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST, ST. BRENDAN'S HOSPITAL

benefits to the volunteer continued

INTEGRATION

Volunteering can build bridges and reduce isolation. For example, for many years, due to segregation in education and the workplace, people with disabilities were rarely in contact with able-bodied people outside of their immediate family. For those using day centres, for those living in supported housing and for those using addiction support groups, the chance to mix with people outside of their environment or situation is often rare. Volunteers with additional support needs may have low confidence and self-esteem, which in turn affects interpersonal and social skills. Supported volunteering provides a safe and secure environment in which to develop these skills and abilities.

What I like about volunteering is that it provides opportunities which are unrelated to the volunteer's disability, background or support need ... it provides the opportunity to mix with others who do not have a disability ... it is an opportunity for socialisation and inclusion.

— DEVELOPMENT OFFICER
FORUM OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

WORK EXPERIENCE, TRAINING AND EDUCATION

For many who face discrimination in the job market, volunteering can provide useful opportunities to gain work experience and can act as a step towards paid employment. Volunteers and support agencies have commented on volunteering as an ideal opportunity for people who have been out of the workforce to try out different career options. Volunteers can update or learn new skills, and may also receive accredited training on their placement. A reference from a volunteer-involving organisation can be a particularly important step towards paid employment.

conclusion

Supported volunteering may be a relatively new concept in Ireland but it is one that is growing in importance and can no longer be ignored. The concept of equality requires that social rights, such as volunteering, be open and accessible to all. Global and national laws, plans, and policies acknowledge the importance of volunteering among socially excluded people and the benefits it bestows on society in general.

Supported volunteering is a win-win situation; it brings benefits to the volunteer-involving organisation and to the volunteer. By opening up to the skills, talents and abilities of volunteers with additional support needs, an organisation proves itself to be a progressive and successful one.



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*I know there are a whole range of volunteers
being excluded ... what I want to know is
what I can do about it?*

— VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR
CONCERN WORLDWIDE



create commitment

In order for supported volunteering to work, the culture and values of an organisation as a whole must be committed to inclusiveness and equality of opportunity for all volunteers. This means that all actors within the organisation – the board/management committee, paid staff, trainees, volunteers, etc – must be aware of and committed to a culture of equality.

The organisation has to be committed to what they are doing ... if the organisation is not open to the idea then there is no point in placing someone with additional support needs in an environment where they will not get any support ... that can only do damage.

— EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPER, INCLUSIVE RECRUITMENT

challenge assumptions

The majority of prejudices, fears and negative assumptions are based on misinformation and myths about certain people and groups. Some examples:

Myth → All homeless people live on the streets.

Fact → The majority live in supported housing or bed and breakfast accommodation, and are not necessarily roofless. Many people who have once lived on the streets have since then completed adult education courses, personal development training and work experience, and have moved on to live independently in different types of accommodation.

Myth → People using methadone constitute a safety risk.

Fact → A volunteer on a methadone maintenance programme, under the strict supervision of a doctor, does not necessarily constitute a safety risk. While there are issues to understand, such as why that person was taking drugs in the first place, the proper use of methadone can be compared with the long-term use of insulin by diabetics (Community Awareness of Drugs, 2003).

Myth → People with disabilities will often be absent.

Fact → Do not confuse disability with ill health. Although some disabilities may have health-related issues, most people with a disability are no more likely to become ill than any other volunteer.

challenge assumptions continued

Myth → Mental illness causes violent behaviour.

Fact → People diagnosed as schizophrenic are 100 times more dangerous to themselves than to others. There is widespread misinformation, fear and ignorance surrounding mental health issues. A person can be violent with or without a mental illness. When working with volunteers with a mental illness it is important to stay rooted in the evidence and not be drawn into anxious speculation about the risks or into stereotypical thinking about how people with certain psychiatric labels behave (May, 2003).

Our attitude is their problem

— MAY, 2003

In daily life and in situations which require quick decision-making, decisions are sometimes based on little, no, or incorrect information. When volunteer-involving organisations hold negative expectations of and predispositions towards certain groups, they act as a barrier to the involvement of these groups of people as volunteers. When an organisation continues to exclude certain individuals as volunteers, that discrimination has an impact on not only the volunteer but also on the volunteer's family, the local community and society as a whole.

To be committed to the notion of equality of opportunity for all, an organisation must first examine its own prejudices and assumptions. All individuals carry fears, stereotypes, assumptions and prejudices. This does not necessarily imply narrow-mindedness. What is necessary, however, is to be aware of the fact that they are assumptions and that prejudices can be challenged and changed.

Steps that organisations can take to challenge and change negative assumptions include:

- Meet all potential volunteers with an open mind.
- Focus on the positive aspects of the way of life of those who may be excluded.
- Invite positive representatives from excluded groups to meet with the organisation.
- Empathise with the impact negative assumptions can have on a person.
- Assess whether or not the organisation had any role to play in previous negative experiences.
- Learn the facts: talk to those in the know – potential volunteers, their support agencies and other experts.

communicate correctly

AWARENESS TRAINING

Your manager and supervisor may understand your situation. It is the other staff and volunteers that I would be worried about.

— VOLUNTEER, SCHIZOPHRENIA IRELAND

Awareness training is a useful tool to challenge the assumptions of volunteers and staff in an organisation.

Training allows people to ask questions in a controlled and safe environment and from an expert ... they feel more comfortable addressing sensitive issues...

— DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINER
ORBIS DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINING

FÁS has implemented the Disability Awareness Training Support Scheme. It has been developed to address the concerns involved in working with people with disabilities. It helps to break down mistaken perceptions and helps to dispel any inherent concerns or sense of discomfort co-workers may have when a person with a disability joins the team. Under this scheme, organisations which employ paid staff as well as volunteers with disabilities are discounted 90% of the training costs.

RESPECTFUL LANGUAGE

Using inclusive, respectful language builds a better environment for everyone and reflects a commitment to ensuring all persons have the right to volunteer their skills, energy and time within an organisation. It is very important to be aware of the impact of the language and words used in relation to social issues such as homelessness, crime, addiction, immigration, disability and so on. Nobody likes to be labeled and often language can be discriminating and disempowering (Volunteer Centre of Toronto, 2001).

Remember to ask the individual the manner in which they would like their disability or support need referred to. For example, a volunteer may prefer a psychiatric disability to be referred to as a 'challenge', while another volunteer living in supported housing may prefer not to be labelled as 'homeless'. Asking for the volunteer's opinion is the first step in developing an inclusive volunteering environment.

communicate correctly continued

- Use language which puts people first and their disability or support need second, for example 'people with disabilities' as opposed to 'the disabled'.
- When using a label to describe a volunteer's support need, avoid suggesting that they are the support need. For example, use the phrase 'he has a drug addiction' instead of 'he is a drug addict', or 'she has epilepsy' rather than 'she is an epileptic'.
- In relation to disability, words to be avoided include: 'afflicted with'; 'sufferer'; 'victim'; 'confined to a wheelchair'; 'dumb'; 'handicapped'; 'insane'; 'invalid', etc. Also, don't use 'normal' when referring to being able-bodied.

Saying the wrong thing or doing something foolish is a common concern for people when it comes to discussing sensitive issues with potential or current volunteers. Respectful language is extremely important. However, not knowing the politically correct terminology often prevents people from addressing sensitive issues at all, thus adding to fears and ignorance. Don't be afraid to make a mistake. Respect for the person as an individual is the priority.

APPROPRIATE ACTIONS

Language is one thing, but actions are just as important. Here are a few important points to remember when meeting with volunteers with additional support needs:

- Speak directly to the person, not to their companion.
- Don't treat people as your intellectual inferiors.
- Don't gush, pity, patronise, over-praise or fuss.
- Ask if you can help if it looks like help is needed, but do not feel offended if your offer of help is turned down.
- Remember that not all additional support needs are obvious.

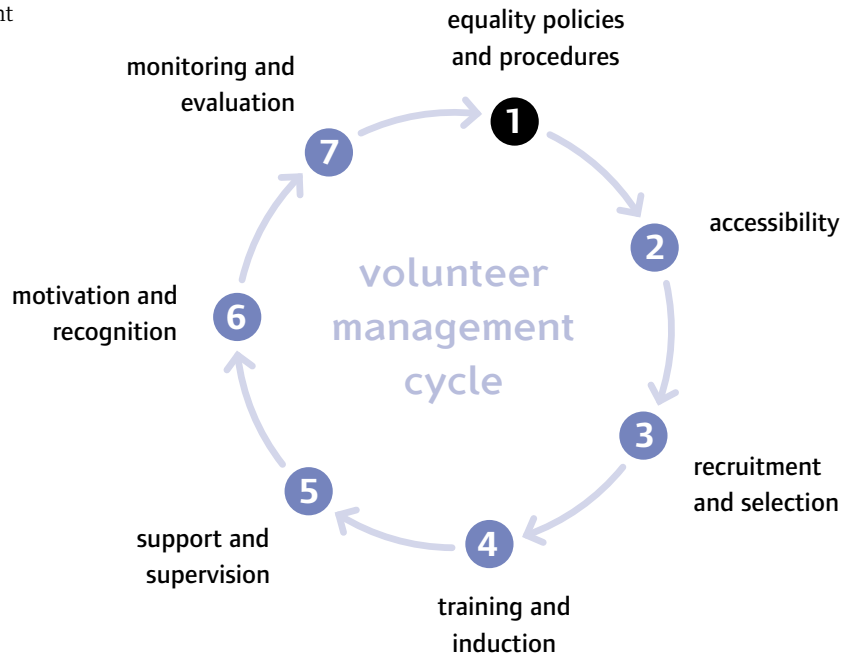
(Avondhu Development)

(County Carlow Network of the
Irish Council of People with Disabilities)

managing volunteers with additional support needs: the volunteer management cycle

Managing volunteers with additional support needs should not be markedly different from managing volunteers without additional support needs. Some minor adjustments may need to be made to the current volunteer management cycle in your organisation, however, to ensure equal access to volunteer opportunities for all.

The stages of the volunteer management cycle are shown in the diagram.



managing volunteers with additional support needs continued

EQUALITY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Ideally, an organisation should have a general equality policy addressing equality for volunteers, paid staff, service users etc. Equality can also be addressed within a volunteer policy. Such written statements reinforce the organisation's commitment to the concept of equality, preventing discrimination and creating a more secure, open and transparent volunteer environment. When devising policies, consider issues such as:

- Why are volunteers involved in the organisation in the first place?
- Does everyone have the right to volunteer in the organisation and if not, why not?
- What resources does the organisation allocate to volunteer development?
- Are volunteers represented in the organisation's decision-making processes?
- Does the organisation genuinely believe each individual has something to offer as a volunteer, or does it just pay lip service to the concept of equality?

Policy development can seem overwhelming; the process must therefore be planned and managed. Good policy development takes time and policies should not be written hastily. Why not begin with an equal opportunity policy statement and go from there?

For example, the Volunteering Ireland equal opportunities policy reads:

Volunteering Ireland recognises that in our society certain individuals and groups are discriminated against, both directly and indirectly. They are denied equality of opportunity on the grounds of age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, caring responsibilities, mental or physical health/disability, race, colour, nationality, ethnic/national origin (including membership of the travelling community), political or religious beliefs, economic status, criminal record, trade union activity or a combination of these. We strive to eliminate all such forms of discrimination and to create a climate in which equal opportunities are promoted as a means of developing the potential of everyone who is involved with our organisation. We do this by fulfilling our legal obligations and by taking positive action which goes beyond the requirements of the law, avoiding stereotyping and tokenism.

ACCESSIBILITY

Before planning the organisation’s recruitment and selection strategies, consider some of the logistical barriers that people from excluded groups may experience when attempting to volunteer. Attention to these barriers at an early stage will focus the organisation on eliminating the circumstances that prevent people from excluded groups from volunteering.

1 Physical accessibility

Disability is not the end of life; it is the start of doing things in new ways

— HAWTHORNE, 2002

Major advances in assistive technology continue to enhance the lives of people with disabilities. Workplace examples include specialist computer hardware and software. An organisation may be in a position to provide some of this equipment. However, not all volunteers with a disability need adaptations or specialised equipment. When accommodations must be made they tend not to be very expensive or ‘high tech’ and are effective and useful for other staff, volunteers and clients too. The table on the right gives some examples.

Disability	Accommodation
Mobility disability	Ensure that entrances and passageways have easy access and are kept clear of all obstructions
	Eliminate clutter
	Avoid fragile free-standing displays
	Place information in immediately accessible areas
	Pay attention to the height of equipment
Visual impairment	Ensure that entrances and passageways have easy access and are kept clear of all obstructions
	Eliminate clutter
	Avoid fragile free-standing displays
	Install a high standard of lighting
	Ensure clear signage
	Provide equipment such as headsets, tape recorders and magnifiers
Hearing impairment	Reduce unnecessary background noise levels
	Use email, fax and text messaging
Concentration difficulty	Reduce unnecessary background noise levels

managing volunteers with additional support needs continued

Supports to enable physical accessibility

Access audits provided by disability support agencies can ensure that buildings and workstations are accessible in every way possible.*

FÁS provides labour market services for people with disabilities. Organisations which engage paid staff as well as volunteers can avail of supports and grants provided by FÁS. Individual volunteers with disabilities may also be able to avail of these grants, when volunteering is being used to help to find and keep employment. The grants available include:

- Personal reader grant.
- Interview interpreter grant.
- Work equipment/adaptation grant.

* Contact the National Disability Authority for details of organisations that provide access audits.

2 Financial accessibility

Another way of making an organisation accessible to all is to reimburse any costs which the volunteer incurs when volunteering. Worrying about how to pay for transport and food is a barrier for people from lower income backgrounds. Some volunteers with additional support needs may be in receipt of social welfare. Transport and food costs may constitute a significant amount of their weekly allowance. It is an even bigger concern for volunteers with disabilities who may require an accessible taxi in order to get to a placement. When organisations refuse to pay travel costs it limits the choices of many volunteers.

A certain amount of funding could be set aside each month for such expenses or organisations may be able to access funding purely for this expense. If an organisation truly cannot afford to reimburse out-of-pocket expenses, it may be able to compensate the volunteer in another way, for example by providing free places on training courses.

Free travel on public transport is available for people aged 66 or over, for recipients of Carer's Allowance and for people on certain disability payments. A Mobility Allowance is also available to people who have a severe disability and are unable to walk. The volunteer should apply to their local social welfare office and health board for the above allowances. Accessible transport schemes also provide a reduced cost taxi service to people with disabilities.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

- Does your organisation exclude potential volunteers through closed recruitment and selection procedures?
- Do you stick to the same safe, comfortable volunteers?
- Do you always use word of mouth to attract volunteers?
- Do you have different interview questions for different volunteers?
- Do you acknowledge additional support needs throughout the process?

The following are guidelines on inclusive and equal approaches to the recruitment and selection process.

1 Role description

The first stage of the recruitment and selection process is to develop a role description. A role description involves listing the specific tasks and activities the volunteer will be expected to undertake, and developing the criteria for the type of volunteer needed. The criteria should be based on the required skills, experience, availability, knowledge, attributes and qualities for the role. It is the basis for recruiting the most suitable volunteer and creates fairness.

2 Targeting volunteers with additional needs

As a result of the lack of volunteering infrastructure in Ireland, promoting and accessing information on volunteering opportunities can be difficult. Social networks are the most common way of finding out about volunteering. For those with little or no access to such social networks – typically volunteers with additional support needs – accessing information on volunteering opportunities can be particularly difficult.

The common belief is that excluded or disadvantaged groups will not volunteer because they do not want to. Therefore, one obvious way of involving volunteers from excluded groups is to ask them. Instead of relying on social networks to recruit volunteers, why not look at using the following options:

- Local volunteer bureaux, including their web sites.
- Libraries, social welfare offices, citizen's information centres, FÁS offices, adult education centres.
- The notice boards, newsletters, websites and other information and promotional literature of support agencies.

managing volunteers with additional support needs continued

When advertising for volunteers:

- Ensure advertisements are accessible; for example, use large print and plain, easy to follow English and/or relevant languages.
- Ensure all advertisements state that the organisation follows equal opportunity guidelines and procedures in its recruitment and selection procedures.

One barrier to the recruitment of volunteers from excluded groups is the volunteer's own perceptions of the concept of volunteering and who can volunteer. It is important to challenge negative and limited perceptions of volunteering.

Volunteering is new to some members of the travelling community ... they may want to but feel that their opportunities are limited. We know that travellers also have to go out there and find out ... there needs to be dialogue between organisations looking for volunteers and travellers ... once one has a successful experience, more will try it.

— SENIOR YOUTH WORKER, EXCHANGE HOUSE

3 Screening and selecting

If you get the right match, the volunteer will give you more and stay longer.

— PRESIDENT AND SENIOR ASSOCIATE
LINDA GRAFF AND ASSOCIATES INC

Matching the right volunteer to the right position is a key duty for those with responsibility for selection. In order to select the most appropriate volunteer, the organisation must first determine the requirements of the role. This requires clear thinking about what skills and abilities are needed in the volunteer. Ensure questions asked on the application form or in the interview are questions that are clearly related to the requirements of the role and framed in terms of the role itself. It is good practice to have a set list of questions which would be asked of all volunteers, irrespective of whether or not there is a support need.

Addressing and discussing additional support needs is the major difference when interviewing and selecting volunteers with additional support needs.

It is necessary to discuss an additional support need if:

- It is related to the requirements of the role.
- The organisation needs to make suitable accommodations.
- The organisation intends to provide additional support.

Organisations are encouraged to use the following guidelines when selecting volunteers:

The application form

Application forms are often the first stage in the selection process. However, they can be problematic for people with visual impairments, learning difficulties, low levels of literacy, for those whose first language is not English, and so on, but who otherwise may be ideal in the role.

An application form sometimes suggests that the organisation is looking for one perfect candidate. This can put off volunteers who have low levels of confidence. They may look at it and feel that they do not have the required qualifications for the role. Many people do not realise how relevant their own experiences or background may be. They are more able to uncover these skills in a one-to-one situation, through discussion and encouragement.

Another option would be to fill out the application form with the potential volunteer as part of the interview. Alternatively, the application form could be completed over the phone.

If they are coming from a background where there is a mental illness ... it is better the person meets with the supervisor/manager and explains their situation in person, rather than on a piece of paper.'

— OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST, CENTRAL MENTAL HOSPITAL

Support needs may be addressed in the application form, for example, by asking 'do you have any support needs which need to be accommodated?' However, questions on application forms covering support needs can be very intimidating and people can feel that they are excluding themselves immediately by stating a disability, a drug addiction, a conviction and so on. Application forms often limit the ability to express a support need or situation in a positive and realistic way. It is possible to approach disclosure in a more creative way. For example, in the case of ex-offenders, an organisation could give individuals the opportunity to explain their case in a confidential statement of disclosure, which would accompany the application form.

The interview

It may be necessary to modify or adjust the interview process for volunteers with additional support needs. In the interview, sensitive issues may be discussed and it is important to handle such issues with care. Useful tips for the interview process include:

- Offer volunteers with additional support needs the same level of respect you would offer volunteers without additional support needs.
- Allocate additional time for the interview to ensure that there is adequate time to introduce issues or concerns relating to the support need.

managing volunteers with additional support needs continued

- Take into account accessible transport; it will have an effect on how long it takes the volunteer to get to the place of interview.
- Be flexible regarding the inclusion of a third party, the location and the time of the interview. Some volunteers with additional support needs may need to bring a sign interpreter, a personal assistant or a volunteering partner/mentor/buddy or coach to the interview. Remember not to address questions to this third party.
- Honestly and respectfully acknowledge any discomfort or limitations the organisation may have in relation to working with people with additional support needs. It is important to give the volunteer the opportunity to present their support need in a realistic way and answer any fears or assumptions that the organisation may have. The situation could be addressed with a question like 'I have not worked with somebody who has had your specific support need. Maybe you could tell me where I could learn a bit more about it?'
- Any questions that you ask must be related to the job *not* your own personal interest or curiosity. Keep all discussion on support needs factual and relevant. If you are going to discuss the fact that someone is on medication, you have to be in a position to explain why that information is relevant to the role requirements.
- Allow the volunteer to direct or lead any discussions about the kind of tasks that might best fit his/her abilities and accommodate his/her support needs.
- Clearly outline the degree of flexibility and accommodation possible within the placement. As one key worker noted it is 'important not to raise expectations about what the organisation can and cannot do.'
- Challenge volunteers who are being unrealistic in their perception of what they can do. For example, an individual who has only recently moved off the streets and into supported housing may want to volunteer with other homeless people. That individual may, or may not, yet be ready to deal with such a sensitive situation. It is necessary to ask the appropriate questions to find out if this is the case. The volunteer must be *ready* to volunteer.
- While it is usually necessary to discuss the support need, this is not where the focus of the interview should be. Discuss and explore the person's strengths and skills as well as their limitations.
- Remember that disclosing private information to strangers is difficult.
- Understand that the volunteer may be very nervous.
- *Always ask; don't assume.*

(Volunteer Centre of Toronto, 2001)

Screening

There will be instances where an organisation needs to make an informed decision about who it will, and will not, accept as a volunteer. Examples include:

- If volunteers will be working with vulnerable people.
- If volunteers will be involved in unsupervised work.
- If volunteers need particular skills, such as driving.
- If volunteers will be handling money, or be put in similar positions of trust.

Note the following, however:

- There is no screening device in the world that comes with a guarantee.
- Having checks in place, and advertising this, is in itself a good screening technique, but be careful about putting off potentially good volunteers.
- Be clear and fair throughout the process; tell people what checks you are planning to carry out and get their consent beforehand. Don't acquire any more information than you actually need to know about the volunteer.
- Be consistent; check every volunteer in the same way, even if you already know him/her.
- Do not be more strict when checking volunteers from excluded groups.
- Store all confidential information securely; restrict access to those who really need it.

Disclosure

For the majority of volunteers from excluded groups it is not necessary to disclose private information, as it may not be relevant to the role. They may have a good handle of and control over their own situation. They may receive enough support from their family and friends.

It is important that organisations are sensitive to the fact that volunteers may want management to be aware of their support needs but are afraid to disclose for fear of lessening their chances. There is also the fear that they will be seen only in terms of their support need. These fears can act as a barrier to volunteers accessing the appropriate support.

It is recommended that the volunteer be honest and upfront about why support is needed. Discussing a support need in an open way inspires confidence and trust and brings social exclusion issues into the open, as opposed to sweeping them under the carpet. It is also necessary that the organisation sensitively facilitates disclosure.

An organisation must be clear about: the actual information that it requires, why it requires it, and who needs the information. The organisation should ask the following questions:

- Is it necessary for other staff and volunteers to know?
- Do the clients/service users need to know?

managing volunteers with additional support needs continued

In general, it is best for a direct supervisor and/or manager to be aware of the volunteer's support need in order to provide the appropriate support and to deal effectively with management issues.

I used to tell everyone that I have a mental illness ... I tried to be open ... but on experiencing their reaction, I don't do it anymore, I have found that it is better to tell others when I get to know them, not straight away,

— VOLUNTEER

USHER ISLAND DAY CENTRE FOR HOMELESS MEN

Disclosing convictions

The vast majority of offenders come from marginalised, excluded and under-resourced communities in our society. Organisations are often fearful of recruiting volunteers with convictions. There are a number of points to consider:

- The nature of the conviction and the circumstances surrounding it.
- Subsequent changes to personal circumstances and the present situation.
- If the conviction is spent.
- The relevance of the conviction, for example, will the volunteer be working with vulnerable people and will s/he be supervised?

TRAINING AND INDUCTION

It is a problem when asylum seekers and refugees are just going in on their first day and told to start working ... they are nervous, have problems with the language and also the cultural differences ... I would recommend that more time is spent introducing them to the organisation and providing some training on what they have to do.

— NEW IMMIGRANT SUPPORT WORKER, DORAS LUIMNI

When the organisation takes the time to make sure that the volunteer is clear about the role requirements and is welcomed as part of the team, everybody benefits.

Training must be appropriate to the needs of the organisation and to the needs of the individual volunteer. To accommodate volunteers with additional support needs, training and induction materials should be in a clear, easy-to-read format and the use of alternative formats should be considered, such as large fonts, audio and computer-based technology.

We altered training and induction courses because of the participants' levels of concentration.

— PROGRAMME DIRECTOR

MARKS & SPENCER READY FOR WORK PROGRAMME

SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION

Supporting and supervising volunteers is an essential part of the volunteer management cycle, but for volunteers with additional support needs, it is particularly relevant.

1 Support

This section explores the types of support an organisation can offer a volunteer with additional support needs, and also the supports which are available to an organisation.

Supported volunteering begins before the placement starts. Support may be required by the volunteer and the organisation to assist in:

- Identifying skills, talents, abilities and areas of interest of the volunteer.
- Identifying the volunteer's additional support needs.
- Sourcing the most suitable volunteer placement and organisation.
- Providing a formal introduction between the volunteer and the organisation.
- Filling out application forms.
- Accompanying the volunteer to interviews.

→ Facilitating disclosure of private information.

→ Travel training for the volunteer.

→ Providing correct information on the additional support needs of the volunteer to the organisation.

Support may be provided after the placement has started by:

- Accompanying the volunteer on the initial placements.
- Assisting with training, for example, task breakdown for volunteers with learning disabilities or with head injuries.
- Facilitating social interaction.
- Ongoing support and guidance for the volunteer.
- Advice and guidance on supported volunteering management for the organisation.

managing volunteers with additional support needs continued

The support given must be based on a coordinated effort, organised in conjunction with the volunteer, the volunteer-involving organisation, volunteer bureaux, service agencies, government agencies and family members, in any combination.

- Volunteering Ireland can provide support to Dublin-based volunteers through its placement service; local volunteer bureaux may be able to offer similar services in other localities.
- The volunteer's support agency may be able to provide supports in the form of a key worker, occupational therapist, volunteering partner/buddy/mentor and job coach*
- The organisation may provide support through a volunteering partner/buddy/mentor programme.
- A network of organisations and individuals working in the field of exclusion can provide support in the form of advice, information and guidance.
- Statutory and other agencies can provide funding for additional supports.
- Families and friends can also provide a range of invaluable supports through encouragement and guidance.

* Job coaches are employment specialists employed by support agencies in order help their clients obtain and maintain an employment position of their choice.

Who provides the support must be decided before the placement starts. It depends on the following factors:

- Preferences of the volunteer and the organisation.
- Expertise, time and resources.

I would talk to, for example, people in the health board whose service users are some of my volunteers; they would know the volunteers better – their needs and history – they can aid in the transition to regular volunteering ... they are good to trouble shoot with.

— VICE PRESIDENT, AN TAISCE

I would prefer to go to my key worker for support... they would know me better

— VOLUNTEER, SCHIZOPHRENIA IRELAND

It is important that boundaries are defined and outlined in relation to the type of support that each party provides. No organisation or individual should offer support they feel uncomfortable with or are not qualified to provide. For example, a volunteer-involving organisation should not be expected to provide a counselling or career guidance service, if they are not comfortable with doing so.

Methods of support

Facilitating social interaction

In general, volunteers are at their most vulnerable at the initial stages of the placement. Positive social interaction, then, and on an ongoing basis, will be an important step in ensuring that the volunteer feels comfortable in the placement. What may seem simple to one person, such as going for lunch in a group, may be nerve racking for another. Many people volunteer in order to make social contacts, and for excluded groups this may be particularly relevant.

Steps that volunteer managers could take to develop a friendly and welcoming environment and to facilitate social interaction include:

- Group coffee mornings.
- Social events outside of the placement.
- A volunteer support group.
- Providing information on the roles of other volunteers.
- Not introducing the volunteer as a 'special' volunteer or singling them out as such.

Others may unintentionally leave people with disabilities out ... it is very isolating.

— DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINER
ORBIS DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINING

I ask other volunteers and staff members to ask him out for lunch, ask him if he wants a coffee...just not to forget about him...he might not want to go, but it is always nice to be asked.

— SUPPORT WORKER
DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT NETWORK

One-to-one support

Each volunteer is an individual and support needs vary considerably. 'One-size-fits-all' solutions are inappropriate. The support needs of one volunteer with a mental illness are not the same as those for another volunteer with the same illness. Some volunteers flourish with minimal support and others prefer regular contact and supervision.

The main support that I would need is just knowing that there is someone at the end of the phone line.

— VOLUNTEER, SCHIZOPHRENIA IRELAND

managing volunteers with additional support needs continued

Volunteering partners

Volunteering partners, buddies and mentors can be beneficial to volunteers with additional support needs. Volunteers, especially those who have been out of the working environment for a long time (or who may never have experienced it) may have concerns about issues such as workplace atmosphere, expectations and authority structure. They may have fears that cannot easily be explored with a supervisor.

These issues could be addressed with a volunteering partner/buddy/mentor. This person can be another volunteer (either from within the organisation or specifically recruited for the task) or a paid member of staff. In unusual cases, the co-volunteer may even be a family member or friend. This person can help the volunteer to understand the culture and unwritten rules of the organisation, as well as providing other practical supports. This can be a very positive way of encouraging and developing social interaction. It is vital to ensure that the partners/buddies/mentors themselves receive the appropriate training and support to undertake their task.

If we have a volunteer starting that has additional support needs, I would organise the roster so that they are working with someone who is patient, who would give them the time.

— VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR, BARNARDOS

The key to the success of this programme are the buddies ... they develop the relationship with other staff. They help with developing their confidence, for example, they maybe afraid to ask where the lunchroom is, what time to leave ... they can ask their buddies these questions ... being a buddy contributes to the development of the staff ... they feel good about themselves.

— PROGRAMME MANAGER
MARKS & SPENCER READY FOR WORK PROGRAMME

Fading out supports

The support required by the majority of volunteers with additional support needs is normally quite minimal and required only at the initial stages of the placement. Supports can fade out as soon as the volunteer and the organisation are ready.

Supported volunteering enables excluded groups to express individual talents, skills and abilities. It encourages individuals to reach their full potential. Providing more support than is necessary does not encourage volunteers to fulfil their potential and can only encourage dependency. All of the actors in the process should be aware of the importance of encouraging independence and self-sufficiency among volunteers with additional support needs.

It is important to ensure that the volunteer does not become overly dependent on supports.

— REHABILITATIVE SERVICES MANAGER
SCHIZOPHRENIA IRELAND

Some volunteers are more vulnerable than others in terms of holding down a placement and so their support needs may be more long-term. In this situation it is important to establish the facts from the beginning, to organise a long-term support system and to ensure that the organisation and other support mechanisms are committed for the long term.

Time for support

When asked why not involve volunteers with additional support needs, organisations sometimes state that they simply do not have the time to give support. However, in order to make volunteering work for the organisation, time must be given to all volunteers; it is something which cannot be avoided.

When involving volunteers with additional support needs, it is necessary that the organisation is aware of the time and resources it is providing to the volunteer and whether it is making a positive difference to the organisation.

We would look at the amount of time and resources we are giving to supported volunteers and what we are getting in return ... we aim to achieve a balance between what we give and what we receive ... supervisors and management need to be aware of the amount of time they are giving.

— VICE PRESIDENT, AN TAISCE

Adaptive placements

Informing yourself about the symptoms of certain disabilities or other support needs helps to structure a more adaptive and accommodating placement. This does not imply that a volunteer manager has to be an expert in disability or social exclusion issues in order to involve and support volunteers from these groups.

I wanted to learn more about spina bifida, so I contacted the support organisation and they told me the facts ... how the condition would impact on the volunteer's ability to do the work and in turn the best way to structure the placement.

— VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR
NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND

managing volunteers with additional support needs continued

Recognise the abilities, limitations, goals and work styles of each volunteer. Ask:

- What type of work they are most comfortable with?
- Do they prefer to have work chosen for them or would they like to decide?
- Do they need deadlines?
- Do they need tasks broken down?
- Do they want responsibility?

Develop assignments that are appropriate to those abilities, goals and work styles. The organisation can support volunteers with additional support needs through adaptive and flexible volunteering placements, such as:

- Virtual volunteering (using the internet to volunteer); for example, website design and management.
- Volunteering from home; for example accounting, proof reading, market research.
- Group volunteering; for example, in June 2000, a two-week Voluntary Services International work camp took place involving five international volunteers and eight volunteers with intellectual disability from St Michaels House. The placement involved clearing and decorating an outbuilding in St. Mary's Hospital Dublin, to use as a social room.

- Rotating placements (liaising with a support agency, by taking on one of their clients as a volunteer for a set period of time and then giving another client the opportunity to volunteer)

- Short term projects, for example compiling and updating databases, mail-outs, fundraising, design (see Volunteering Ireland's TLC service*).

However, the organisation should not create placements just to involve volunteers with additional support needs. Avoid tokenism; it can only reinforce notions of charity. It is also important to be aware of the danger of creating special jobs for volunteers with additional support needs. This can result in further segregation and sheltering.

*Time Limited Commitment (TLC ©) provides opportunities for individuals who wish to volunteer on once off projects which involve no long term commitment

2 Supervision

Volunteering Ireland's *Charter for Effective Volunteering* outlines the volunteer's and organisation's rights and responsibilities, including:

Volunteer's responsibilities

- To respect the values and aims of the organisation.
- To be committed.
- To be reliable and to give the organisation sufficient warning if unable to turn up.
- To be punctual.
- To attend essential training and support sessions.
- To undertake the work to a high standard.
- To be honest if there are problems.
- To respect confidentiality.
- To leave when asked and/or when no longer enjoying the volunteering experience.

Organisation's rights

- To ask for tasks to be done in a particular way.
- To ask for commitment.
- To ask for reliability.
- To ask for punctuality.
- To deal with disciplinary and grievance matters.
- To ask volunteers to leave if their involvement hinders the organisation achieving its goals.

These are useful and necessary guidelines when supervising all volunteers. Being supportive and sensitive to volunteers with additional support needs does not imply that they should be supervised or disciplined differently to other volunteers.

People with disabilities are treated differently in the work place ... they are allowed to be late, they are not reprimanded when they have done something wrong, we really need to change people's attitudes, don't treat us differently ... when this happens it is bad for everyone ... co-workers get annoyed seeing that you are getting away with it ... in the workplace everyone should be treated the same.

— DIRECTOR, MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY IRELAND

It is necessary to address the fact that some supported volunteers may finish the placement earlier than planned. This causes frustration among those who have put in the time and given support. If the appropriate supports are in place and it is a genuine and meaningful placement, then this is less likely to happen. However, it can happen with all volunteers and it is the volunteer's right to leave without feeling guilty.

managing volunteers with additional support needs continued

MOTIVATION AND RECOGNITION

Motivation and recognition strategies do not change when working with volunteers with additional support needs. However, motivation and recognition may be especially important for volunteers who have not experienced positive encouragement for a long time and who also may be lacking in confidence in their own abilities.

Ways of motivating and recognising volunteers include:

- Say 'thank you' regularly.
- Build volunteers' self-esteem by giving them a sense of ownership of their work.
- Give volunteers a title which reflects the work they do.
- Recognise and praise volunteers publicly, for example in your newsletter or on your website.
- Encourage volunteers to participate in training.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Regular feedback and discussion is good volunteer management practice. Supported volunteering may be one way of developing the volunteer's life and work skills; in this situation feedback is particularly beneficial.

Feedback and discussion must establish:

- How the placement is progressing for both the volunteer and the organisation.
- What new skills the volunteer has gained.
- Where do their talents lie?
- Is it time to progress, to either another position or even into employment if that is the main motivation behind volunteering?

Allow for the involvement of key workers, volunteering partners/buddies/mentors, occupational therapists, etc. at evaluation meetings and discussions.

✓ checklist

COMMITMENT, ASSUMPTIONS AND COMMUNICATION

- ☐ Does the organisation have a top down culture of equality, that is, from the board of management to the volunteer?
- ☐ Are negative assumptions and attitudes challenged within the organisation?
- ☐ Does the organisation facilitate awareness training for staff and volunteers?
- ☐ Does the organisation encourage and develop an informed and inclusive approach to language and actions?

MANAGING VOLUNTEERS WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

- ☐ Does the organisation have equality policies and procedures in place?
- ☐ Is the organisation accessible – both physically and financially – to all volunteers?
- ☐ Is there a role description, stating the requirements of the role and what is required of the volunteer?
- ☐ Where does the organisation source volunteers? Are diverse targeting techniques used?
- ☐ Does the organisation rely heavily on the application form as an initial screening tool? Can a more flexible approach be adopted?

- ☐ Is the organisation aware of and sensitive to additional support needs throughout the recruitment and selection process?
- ☐ How does the organisation facilitate disclosure? Is the disclosure of support needs directly related to the requirements of the role?
- ☐ Does the organisation take the time to ensure that the volunteer is clear about their role and duty within the organisation?
- ☐ Does the organisation facilitate the inclusion of external supports both for the volunteer and for the organisation?
- ☐ Does the organisation encourage social interaction among its volunteers and staff?
- ☐ Does the net contribution of the volunteer to the organisation outweigh the level of support provided?
- ☐ Is the organisation open to adaptive volunteering placements?
- ☐ Is the organisation aware of its rights and responsibilities, and those of the volunteer?
- ☐ Does the organisation take time to motivate the volunteers and recognise their contribution?
- ☐ Does the organisation insure ongoing monitoring and evaluation?



resources

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additional reading

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useful contacts

The **AISLING FOUNDATION**, 1 Mount Crescent Street,
Dublin 2. [T](tel:016340018) 01 634 0018 [E](mailto:info@theaislingfoundation.org) info@theaislingfoundation.org
[W](http://theaislingfoundation.org) theaislingfoundation.org

BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY, 32 Lower O'Connell Street,
Dublin 1. [T](tel:018747232) 01 874 7232 [E](mailto:admin@bitc.ie) admin@bitc.ie [W](http://www.bitc.ie) www.bitc.ie

Its projects: *The Linkage Programme*, placing offenders in
employment & training ([E](mailto:paddy-linkage@bitc.ie) paddy-linkage@bitc.ie); *Ready
for Work Programme*, work experience for those affected
by homelessness ([E](mailto:ready4work_dub@hotmail.com) ready4work_dub@hotmail.com)

CENTRAL REMEDIAL CLINIC, Vernon Avenue, Clontarf, Dublin 3.
[T](tel:018057400) 01 805 7400 [E](mailto:info@crc.ie) info@crc.ie [W](http://www.crc.ie) www.crc.ie

COMHAIRLE, Hume House, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.
[T](tel:016059000) 01 605 9000 [E](mailto:info@comhairle.ie) info@comhairle.ie [W](http://www.comhairle.ie) www.comhairle.ie

COMMUNITY AWARENESS OF DRUGS, 31/31A Central Hotel
Chambers, Dame Court, Dublin 2. [T](tel:016792681) 01 679 2681
[E](mailto:communityawareness@eircom.net) communityawareness@eircom.net
[W](http://www.aboutdrugs.ie) www.aboutdrugs.ie

The **COUNCIL OF EUROPE SECTION**, Department of
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DISABILITY FEDERATION OF IRELAND, Fumbally Court, Fumbally
Lane, Dublin 8. [T](tel:014547978) 01 454 7978
[E](mailto:info@disability-federation.ie) info@disability-federation.ie
[W](http://www.disability-federation.ie) www.disability-federation.ie

DUBLIN BUS, Information Bureau and Customer Service,
59 Upper O'Connell Street, Dublin 1. [T](tel:018734222) 01 873 4222
[E](mailto:info@dublinbus.ie) info@dublinbus.ie [W](http://www.dublinbus.ie) www.dublinbus.ie

ENABLE IRELAND, Assistive Technology Training Service,
Enable Ireland Adult Services, Cashel Rd, Dublin 12.
[T](tel:014992357) 01 499 2357 [E](mailto:slong@enableireland.ie) slong@enableireland.ie
[W](http://www.enableireland.ie) www.enableireland.ie

EQUALITY AUTHORITY, 2 Clonmel Street, Dublin 2.
[T](tel:014173336) 01 417 3336 (also textphone) [E](mailto:info@equality.ie) info@equality.ie
[W](http://www.equality.ie) www.equality.ie

EXCHANGE HOUSE TRAVELLERS SERVICE, 42 James Street,
Dublin 8. [T](tel:014546488) 01 454 6488 [E](mailto:info@exchangehouse.ie) info@exchangehouse.ie
[W](http://www.exchangehouse.ie) www.exchangehouse.ie

FÁS EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, 27/33 Upper Baggot Street,
Dublin 2. [T](tel:016070500) 01 607 0500 [E](mailto:info@fas.ie) info@fas.ie [W](http://www.fas.ie) www.fas.ie

FÁS DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINING SUPPORT SCHEME,
Services to Business Manager, Training Centre, Baldoye
Industrial Estate, Dublin 13. [T](tel:018167400) 01 816 7400 [E](mailto:info@fas.ie) info@fas.ie
[W](http://www.fas.ie) www.fas.ie

FOCUS IRELAND, 14a Esutace Street, Dublin 2. [T](tel:018815900) 01 881 5900
[E](mailto:info@focusireland.ie) info@focusireland.ie [W](http://www.focusireland.ie) www.focusireland.ie

useful contacts continued

HEALTH & SAFETY AUTHORITY, 10 Hogan Place, Dublin 2.

T 01 662 0400 **E** info@hsa.ie **W** www.hsa.ie

HOMELESS AGENCY, Parkgate Hall, Conyngham Road,

Dublin 8. **T** 01 703 6100 **E** homeless@indigo.ie

W www.homelessagency.ie

INCLUSIVE RECRUITMENT, 39 Lower Dominick Street, Dublin 1.

T 01 874 6384 **E** info@smh.ie **W** www.smh.ie

IRISH DEAF SOCIETY, 30 Blessington Street, Dublin 7.

T 01 860 1878 **E** info@irishdeafsociety.org

W www.irishdeafsociety.org

IRISH RAIL, Accessibility Officer, Connolly Station, Amiens

Street, Dublin 1. **T** 01 703 2634 **E** access@irishrail.ie

W www.irishrail.ie

IRISH REFUGEE COUNCIL, 88 Capel Street, Dublin 1.

T 01 873 0042 **E** info@irishrefugeecouncil.ie

W www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie

IRISH WHEELCHAIR ASSOCIATION, Blackheath Drive, Clontarf,

Dublin 3. **T** 01 833 8241 **E** info@iwa.ie **W** www.iwa.ie

MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND, 6 Adelaide Road,

Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin. **T** 01 284 1166

E info@mentalhealthireland.ie

W www.mentalhealthireland.ie

MERCHANTS QUAY IRELAND, 4 Merchants Quay, Dublin 8.

T 01 604 0086 **E** info@mqi.ie **W** www.mqi.ie

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR DEAF PEOPLE, 35 North Frederick

Street, Dublin 1. **T** 01 872 3800 **E** nad@iol.ie

W www.nadp.ie

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND OF IRELAND, Whitworth

House, Whitworth Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9.

T 01 830 7033 **E** info@ncbi.ie **W** www.ncbi.ie

NATIONAL DISABILITY AUTHORITY, 25 Clyde Road, Ballsbridge,

Dublin 4. **T** 01 608 0400 **E** nda@nda.ie **W** www.nda.ie

OFFICE FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION, Department of Social & Family

Affairs, Aras Mhic Dhiarmada, Store Street, Dublin 1.

T 01 704 3851 **E** osi@welfare.ie **W** www.welfare.ie

ORBIS DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINING, 12 Nutgrove Enterprise

Park, Nutgrove Way, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14. **T** 01 406 9458

E info@orbis.ie **W** www.orbis.ie

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN IRELAND, Richmond Square,

Morningstar Avenue, Dublin 7. **T** 01 872 1757,

E info@pwdi.ie **W** www.pwdi.ie

SCHIZOPHRENIA IRELAND, 38 Blessington Street, Dublin 7.

T 01 860 1620 **E** info@sirl.ie **W** www.sirl.ie

VANTASTIC, Unit 127, Baldoyle Industrial Estate, Baldoyle,

Dublin 13. **T** 01 839 2447 **E** info@vantastic.ie

W www.vantastic.ie

useful websites

Disability

- [W www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)
- [W www.disabilityconsultancy.ie](http://www.disabilityconsultancy.ie)
- [W www.accessability.ie](http://www.accessability.ie)

Supported volunteering management

- [W www.volunteeringireland.com](http://www.volunteeringireland.com)
- [W www.diversitychallenge.org](http://www.diversitychallenge.org)
- [W www.energizeinc.com](http://www.energizeinc.com)
- [W www.volunteering-ni.org](http://www.volunteering-ni.org)
- [W www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)
- [W www.ivr.org.uk](http://www.ivr.org.uk)

Volunteer mentoring

- [W www.volrap.org](http://www.volrap.org)
- [W www.depaultrust.org](http://www.depaultrust.org)

Assistive technology

- [W www.atireland.ie](http://www.atireland.ie)

Recommended terms for Internet search engines

Volunteers with disabilities

Social exclusion and volunteering

Disability accommodations

Assistive devices

Mentoring

Diversity in volunteering

Supported volunteering



This project was made possible with financial support
from the Vodafone Group Foundation, the National
Committee on Volunteering and Barclays



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Volunteering

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ISBN 0-9546988-0-0



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