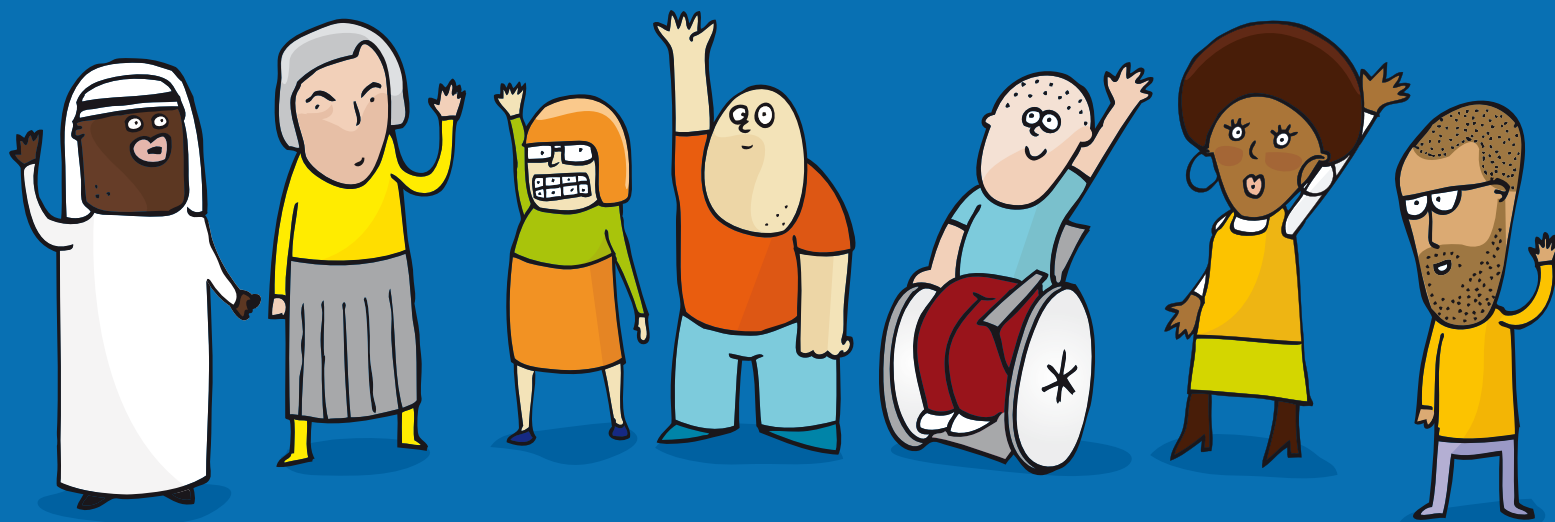


Resource on  
**VOLUNTEERING &  
VOLUNTEER SUPPORT  
IN THE YOUTH SECTOR**



# Resource on **VOLUNTEERING & VOLUNTEER SUPPORT IN THE YOUTH SECTOR**

NYCI wishes to acknowledge the work of the Working Group on Volunteering in developing this resource and the accompanying Policy and Charter.

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# Resource on **VOLUNTEERING & VOLUNTEER SUPPORT IN THE YOUTH SECTOR**

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# INTRODUCTION



# INTRODUCTION

The Volunteering Support Manual is the third element in the development of NYCI's structures and supports to assist organisations in attracting, recruiting and retaining volunteers. It follows the Policy on Volunteering adopted by NYCI's Assembly in November 2006 and the Charter on Volunteering developed in early 2007.

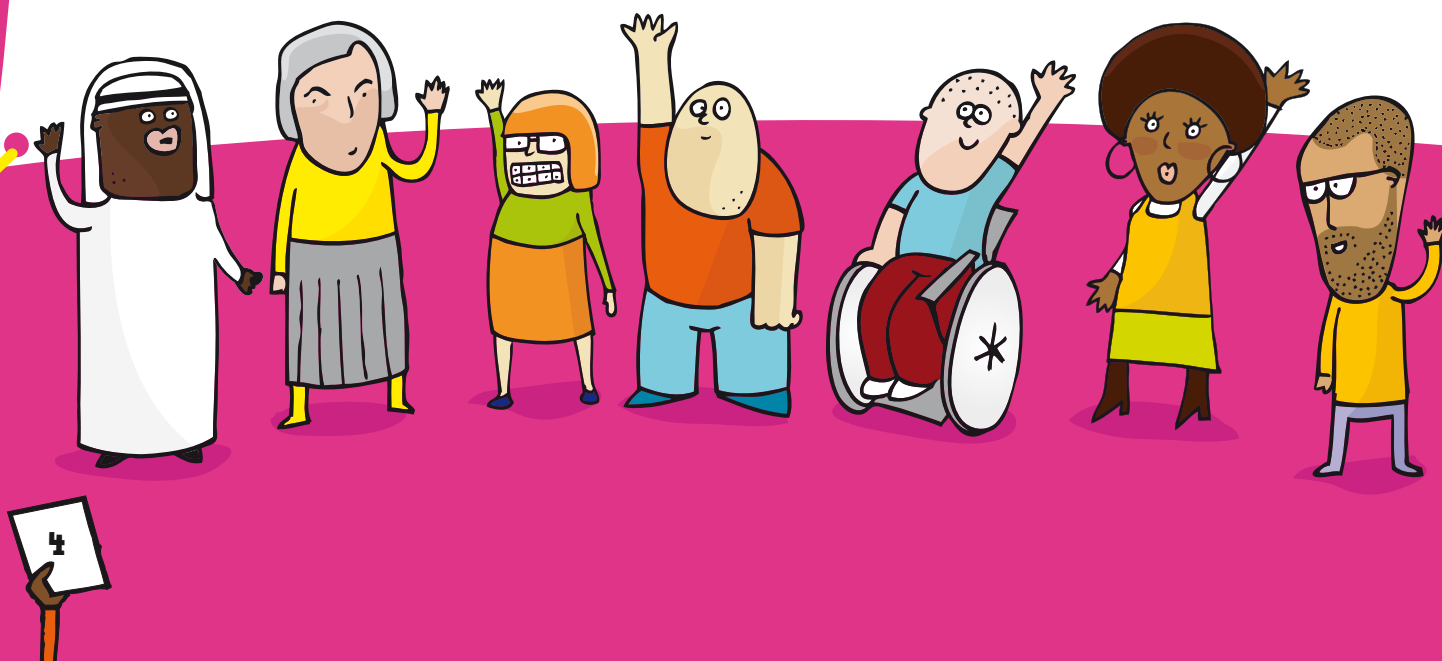
All of these resources have been produced as a direct result of feed-back and inputs received during the development of NYCI's first Strategic Plan during 2002. The Plan contained specific aims which included the promotion and development of volunteering as a worthwhile activity that is fundamental to society and also directed NYCI to support and develop best practice for involving volunteers in voluntary youth organisations.

One key objective relates to the establishment of strategic partnerships to develop, promote and support volunteering among policy-makers and the business community. This has been achieved with NYCI now being represented on the Board of Volunteering Ireland, and with strategic links established with Business in the Community with whom we have already delivered one awareness seminar for the sector.

A second objective relates to the development, nurturing and support of volunteering within the youth sector and within NYCI. To progress this work the Board of NYCI established a working group on volunteering as a sub-group of the Board. Terms of Reference for the group were drawn up and closely complement the key objectives in NYCI's strategic plan.

The first step on the road was the development of a consultation process that was to identify the major issues within the sector. This was carried out by means of a National Consultation Seminar on Volunteering in the Youth Sector which took place in April 2006. The seminar proved to be the catalyst for NYCI's work in this area as it provided key findings and outcomes to be worked on. These included issues such as defining volunteering in the sector; identifying barriers and challenges to volunteering and volunteers; and duly made recommendations for the sector to NYCI.

The result of all of this work is the 3 resources now in place, which will hopefully contribute to a vibrant voluntary sector and assist organisations to put in place robust structures and procedures which attract and retain volunteers.



# DEFINING VOLUNTEERING IN THE YOUTH SECTOR

the  
gift  
of  
time..



Participants at the National Consultation Seminar on Volunteering in the Youth Sector were asked to come up with a definition of what they believed volunteering meant. Not surprisingly, there was no clear definition of what it meant in relation to the youth sector, as there were so many differing views and experiences. Even in groups where similar roles were joined together, it proved difficult to generate agreement in respect of a definition.

As a result we must therefore be open to the concept that volunteering is many things to many people, and this as such creates a significant difficulty for any organisation or sector in attracting and engaging with prospective volunteers.

## Some examples of definitions from the seminar are:

'Volunteering is giving of your time and expertise/experience freely to influence and shape the development of young people, volunteers and youth organisations at local/regional/national level'

'Volunteering is a commitment of time to improve the situation and capability of young people by acting as a role model in terms of conduct and actions that we hope young people will aspire to.'

'A volunteer is someone who gives up their time for others' reward, because they care about their communities and people, are motivated to help other people, while being outgoing and willing to do stuff.'

More importantly, whilst it may be difficult to formally come up with a definition, there was more general agreement that volunteering was based on a set of principles that people accepted and tried to ensure that it formed a fundamental part of the ethos of their organisation and the work they did.

## Some Guiding Principles therefore are:

- Volunteering plays a significant and positive contribution to improving the lives of people, and to strengthening communities and civil society.
- Volunteering work is undertaken by the volunteer's free will, without financial gain.
- Sustaining volunteering is a means of creating and supporting a network of people who are available to work for and support organisations.
- Volunteers should be valued primarily for their individual contributions, enthusiasm and commitment, as well as for the experience and skills they can bring.
- Volunteering very often takes place informally in communities, as well as the formal organisation of National Society programmes and activities.
- The role of volunteers complements but cannot replace that of paid staff and others who provide services.

# TYPES OF VOLUNTEERING

## Diversity of Volunteers

It is clear that there are many varied ways in which volunteers specifically in the youth sector can engage, some of which are as follows:

**Occasional Volunteers** - These are people who volunteer at short term events such as summer projects or help by contributing specific skills ranging from driving buses, accountancy, mentoring, painting /decorating etc. They volunteer occasionally, for short periods, perhaps a few times a year.

**Regular Volunteers** - These are people who give a commitment, on an ongoing basis usually within the one organisation which they have had link with for some time. They undertake regular work in organisations, usually the same or similar role and complement the daily work of paid staff.

**Specific volunteers** - These are people who volunteer for a specific task or role such as for positions of responsibility or the Governance of the organisations. They have usually been elected and/or recruited by the community and/or staff on the basis of their skills and experience.

**Young Volunteers** - These young people can hold any of the above roles and/or act as peer mentors to other young people in organisations. There are also a number of specific youth led and managed voluntary organisations.

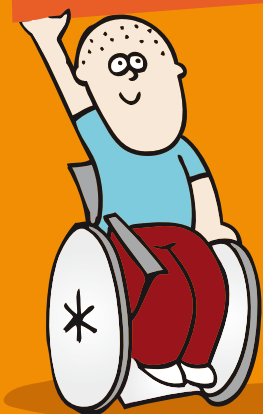
Additionally, it is possible to categorise volunteers by task, and in doing this it can be seen that in fulfilling this role, the volunteer may cross over one or more of the groups noted above.

For instance, it is quite possible for a young person who volunteers as a youth leader on a regular basis within his/her organisation to take on or to be asked to take on a different role such as possibly representing the organisation on the Board of another organisation or at a Conference. Likewise, paid staff of an organisation may take on a similar Board or Governance role within another organisation on behalf of the organisation that employs them.

What this diversity means is that as with the definition of Volunteering, it is difficult if not impossible to clearly identify a generic youth sector volunteer. The impact of this for organisations and the sector generally is that it throws up a significant variety of challenges and obstacles that the organisation needs to be aware of and address in relation to its volunteer body.



# INVOLVING VOLUNTEERS





# THE ORGANISATION

---

The first step on the road to working with volunteers is to take a long hard look at your organisation and its structures.

To create effective volunteer opportunities, your organisation must have a clear picture of where volunteers fit into the work of the organisation and into its day-to day life.

## Some questions that therefore need to be asked are:

How does the concept of volunteering fit with the aims and objectives of the organisation?

What impact will the engagement of volunteers have on the staff body?

What changes will need to be made to the organisation's structure to support volunteers?

What consultation is needed to happen with all stake-holders?

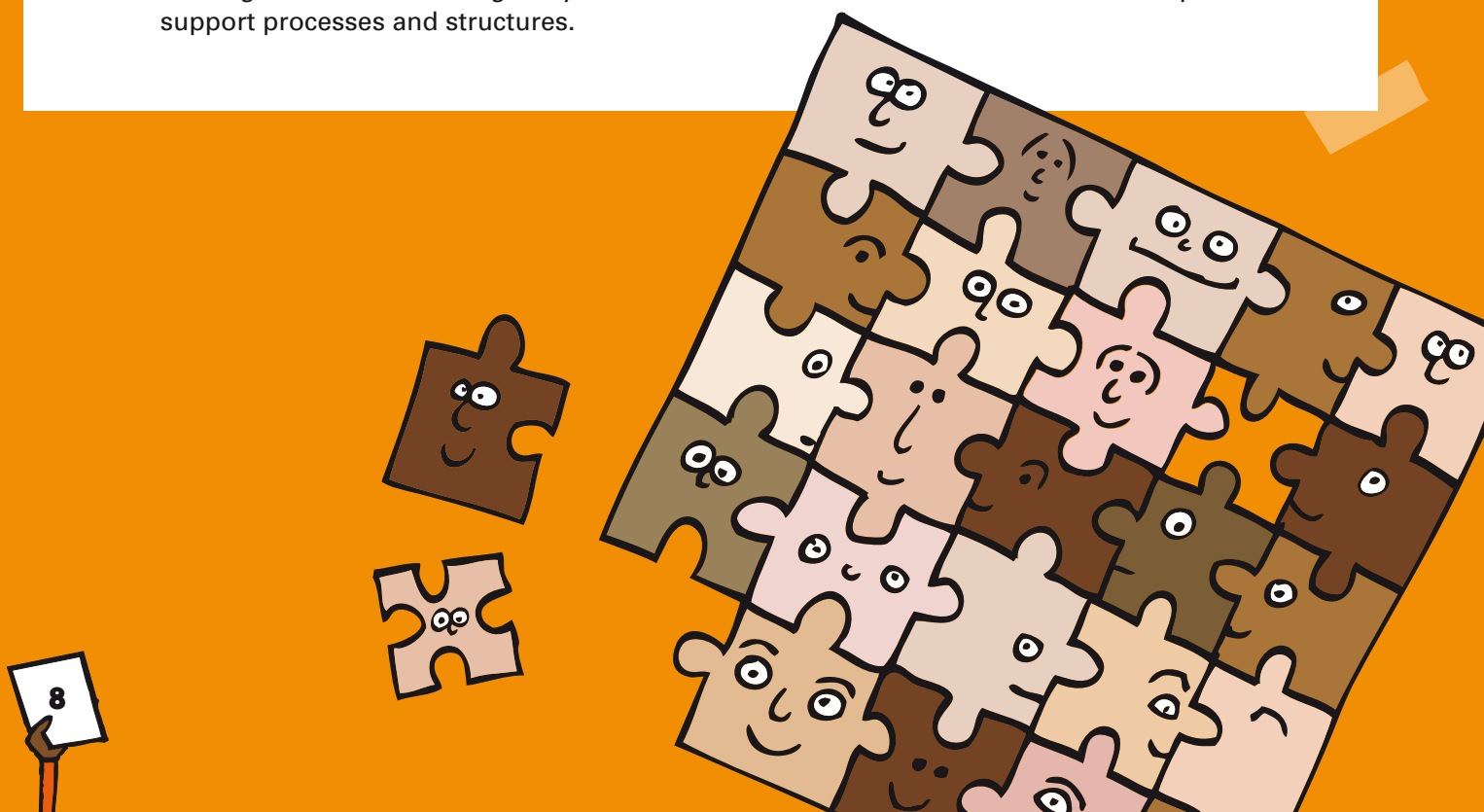
What new structures and supports need to be developed?

What resources are needed to make this happen?

It should also be noted that this engagement will not always be staff driven. Many voluntary organisations are led and even managed by volunteers. Where resources are limited the duties of volunteers at this level will also include those usually associated with Chief Executives or Directors. It is therefore important to acknowledge this in any planning within the organisation.

All of these questions and others need answering whether your organisation is new to engagement with volunteers or has a lengthy history of volunteer engagement.

The organisation should regularly review itself to ensure that it continues to develop its support processes and structures.



# ORGANISATIONAL NEEDS ANALYSIS

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Looking at your-self in a critical analytical manner is usually a challenge to the skills and abilities of most of us. Human nature has tendency to see things through rose-tinted glasses and that is no different for organisations.

In preparation therefore for bringing volunteers into an organisation, or even for evaluating and reviewing how we work with volunteers, it is imperative that we look at the organisation in a clear appraising manner, so that we accurately identify the needs of the organisation as a home for volunteers and don't shoe-horn volunteers into manufactured or imagined spaces.

The process therefore must be a structured and analytical process which is informed by all of the factors prevailing in the organisation. The most common way of undertaking this work is by way of matrix or Needs Analysis Framework (NAF).

## What is a Needs Analysis Framework (NAF)?

A Needs Analysis Framework quite simply is a tool to help organisations or individuals to organise and present existing information in a coherent and consistent manner to deliver clarity on how they do something. It can be applied in a variety of settings but is an ideal process to use in deciding whether your organisation should enter into or continue with a process such as engaging volunteers.

A Framework is therefore nothing more than a structure to document findings and conclusions in a systematic way, using indicators and descriptors for each of the areas of the framework resulting in conclusions that can be transformed into organisational decisions. The process works on the basis that the Framework can be created from information that is already there.

## Putting it into practice

The framework works by identifying the key elements of an organisation and by critical assessment, analysing performance and therefore needs within those areas. An organisation may do this on an organisation-wide basis covering all areas such as Governance, Staffing, Service Delivery, External Influences, Resources and funding, etc. Alternatively, an organisation may choose to focus solely on the specific area that they wish attract volunteers to. The factors being assessed may therefore be different or more specialised in nature e.g. Support Capacity within the work area; skills availability in the sector; etc.

Whatever indices are used, the benefit of the process is in the exercise itself. The process may conclude with the same results as known already, however, generally speaking it will give a clear picture of the strengths of an organisation and challenges for it in proceeding on a particular piece of work as in engaging with volunteers.

(Please see example matrix in Section 6)



## CREATING THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT

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A fundamental part of establishing the concept of volunteering in an organisation is based on the process of creating a holistic organisation wide environment that is both attractive and welcoming to prospective volunteering.

As part of the analysis of the organisation, you will have established why the organisation needs volunteers; what they will be doing; what type of people you are looking for; what impact this will have on the organisation and its employees.

As you progress through this resource you will visit chapters or sections devoted to individual areas of volunteer engagement and support. Whilst they all deal with different elements of working with volunteers, they all contribute to one overall process, and that is the creation of the right environment to bring volunteers in to your organisation or to retain the volunteers you have.

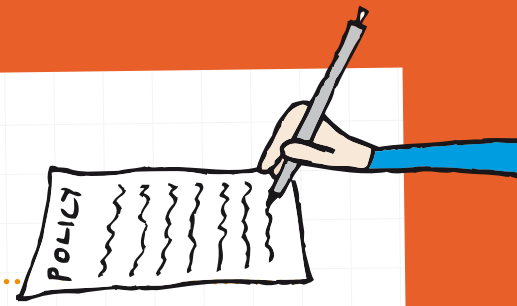
This is probably the most important element of the thought process. Volunteers will want to work for your organisation if they feel welcomed, supported, wanted, recognised and valued. The volunteer support process must therefore include all of the elements that provide these benefits for volunteers, and even missing out on just one of these supports can cause difficulties in volunteer retention.

You should therefore constantly re-visit the environment you have in your organisation, and look at it from the point of view of the volunteer. Would you like to work in their position with the support that they have?

**WELCOME VOLUNTEERS!**



# DEVELOPING A POLICY



Usually, one of the first steps in formalising an organisation's intentions with regards to volunteers and volunteer support is the Policy document.

The main consideration is that the Policy should reflect the needs of the organisation and be workable, as otherwise it will just be filed away and forgotten.

## What should be in it?

There is no set format for volunteer policies. Each organisation has its own needs that should be reflected in its policy and should be reflective of the kind of work it does. An organisation whose volunteers work with young people with learning difficulties may have a different style of policy to that of one carrying out environmental or conservation work, for example.

In general, most organisations tend to have a policy that is a short concise document that refers to other separate documents or appendixes covering specific issues; e.g. Health and Safety.

This is usually the best option as a substantial tome that covers everything and all things can be daunting and overwhelming to the reader and often is self-defeating as it becomes too detailed to be taken in properly.

## Whilst there are no blueprints for the perfect policy, there are some specific items that should be covered:

- An explanation of what the organisation does and why it involves volunteers.
- The organisation may have a vision or mission in relation to volunteers.
- Who is defined as a volunteer in the organisation?
- An explanation of the purpose of the policy.
- Reference to how the policy engages with the rest of the organisation in terms of other policies such as equality, diversity, etc.
- Implementation recommendations.
- Internal Procedures Recruitment and selection.
- Commitment of supports.
- Recognition of the rights of the volunteer and responsibilities.

## The above list is not exhaustive and as noted, some organisations will have different priorities within their policy.

What is most important though is that the policy becomes an integral part of the life of the organisation. Once developed the policy should be revisited on a regular basis to ensure that it is up to date and properly reflects the intentions of the organisation as well as changes in both the environment and in legislation.

It may be appropriate in larger organisations to establish a steering team or committee who will have responsibility for this work.

# IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY

## Introducing the Policy

Once the Policy is written, your main task is to ensure that it does not sit on a shelf or in a filing cabinet somewhere. If it is to be properly implemented, people need to know that the policy exists and to understand its purpose. Maintaining the commitment to equality, diversity and good practice means ensuring that the policy becomes an integral part of the everyday life of the organisation.

It is useful to initially introduce the policy with a meeting which gives the opportunity to talk through the policy and explain its importance. This should not be a challenging process as provided that proper consultation took place in the development of the policy, there should not be any surprises there for anyone.

Following the meeting, all staff and volunteers should receive a copy. Making it part of a staff or volunteer support pack will guarantee its position and ensure that all new staff and volunteers get a copy as part of their induction process.

Finally, in terms of profile, it is always a good idea to display the policy prominently, possibly on staff notice-boards. Some organisations may wish to be more creative and actively “advertise” the policy making posters with key phrases taken from the policy matched to positive volunteering images, for example.

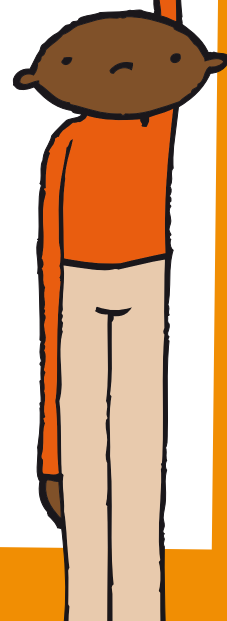
## Accessibility of the policy

- Make your volunteer policy as accessible and inclusive as possible.
- Make sure that it is written in clear English (or appropriate language) and isn't presented as a legal or technical document.
- Make sure that the format is conducive to it being understood.
- Make sure that the presentation in terms of colour, typeface, size of text, etc. makes it readable by all.
- Bullet points can be useful in emphasising certain important parts of the policy.

## Reviewing the Policy

The flexible nature of volunteering, and the constant change in society, means that circumstances for volunteers can change much more quickly than with paid staff. It therefore makes sense to have an agreed review process and time-table to adapt or improve the policy.

Having such a process in place ensures that the policy is kept as a living part of the organisation, and even if very little is revised or amended, the process of looking through it underlines its importance within the organisation.



# VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

In your work around identifying the needs of the organisation, you may have identified opportunities for volunteering that are currently available in your organisation. There are, however, a whole variety of roles and responsibilities that can be carried out by volunteers and the following table may help in identifying other areas that may not have been considered.

## Governance

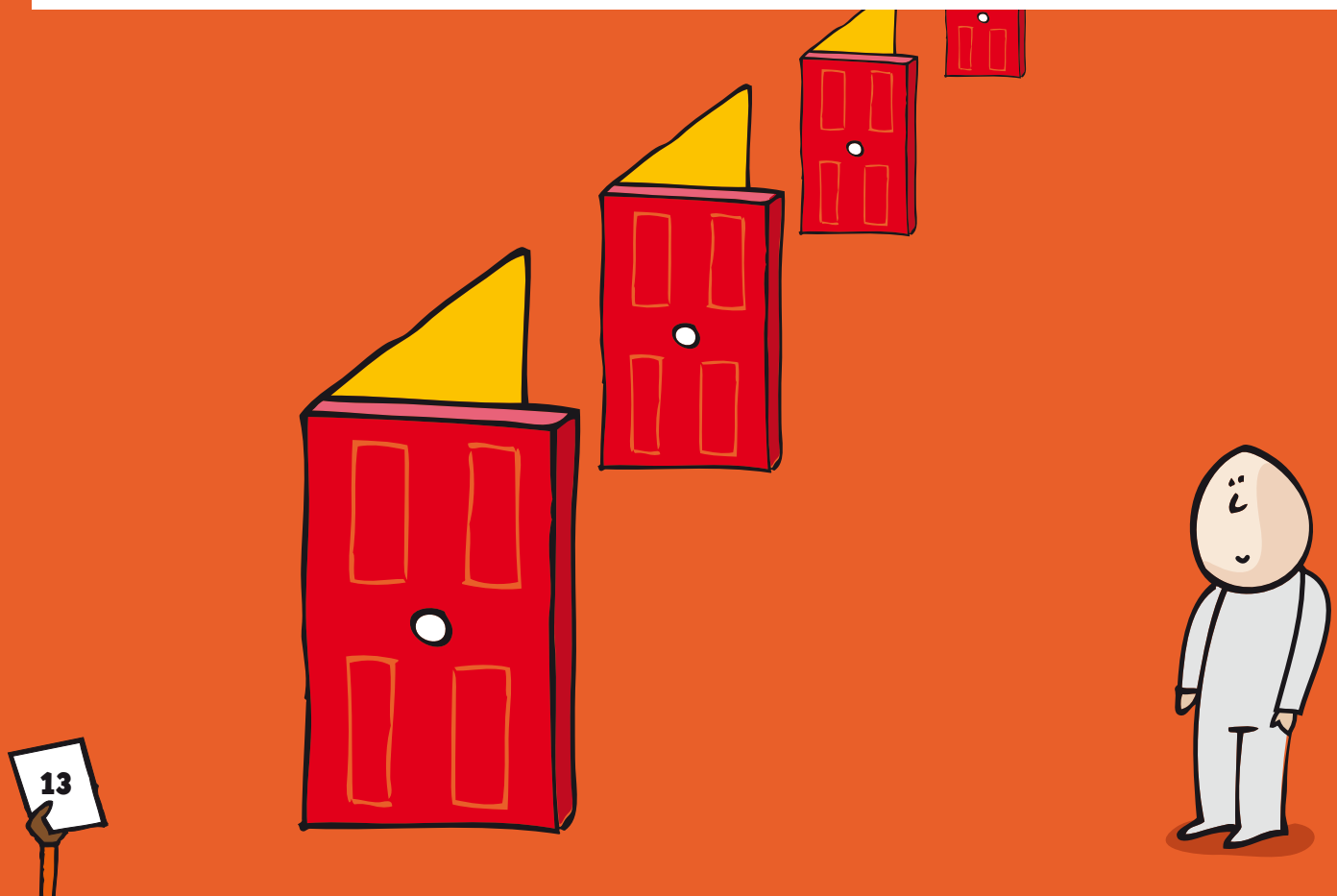
Board Members  
Members of decision making sub-groups  
Members of advisory groups to work areas

## Programme Delivery

Youth Workers  
Youth leaders  
Members of programme steering groups  
Helpers

## Support Functions

Helpers  
Fund-raisers  
Part-time support (e.g. parents)  
Domestic (e.g. cleaners)



# ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP/ VOLUNTEER MOTIVATION

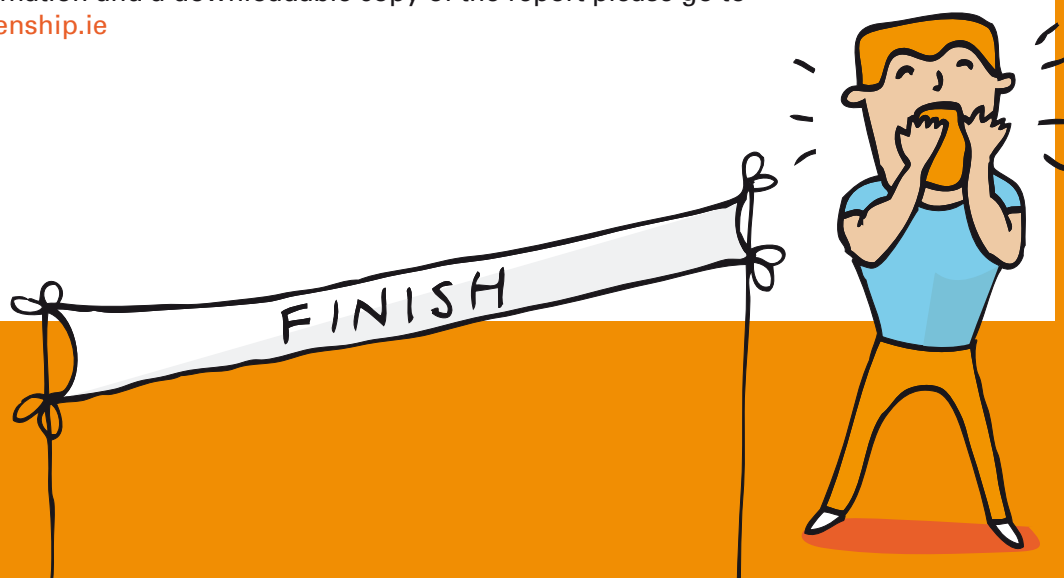
The Task Force on Active Citizenship published its report on Active Citizenship in March 2007.

## The report identified 10 Guiding principles for Active Citizenship

- Active Citizenship concerns everyone.
- We all have rights and responsibilities as members of different communities: family, neighbourhood, shared interest, national, European and global.
- Active Citizenship is based on the values of inclusion, equality and solidarity with those who are disadvantaged.
- Strong and healthy communities welcome and value diversity in cultural expression, values and lifestyles.
- Openness, accountability and trust will help maximise participation in the democratic and decision-making process.
- Subsidiarity is a foundation of active and engaged citizens – by enabling and empowering decision-making as close to the citizen as possible.
- Respectful dialogue allows Government, citizens and communities to seek the common good while acknowledging differences.
- A successful society depends on partnership – with citizens, civil society, elected public representatives, the public service, business and trade unions all contributing in different ways.
- Active Citizens are made not born – lifelong learning allows us to develop and grow at each stage of our lives.
- Active Citizenship needs leadership – and we are all potential leaders in our communities.

(Report of the Task Force on Active Citizenship – March 2007)

For further information and a downloadable copy of the report please go to [www.activecitizenship.ie](http://www.activecitizenship.ie)





# YOUNG PEOPLE VOLUNTEERING

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) in its submission to the Joint Committee on Arts, Sports, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltach Affairs, in its review of Volunteering in Ireland, proposed that the Government's role was to create the right environment for volunteering and could do this by means of a national information and promotional campaign to encourage volunteering, particularly amongst young people.

In reality, an initiative at this national level has not taken place, and although there have been significant watersheds such as the Special Olympics, volunteering remains an activity where organisations play the primary role in attracting people to their work. This resource is centred on that organisational role in attracting and retaining volunteers by concentrating on the key issues and the key actions that organisations need to take. Nowhere is that more relevant than in involving young people as volunteers.

Whilst some organisations develop their own young people through their own programmes to progress as youth leaders and afterwards to retain them as adult volunteers, many organisations engage with young people purely in a programme delivery capacity. Engagement with young people as volunteers is therefore a significant challenge for organisations. NYCI in a recent commissioned research identified three main factors that influence young people in their decision to volunteer or not.

## General Perception:

Most young people are happy to "help out" or "give a hand" in an informal or unstructured way. There is however uncertainty as to whether they regard this as volunteering. They were also unclear in their understanding of volunteering, associating it to roles and not just activity e.g. working at the Special Olympics was obviously volunteering, whereas coaching a youth football team was not. Additionally, where they were given roles and titles in a team environment e.g. leader/chairperson etc. they found it easier to associate this with volunteering.

## Why volunteer?

The main reasons why young people want to volunteer were:

- Satisfaction of helping people
- Growth in self-esteem and self-awareness
- Sense of achievement, pride and enjoyment
- Friendship
- Personal opportunities
- Informal activity
- Learning something new





## Influencing Factors

The third element which needs to be considered is the various factors that influence, and it is important to note that these are not always constant. They may vary for a number of reasons such as location, family background, education etc.

### Social environment

Main influencers here are:

- Having friends who are volunteers.
- Having family members who volunteer.
- Knowing local people who volunteer.
- Having access to information about volunteering opportunities.

On the negative side, peer pressure was seen to have a detrimental effect on young people, especially in environments where helping others was seen as “goody-goody” past-time and attracted criticism and harassment.

### Information

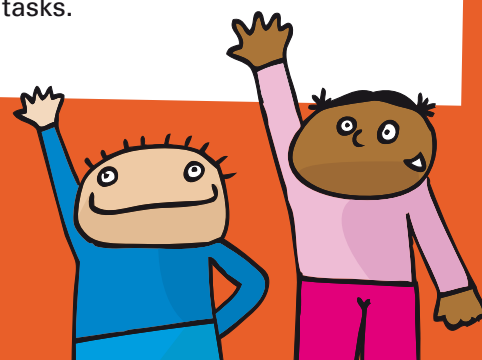
There is a clear view that becoming a volunteer depended primarily on the availability of information for volunteering opportunities at the local level. Unfortunately, access to information varied significantly between areas which participated in the research. It is also important to note that unlike adults who are more varied in their choice of volunteering particularly in terms of geographical location, young people almost totally preferred to volunteer in their own local groups or their local community.

### Education

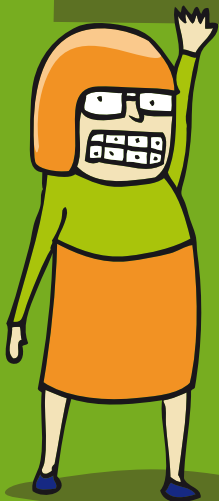
There is a traditional link between early volunteering and the education system at school level, although that is very much seen as a helping or fund-raising activity. What has been highlighted is the need to establish valuable opportunities in order to engage with young people.

- Young people want to be involved; therefore opportunities must be in roles, and not just as helpers.
- Organisations need to be willing to open up their structures to allow real participation.
- Organisations need to promote the positive to make the opportunity attractive.
- Organisations need to develop opportunities that are fun; allow participation and ownership; fit with the young people's other commitments; have real and visible outcomes.

Creating an environment that attracts young people is the only way to get them involved. It is fundamental that your organisation recognises the value of their inputs and does not use them solely as a “strong pair of hands” to help with menial tasks.



# RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION



## INTERNAL PROCEDURES

An organisation should put in place a formal recruitment process for the engagement of volunteers as it would for its paid staff. It is a good idea to include a couple of sentences about the recruitment process in your Volunteer Policy, but ideally a separate, accessible guide such as a one-page “aide memoir” can be developed which gives clear guidance and instructions on the process and procedures to be used.

**This could include the following chronological sequence:**

- How will you decide to recruit a volunteer?
- How will you agree the steps to be taken?
- How will you advertise the vacancy/opportunity?
- What application process is suitable – will you use a form?
- How will you interview candidates?
- What will you do about references?
- Will there be a probation period?
- How will you deal with people you feel aren't right for the role?
- What documentation do you need to provide?
- Will you have a formal volunteer agreement?
- Do you have a formal role description to issue?
- What other support documentation will the volunteer get?
- Do you have a volunteer hand-book that covers all terms and conditions?
- Are there any other processes such as vetting or other checks that have to be completed?

Once again, this list is not exhaustive, but is intended as a guide to those organisations who perhaps do not yet have fully developed supports and structures to engage with volunteers.

What is important is that any guide or process developed is workable for the organisation and reflects the needs of the organisation. As with the policy it is therefore natural that processes may vary between organisations, but a basic element of best practice as noted above is recommended.

The Internal procedures should cover all elements of HR practices in respect of volunteers. These can be categorised in 3 main areas:

1. **Recruitment**
2. **Supervision and Evaluation**
3. **Deselecting or Dismissal**

## Recruitment

The basic parameters for recruiting are referred to above, but it does no harm to develop a chronological progress chart or the like to ensure that all steps are addressed. This may follow the following steps:

- Agree who is responsible for the recruitment process
- Agree the interview and decision making process
- Prepare the required documents including advertisement, person specification and role description and any application forms
- Consider any promotional processes to advertise the opportunity
- Agree on any short-listing process
- Arrange the logistics for the interview
- Agree the support process such as References and Garda Vetting
- Put in place the documentation to be completed on appointment
- Ensure that induction and support documentation is ready for the new volunteer

## Supervision and Evaluation

Supervision and support will vary according to the type of role being carried out. However, every volunteer has the right to supervision and support in carrying out his/her duties. It is important therefore that the organisation agrees who will be responsible for providing support and supervision to each and every volunteer before they start. This creates a favourable first impression and gives the volunteer a sense of confidence. The person with responsibility will vary from organisation to organisation. It may be a staff member who has responsibility as the Volunteer co-ordinator; alternatively it could be another volunteer who has this responsibility. Whoever the person is, the structure must be firmly established and clearly communicated.

Ongoing support and supervision is vital in the overall evaluation of volunteer contribution to the organisation. The process can be developed involving reports from supervisors, other monitoring processes and indeed feed-back from the volunteers themselves. Completed properly the evaluation process will show how the volunteer is working and contributing to the overall aims and objectives. Done well, the process should be a positive experience for both the volunteer and the organisation.

Things, however do not always work out positively, and organisations should be aware that sometimes actions need to be taken which are not always positive or pleasant.

## De-selection or Dismissal

Unfortunately, not all engagement with volunteers or prospective volunteers will end up with a positive outcome. There will be times, either at the recruitment stage or following evaluation of performance where the organisation needs to decline or dismiss.

### So what if things don't work out?

This is probably one of the most difficult issues to deal with in the whole organisation/volunteer relationship, but it is one that you must address effectively and promptly. In order to protect your organisation and the welfare of any client group in your care, a formal process must be put in place.

## Refusing Potential Volunteers

This is probably the easier of the 2 scenarios, as often, there has been little personal contact between the organisation and the individual. Nevertheless, the formal process should be documented and adhered to. It should:

- State the method of communication, be it letter or interview)
- Stress that you are following organisational policy
- Explain why the volunteer is being refused
- Offer suggestions on skill and experience building
- If appropriate, suggest an alternative opportunity within the organisation.

## Parting with existing Volunteers

The more difficult of the 2 scenarios, usually because the volunteer has been working with the organisation and has built up personal relationships with other staff and volunteers, including possibly your-self.

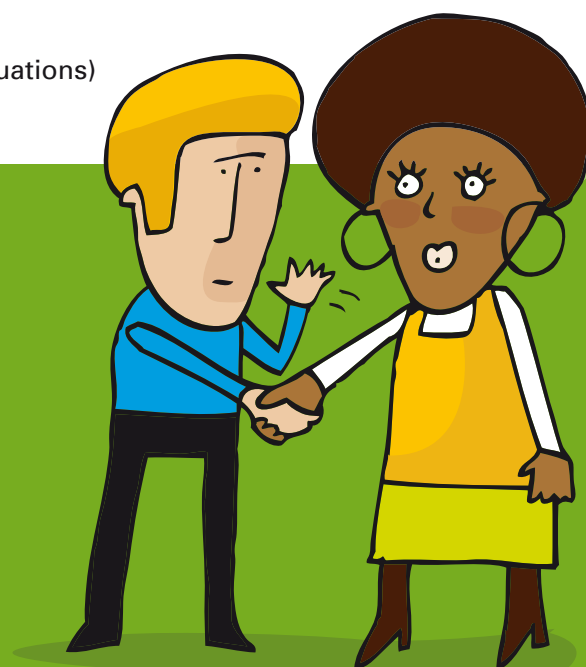
Whilst de-selection or dismissal should be the last resort, and be used as such once the whole range of options such as support, training, and possible discipline have been used, it is nevertheless a real option that sometimes we have no alternative but to consider.

Any previous process carried out should not however undermine the formal process, which like above should be fully documented and communicated. It should:

- State the method of communication
- Differentiate between procedures for performance issues or disciplinary issues
- Clearly state why this process is now necessary
- Clearly state the issue or action which has necessitated the process
- Document the processes and actions which have led to this stage
- Clearly state the implications of the action

As well as the above process, the organisation should have an exit process in place that may include an exit interview. It should also have a clear policy on references for volunteers who are leaving.

(Please also see Section 4 – Dealing with Difficult Situations)



## RECRUITING FOR DIVERSITY

In a changing social and cultural environment, it is always important to be aware of the changes in the make up of society and how those changes affect the social environment that we both live and work in.

One of the main areas in which this change happens is in the area of volunteering. Where there is a significant influx of new culture and nationalities into a country, it brings new perspectives. Many countries have significantly different or stronger volunteer structures to others. In some countries it is legitimately viewed as an alternative to military service; in others community service is a normal part-and-parcel of everyday life. For many immigrants, volunteering is a way to get to know the country and society that they have moved to whilst they look for employment.

Whatever the reason, organisations must keep an eye of the bigger picture to ensure that they develop appropriate structures.

It is important that initially, the commitment to recognise diversity is built into the Volunteer Policy by including a specific statement or paragraph.

Secondly it is vital that in order to engage with diverse sections of society that appropriate recruitment materials are developed. These might include:

- The use of positive images rather than pages of words.
- Ensuring that pictures/images speak to the section of the population that you want to involve.
- Is the language appropriate?
- Make sure that you have material translated into the relevant language.
- Keep accessibility in mind so that disabled readers can access the information.
- This could be a simple issue of using the correct colours as much as size and type of print.
- Make sure that accessibility extends to other mediums such as the web-site etc.
- Recognise that printed material may not be the best or only way to reach your target audience.



# VOLUNTEER RETENTION

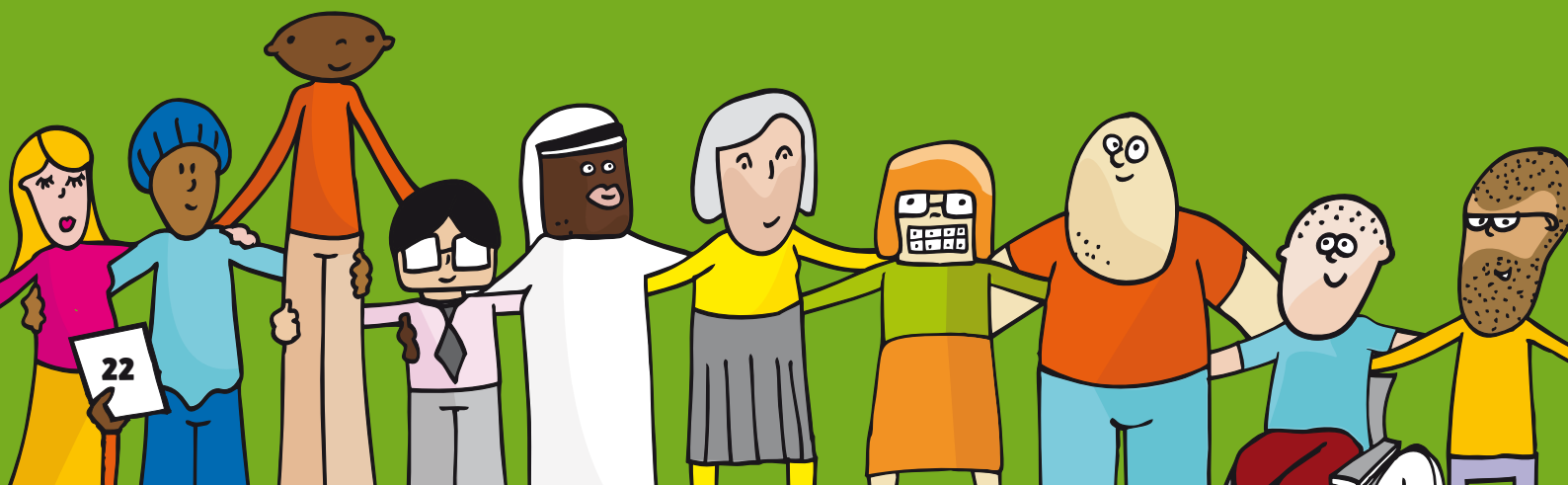
This manual's main purpose is to support organisations through examples of best practice, to create an environment that is attractive to volunteers and makes them want to stay.

It is fundamental therefore that an organisation's volunteer support processes do not just start and finish with the recruitment process. The investment made in ongoing support as documented in other sections of this manual, highlight the commitment required to retain good and effective volunteers. In the same way as with employees and paid staff, retaining volunteers is often more difficult than obtaining them in the first place.

In the current climate of more opportunity and a move away from the more traditional life-long concept of volunteering, it is more important that organisations have a clear organisation wide process that's re-visited on a regular basis to ensure that it maintains the right environment to convince volunteers to stay with the organisation.

**Some of the actions that might take place to ensure that this happens are as follows:**

- The development of a clear ethos and policy
- Identifying clear roles and provide full information on what's required
- Develop systems that consider the needs of individuals
- Implement strong and transparent support structures
- Make it evident with clear notices etc. that the organisation is committed to its support of volunteers
- Ensure that evaluation processes include opportunities for volunteers to express their expectations and comment on how the organisation is meeting those
- Identify people with appropriate skills and abilities to manage and support volunteers
- Ensure that appropriate equivalent supports and protections (Insurance etc.) are in place as they would be for employees
- Demonstrate regularly that the volunteer matters
- Ensure that they know the benefit of their contribution and that they are valued
- Regularly review and update all procedures for volunteer involvement



## CHILD PROTECTION / GARDA VETTING

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There are a number of Guidelines or pieces of Legislation that impact on the Youth Sector in the current day, and organisations need to be aware of all of these. A breakdown of relevant legislation is included in an Appendix at the rear of the resource. However, for this section we will concentrate on the issue of Child Protection and Garda Vetting.

The issue of Child Protection will obviously impact on any organisation that works with young people under the age of 18, and the requirements and processes are equally relevant to the recruitment of volunteers as they are to staff.

The relevant Guideline that currently applies to the sector is the Code of Good Practice for the Youth Work Sector published in September 2002 and updated in May 2003. This aims to assist and give direction and guidance to youth workers and youth organisations in protecting children and young people under their care, and in dealing with allegations or suspicions of abuse. The Code may also be used by organisations to assist them in the design and drafting of Codes of Behaviour and Child Protection Policy documents.

As part of the ongoing improvement of practice in this area, Garda Vetting was expanded on 1st September 2006 to include the Youth Work Sector. From that date, all new staff and volunteers need to go through a Garda Vetting process before they commence any work or activity on behalf of an organisation.

The Garda Vetting will show that a person has no conviction against them or will provide a statement of all convictions and prosecutions, successful or not and pending or completed in the Republic of Ireland or elsewhere.

It is important, however, to note that Garda Vetting should not be regarded as the sole means of recruitment or selection. It is a process that needs to be a fundamental part of the recruitment and selection process and complement the other best practice elements such as interviews, references etc. Implementing a Garda Vetting process does not relieve an organisation from their duty of care under best practice recruitment and selection processes.

### Putting it into practice

#### So how does this impact on organisations recruiting volunteers?

The system currently (August 2007) is addressing new staff and volunteers. It will eventually be expanded to retrospectively include current staff and volunteers as the capacity of the Garda Unit permits.

Any organisation therefore recruiting new volunteers needs to build this process into their recruitment process, and it can be summarised as follows.

During the interview process, an organisation must make clear the fact that the post/volunteering opportunity is subject to Garda Vetting. It must also obtain the prospective volunteers consent to carrying out the vetting.

The form must be fully completed with the required details and be forwarded to the vetting unit through the agreed channels.



To avail of Garda Vetting, an organisation must apply for such service through the authorised vetting person for their organisation, having entered into such an agreement with the Garda Vetting Unit. Alternatively, if an organisation does not have an authorised person, by reason of the number of vetting applications it makes on an annual basis, it may apply to access the vetting process through the Youth Work Garda Vetting Consortium.

This Consortium was established to support smaller organisations which might have capacity or resource issues to fulfil the process themselves in accessing the vetting process. It is administered by the Child Protection Unit at NYCI and co-ordinated by the National Co-ordinator of Child Protection.

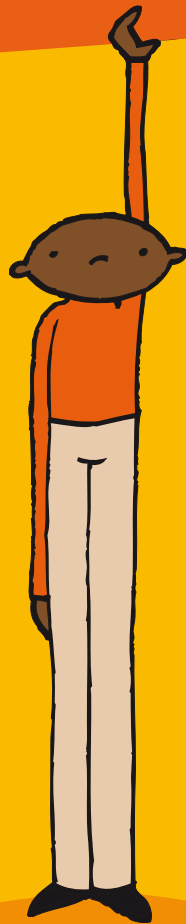
It is recommended that a prospective volunteer does not start with the organisation until the result of the vetting search and all other recruitment procedures are satisfied. This will save significant embarrassment for both the organisation and the volunteer in the event that any of these recruitment procedures report a conviction or other information that may impact on their suitability.

Organisations should however be conscious that a report of a conviction or the receipt of some negative information will not automatically bar the applicant from joining the organisation. As with best practice in recruitment, it is very much the organisation's responsibility to make the decision based on the information received and whether that information or conviction is relevant to the work the volunteer will be carrying out.

For further information on the requirements of Child protection and Garda Vetting, please refer to the Code of Good Practice for the Youth Work Sector or contact the Child Protection Unit at NYCI.



# **DEVELOPING VOLUNTEER CAPACITY AND SKILLS**



# VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

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The Management of Volunteers is a key issue in the creation and support of an effective volunteer structure, both for the organisation and the volunteer. There needs to be a clear line of communication established and documented to ensure that the volunteer has a direct line of contact with the organisation and with a designated post or person within the organisation.

There are a number of facets and factors that need to be considered in establishing the management structure:

## The Manager or Co-ordinator

As part of its initial evaluation in considering whether to engage with volunteers, an organisation will have identified its capacity to support the process. A fundamental part of this process will be the establishment of a line management capacity to support and manage the work of the volunteer/s. There are a number of ways in which this may happen. In larger organisations where volunteer numbers are significant the organisation may establish a Volunteer Management Committee made up of a number of members of the organisation. Alternatively, the organisation may decide to create the specific post of Volunteer Manager or Co-ordinator. In smaller organisations, and often in reality even in larger organisations, the resources are not always there to provide this structure, and the role is usually accommodated as an additional duty into an existing post. Whichever option is best suited to your organisation, you should ensure that ideally, there is one person or place in the organisation that has overall responsibility for the management and co-ordination of the volunteer cohort, and most importantly this should be communicated to the volunteers and the organisation as a whole.

## The Organisation

In engaging with volunteers, the organisation cannot overlook the impact that this may have on the staff of the organisation. In organisations where there are obvious financial and resource pressures, the engagement of volunteers may contribute to increased insecurity and uncertainty. It is therefore important to ensure that organisation employees are also supported during this period.

### Concerns may include:

- Fears about employment security.
- Resentment around the increased work-load of supporting volunteers.
- Fears about not having the necessary experience to manage the relationship.
- Concerns about the skills of the volunteers and their impact on the organisation.
- Concerns regarding the dependency of volunteers.

It is therefore vitally important that the organisation fully engages with its employees in making sure that the correct structure is put in place. This will include organisational policy and possibly a charter. Team meetings and briefings will also contribute to a better working environment. These are all addressed in other sections of this resource.

## The Volunteer/s

As with staff, it is important to note that volunteers entering the organisation will also bring with them uncertainties that need to be recognised and dealt with at the earliest opportunity.

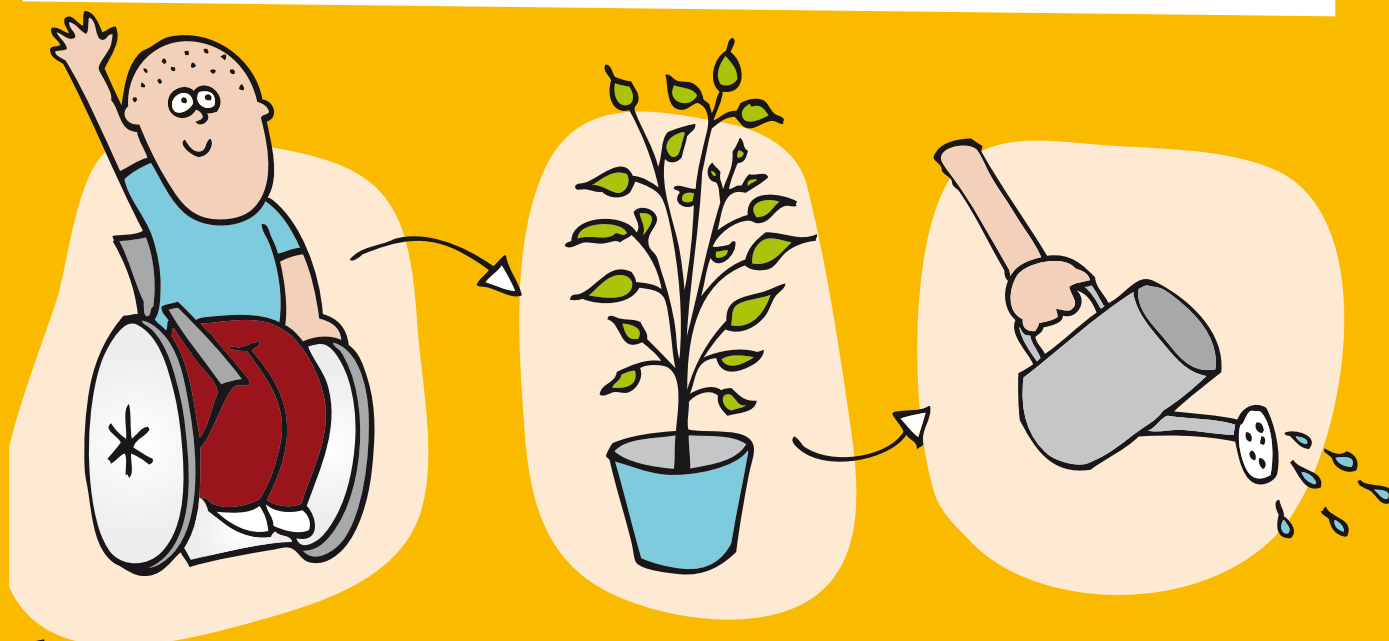
In line with the old saying “You only get one chance to make an impression, good or bad”.

### Some volunteer concerns might be:

- Initial nervousness on entering a new environment
- Shyness on meeting new people
- Lack of experience in working in a team or in a certain fashion
- Concerns about their ability to fulfil their responsibility
- A feeling that they will be looked down on and not treated fairly
- Concerns that their skill and contribution will not be recognised
- Knowing that they have more skills than some employees but not being allowed to use them
- Being given the menial tasks that no-one else wants
- Having adequate support

Again, as with employees it is vitally important that the organisation puts in place the proper structures to successfully induct new volunteers. This will include the communication of the usual processes such as the policy etc. However it will also benefit from good recruitment processes such as ensuring that volunteer selection is targeted and matched to available tasks, therefore ensuring that volunteers gain a sense of confidence that they will be able to carry out their work properly. Other elements that can be considered are including team-work with staff as an integral part of the role description and allowing time for that to happen.

In all of this, the underlying element that supports success is communication. The organisation must communicate a clear line management structure that is known to all, and then be seen to be supporting and implementing that structure to best effect.



# TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

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Training and Development is an essential part of the support structure that an organisation should put in place for its volunteers. In the same way as we invest in support structures for our employees to develop their potential and skills, it is essential that the organisation provides a similar process for its volunteers.

Training can take the form of specific on-the-job training to provide them with the information and skills they need to carry out the responsibilities and duties of their role. Alternatively it could take the form of a more strategic investment in their development to enable them to take on added responsibilities. Whatever form it takes, any investment will only be of benefit to the organisation in the long run, as the improvement in skill and performance results in improved service provision.

The benefit that the organisation reaps will be directly proportionate to the investment it puts in. Whilst volunteers will have specific and different needs to those of employees, it is important to ensure that training timings and methods are appropriate to their needs and capabilities. Ultimately, however, lack of training investment will be reflected by a lack of performance, and it is the organisation that will inevitably suffer in the long run.

## Why train?

- To lessen mistakes and other problems
- As part of a volunteer recruitment process
- To demonstrate the standards the organisation expects
- To inform new volunteers about the organisation and their tasks
- To improve performance and create new opportunities
- To give an opportunity to learn about the environment the organisation works in
- To improve skills and awareness of their own capabilities
- To improve inter-personal skills and group dynamics and relationships
- Provide a standardised organisational approach
- To minimise risk

## Types of Volunteer Training

There are 3 main areas where an organisation might consider providing training for its volunteers

Induction on joining the organisation

In-service skills training linked to the volunteer's role

More advance development training to improve the volunteer's capabilities

## Induction

Induction or orienteering is probably the single most important investment that an organisation can make in its employees or volunteers. It sets the scene for the whole relationship between the volunteer and the organisation. It provides the basic

organisational information that the volunteer needs to feel secure, wanted and supported and ensures that they better understand the structure of the organisation, their role, and how they contribute to the success of the organisation.

In providing induction the organisation will provide the following:

- What is the organisation about?
- How will the volunteer be working?
- Where does the volunteer fit in with the rest of the organisation?

If this process does not happen, volunteers will feel insecure and unsupported, and will very quickly leave an organisation. One of the biggest influencers in volunteer retention is making sure that the volunteer feels wanted.

### **In-service skills training**

This is simply the basic training that Volunteers will require in the specifics of their role. It will consist of information provision, skills-building and awareness-raising, and will happen on an initial and on-going basis to ensure that they are able to perform their work effectively and successfully.

The training will be appropriate to the role and the individual's capability. It will focus on the fundamentals of the role, and upon completion, the volunteer should have a full understanding of what they are and what they are not allowed to do, and the actions to be taken in any given situation.

### **Advanced Training**

This will occur usually with experienced volunteers who have been with the organisation for some time and either want to develop under-used skills or have the opportunity to take a more responsible role within the organisation. This training may take the form of the following:

- Practical demonstrations
- Work shadowing
- Buddying/mentoring opportunities
- Visits to other organisations
- Conference/Seminar attendance
- Role-Plays/Simulations
- Once-off Training Sessions
- Linked or modular training courses
- Structured practical or academic learning
- Time allocated to Manual or Resource reading

Finally, whatever the training opportunity or need, it is important that this be delivered in a structured manner as part of an organisational training policy and strategy for the organisation. This will include possibly looking at accreditation of training and learning opportunities.

# VOLUNTEER NEEDS ANALYSIS

As with organisational needs it is important that the Training and Development of Volunteers is advised and informed by a critical assessment of current skill and ability levels. It is also important that it is put in place as a strategic support process that operates within and is advised by the organisation's development and needs, and doesn't just occur on an individual "ad hoc" basis.

It is important therefore that any needs analysis reflects the core business of the organisation; its various work areas; the role of the volunteer body within these areas; the skills needed to deliver on the work. It can therefore be seen that in the same way as the organisation invests in the training and development of its paid staff, it should similarly put in place an appropriate structure for its volunteers. As such the matrix or framework system can work equally for staff and volunteers.

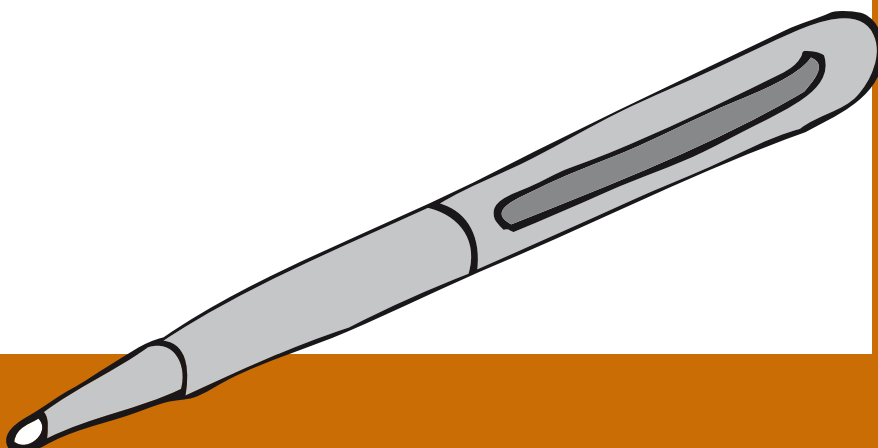
The matrix concept is a simple one to implement. It is based on identifying the key work areas of the organisation, the key elements of these areas and the key skills needed to deliver on these areas. By correlating these factors with the skills currently available within the volunteer body, it gives the organisation a clear view of where current needs are being met and where there is a capacity or skills deficit that needs addressing.

By putting this in place, the organisation gets a clear picture of where investment can be made in up-skilling its volunteers, or even where training is urgently required to address an area of significant need.

**The following template is an example of how you might use this process:**

- The skill areas to the left are the main core areas that might exist within an organisation or a programme.
- Each work area is then evaluated and marked with an X where the organisation feels that it is relevant to its staff or volunteers.
- Lastly each volunteer is then evaluated in terms of their skills. (This evaluation can happen in a number of ways but should include an interview stage and a critical assessment stage)
- All skills identified are then marked with a Y against the relevant factor and the grid complete. Once completed, the grid will give a picture of the capacity of either an individual or a team to deliver on the required work areas.

The usefulness of this exercise is that as well as identifying gaps where there is training or development needed to address skill deficits; it can also identify current or existing skills that the organisation is not aware of, and therefore not utilising. It can then contribute to a clearer and more effective use of volunteer resources to the benefit of the organisation.



# VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

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It is important to recognise that whilst the relationship that volunteers have with an organisation is very different to that of paid staff, it does not mean that they should not expect a level of support from the organisation to help them in their work.

Whilst some areas of legislation may not apply to volunteers in the way it does to paid staff, it does not mean that the organisation has no duty of responsibility to ensuring a safe working environment for its volunteers.

It is therefore critically important that any organisation engaging volunteers to support the delivery of its work in any way, has in place a process of communicating essential information relating to the rights of the volunteer, the responsibilities of their role and more generally, any organisational structures and procedures that affect them. Ideally this would be presented in a Volunteer Hand-book or similar resource.

Some items that may be included are:

## Internal Procedures

There should be a clear statement of commitment to ensuring that there are specific internal procedures in place in order to ensure the volunteer is aware of all matters that affect him/her

## Recruitment & Selection

The organisation should include a clear description of the process used.

Appropriate role descriptions and support documentation used in all volunteer recruitment processes should be provided.

Protecting and Safeguarding Children

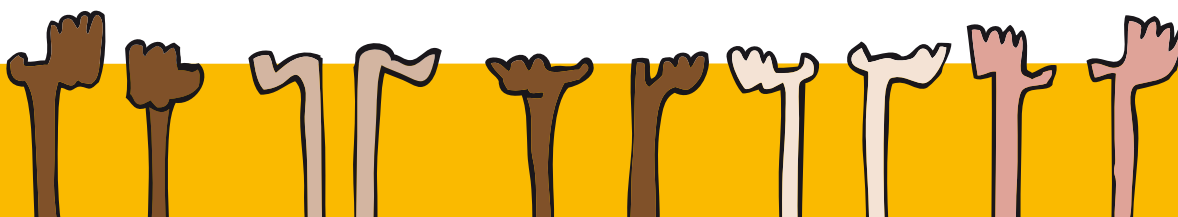
Where a volunteer has substantial unsupervised access to a child as part of their work on behalf of the organisation, the organisation will ensure that the volunteer shall be subject to a child protection proofed recreation and selection process that will include the required extended vetting procedures prior to them taking up this role. This should be included as an integral process within the Recruitment Process.

Induction

Volunteers will receive an appropriate induction, which will include information on the aims, background and organisational framework of the organisation. Additional information will be provided to help the volunteer in their work. The organisation should strive to make the information sessions accessible and relevant to needs as appropriate. Opportunities to develop knowledge and skills will also be provided as appropriate.

## Roles & Responsibilities:

The organisation should recognise that volunteers require a clear, complete, and current description of the duties and responsibilities of the position which they are expected to fill. Prior to any volunteer assignment or recruitment effort, the organisation should ensure that a role description will be developed for each volunteer position. Role descriptions will be reviewed and updated regularly, or whenever the work involved in the position changes substantially.





All role descriptions should include a description of the purpose and duties of the position including details of management accountability channels; a timeframe for the performance of the role, qualification criteria, and a description of role benefits.

### Training

The organisation should ensure that volunteers receive specific on-the-job training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their volunteer assignment if necessary. The timing and methods for delivery of such training should be appropriate to the complexity and demands of the position and the capabilities of the volunteer.

## Support & supervision

The organisation should put in place appropriate support and supervision processes and develop specific structures to ensure that this happens. Such structures and support information should be contained in the Volunteer Handbook. In providing this, the organisation should recognise that some aspects of supervision will require specific emphasis and consideration of the demands on volunteers and be tailored accordingly.

## Relationships between paid staff & Volunteers:

To support a culture of productive co-working between staff and volunteers to ensure the most effective delivery of the aims and objectives, the organisation will ensure in developing staff and volunteer support structures that both cohorts understand and respect the needs and abilities of the other and the special and specific demands faced by each other.

## Recognition

The organisation could include a commitment of intent to ensure that the work of the volunteer is recognised by the organisation.

If the organisation has any formal structure for doing this relevant details of the process and award should be included.

## Health and Safety

This should take the form of a commitment that the organisation will as far as is practical, care for the health, safety and welfare of its volunteers. Volunteers should be provided with copies of relevant organisational health and safety procedures and receive appropriate support and training.

## Expenses

The organisation should ensure that by putting in place an appropriate reimbursement system, it makes volunteering accessible to all. The schedule should make it clear that the organisation meets "out-of-pocket" expenses only, to ensure that the organisation does not fall foul of any national minimum wage legislation. A copy of the schedule should be included or reference made as to where to find it.



## Insurance

The organisation should ensure that adequate arrangements are in place to ensure that volunteers are suitably covered and protected whilst carrying out their duties on behalf of the organisation. This statement is an important part of the support for volunteers and including it in the hand-book is an easy way of making sure that all volunteers are aware that they are covered.

## Grievance and Dispute

The organisation should acknowledge that the relationship between the organisation and its volunteer workers is entirely voluntary and does not imply any formal contract. However, it is important that the organisation is able to maintain its agreed standards of service to those who use it, and it is also important that volunteers should enjoy making their contribution to this service. It is therefore essential that a structured procedure be in place to deal with any behavioural or performance issues. The organisation should put in place appropriate grievance and disputes structures for volunteers, details of which can be included as an appendix to this Volunteer Hand-book.



# DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

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No one ever looks forward to dealing with a difficult situation or a difficult person. Invariably however, problems will arise and at some time we will all face situations that we have to deal with and it is important for us to deal effectively and promptly with these situations to avoid them escalating into far more serious issues.

In all situations it is fundamentally important to know the kind of person or people you are dealing with. It is important to know how they react to pressures and stresses at any given time. To accomplish this it is always a good idea for an organisation to invest in some form of team exercise such as Myers Briggs or the like that will identify in a fun team environment the various preferences of each of their team. Not only is it important for the organisation, it is also useful for colleagues to have undertaken the exercise together as it gives them an insight into each others behaviours and attitudes. This kind of exercise is equally important in supporting and dealing with volunteers, and can contribute to lessening any problem scenarios before they develop.

However, if we do find our-self in a difficult or conflict situation, there are some basic simple actions that can be taken to make their resolving a great deal easier.

## **Step back from the situation:**

It is important not to jump into the think of things. Step back, listen to all viewpoints and make sure you have all the information. The person you're dealing with won't be exactly like you, so try and find out what kind of person you are dealing with, and what kind of responses will work for them.

## **If possible, practice your response:**

If you don't need to respond immediately, try and practice your response in private. Try it in front of a mirror, and take note of your voice, your facial expressions and your body language. Imagine your-self as the other person and judge how your approach would impact on that person.

## **Stay in the "Adult" mode:**

Make sure that you remain in the neutral "adult" mode. Don't be judgemental or defensive and make sure that you accept any responsibility that may be yours. Remember, it is ok to agree to disagree. The important thing is to keep it logical and not allow tempers to flare.

## **Try to find an agreement:**

It is always a good start to find early agreement, even if it is only that a problem exists. Coming to an agreement conveys understanding of co-operation and can contribute hugely to further agreements later in the process.

## **Communicate and Explore Alternatives:**

Never assume that you can't help someone. By thinking of and offering alternative suggestions, you can keep the discussion on the positive. Don't revisit the same issue, if it continues to be a negative in the discussion. If something can't be progressed immediately – "park it" – and come back to it when you have some positive agreement on other elements.



**Establish Boundaries:**

Know what you are able to do and agree on what you can't or aren't able to. Sometimes you may want to communicate this to the other person, sometimes not. The timing of such a communication can be highly important. Poorly communicated boundaries at the start of a negotiation can compromise any discussion or agreement if they are considered a threat by the other party.

**Speak in Private:**

At all times, difficult or confidential issues should be dealt with in private. Don't give the other person the opportunity to create an audience or a bank of support to challenge your position. Remember – "Praise in public, criticise in private"

**Use more "I" than "YOU" Language:**

"You" language can make a person defensive. Use phrases like "I would like you to ..." or "I was hoping we might.."

**It's Not Personal:**

Separate your-self from the issue. Remember that a professional relationship in the work-place is just that. It's not a personal issue for you.

**Focus on what you can do:**

Tell the person what you can or are willing to do, rather than what you can't. Try and maintain the positive element throughout.

**Clear Communication:**

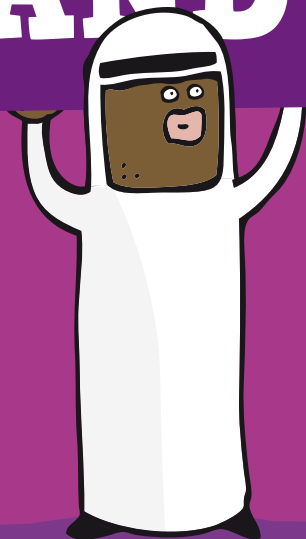
Ensure at all times that you maintain a clear over-view of where you believe the discussion to have reached, and make sure you communicate this. If necessary, take time-out to review the discussion to date. Draw up a list of the points discussed and go through them with the other person. At this stage you can also ask questions such as "Are we OK with this part" or "Do we have agreement on this element" All of this will contribute to resolving the overall issue.

**Keep a record:**

All discussions and conversations in issues such as this must be clearly documented and a formal record kept.

Remember, we are all at some stage going to have to deal with a difficult situation. When caught in this position we sometime forget that we have all of these choices available to us. Slow the whole process down and give yourself time to think. The better prepared we are, the better result we will get.

# RECOGNITION AND REWARD



# VOLUNTEER RIGHTS

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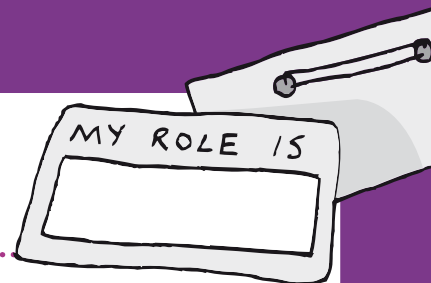
(Sourced from Volunteering Ireland)

## A volunteer has the right to:

- Receive information about the organisation's purpose, work and values and its policy on volunteers and volunteering
- A clearly written description of the work he/she will undertake and of assigned tasks within that work
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Be seen as a valued part of the organisation through inclusion at training sessions, meetings, social functions etc.
- Receive appropriate training
- Know who to turn to with problems and difficulties
- Be appreciated by having his/her work valued by the organisation
- Make mistakes and learn from them
- Express his/her view on a subject
- Be listened to and taken seriously by other volunteers and employees
- Receive support and supervision including regular constructive feed-back on performance
- Work in a safe environment
- Be covered by insurance
- Have choices and be able to negotiate those choices
- Be able to say no
- Carry out voluntary work without being exploited
- Be reimbursed for any agreed expenses
- Be consulted on matters that affect his/her work
- Be free from discrimination on any ground



# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



(Sourced from Volunteering Ireland)

In taking up volunteering with an organisation a prospective volunteer needs to have a clear picture of what the organisation expects. In the same way therefore as it is important to inform a volunteer of his/her rights, it is equally important to provide a clear description of the role and the responsibilities attached to working for the organisation.

## The Role Description

This will be drawn up (as for paid employees), based on the needs of the organisation and will be a complete description of the volunteer's commitment and responsibility to the organisation. It will include:

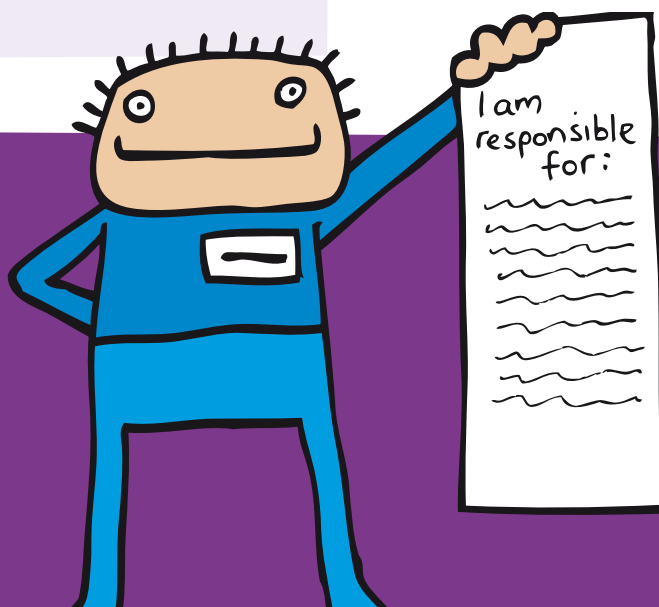
- The context of the work and who (if any) they will be working with
- The time commitment, when, for how long, is it flexible, is it long or short-term
- Information on organisational supports such as expenses, training opportunities
- Information on the management/accountability and reporting structures

In addition, it is important to establish clearly the responsibilities of a volunteer

## Volunteer Responsibilities

A volunteer has to:

- Be reliable
- Carry out the work to the best of his/her abilities
- Attend the place of work at the agreed times
- Notify the appropriate person if unable to attend
- Agree to accept and adhere to the organisation's policy
- Respect confidentiality
- Respect the rights of others in the organisation
- Be honest and open in the case of problems or difficulties
- Attend training or support sessions as agreed
- Communicate information appropriately
- Acknowledge decision made by others
- Ask for help or support when needed





# RECOGNITION AND REWARD STRUCTURES

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One of the focal points in any debate about volunteer support is that of recognition and reward. In Ireland, Traditionally, volunteering has been regarded as work done in the background by committed individuals who like to stay out of the limelight. Even today, many volunteers in the youth sector would still find this definition acceptable.

However, in its 2001 Report “Tipping the Balance”, the National Committee on Volunteering indicated that there is a growing realisation that initiatives need to be developed that recognise, in tangible ways, the work carried out by volunteers.

For many volunteers, seeing the results of their commitment is often the most important benefit to them, however, “Tipping the Balance” highlighted a number of other positive outcomes which volunteers viewed as important. These were:

- A sense of being appreciated
- Seeing greater recognition of the volunteering effort
- Seeing recognition from peers or directly from other people involved

What is clear and cannot be argued with, is that in present day Ireland, in an environment where work and other pressures are putting an increasing demand on individual’s time; making an ongoing commitment to work voluntarily in an organisation is an increasingly difficult thing to do, and therefore could and should be recognised in some way by the benefiting organisation.

## Informal Recognition

These can take the form of informal reward structures such as service pins, badges, plaques or shields. Other examples are informal ceremonies or celebratory events. Any or all of these can be supported by a certificate or thank you card, or a piece in either the organisation news-letter or a local paper. Whilst they are informal, they can be especially valuable in small close-knit organisations or communities, particularly where the resources aren’t available to do anything on a larger scale.

## Formal Recognition

Normally a system of awards or special recognition ceremonies that take place at National level in larger organisations. They are designed to recognise the ongoing work of a small number of volunteers or groups who have made a special contribution to the organisation. These events or ceremonies tend to be more structured and become an integral part of the organisation’s annual calendar.

This kind of recognition can be supported by a progressive structure akin to a Quality award where individuals have the opportunity to progress from level to level over the course of their time with an organisation.

## Accreditation of Learning

Probably the most formal recognition process of all, and usually linked to some form of structured participative learning undertaken either on a full –time or part-time basis.



The climate is however changing here, and there is a growing demand for recognition of experiential learning in a formal manner. Accreditation and qualifications have been traditionally associated with the formal education sector or within fairly strict professional structures. There is however an increasing demand for opportunities for employees and volunteers to have their experience and skills recognised at a formal level.

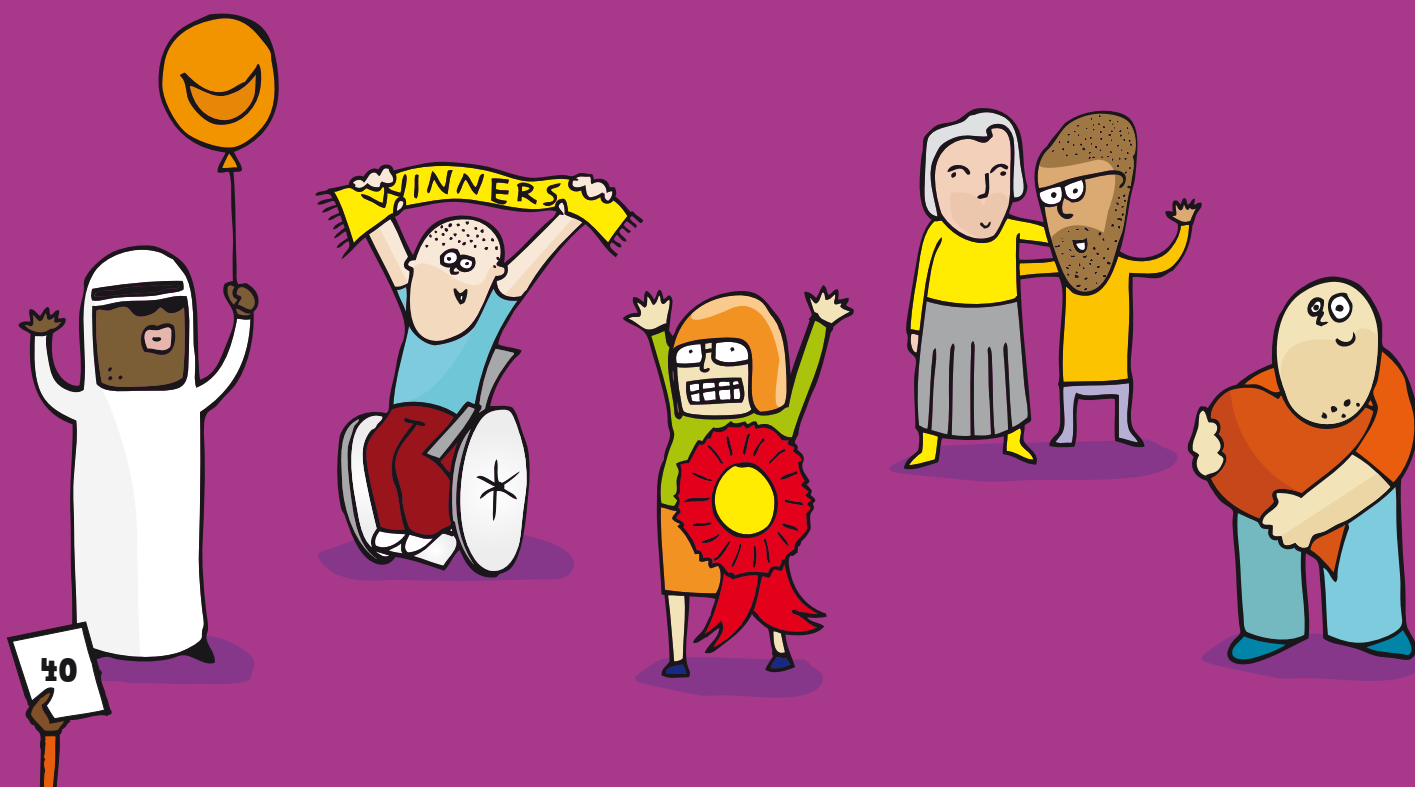
Organisations should therefore be aware of this climate and develop appropriate opportunities for their volunteers to benefit. Within the sector there are already opportunities within specific areas such as Youth Health promotion and Youth Arts with NUI accredited special certificates. Additional work is currently under way to establish a FETAC accredited programme in Global Youth Work.

Organisations may therefore want to consider developing structures within their own organisation where capacity and resources permit to put in place incremental learning processes that take into account volunteers roles and duties and develop and explore the development of a more formal recognition process such as accreditation.

### Resource Implications

It should be noted that any kind of recognition structure is likely to have a resource implication for an organisation and therefore the organisations ability to support the process on an ongoing basis should be considered at the start before embarking on such a process.

**THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!**



# APPENDICES



# SPECIMEN TEMPLATES

## Training Needs Analysis Template

Skill Area	Volunteer 1		Volunteer 2		Volunteer 3	
<b>Communication and Interpersonal Skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group facilitation</li> <li>Presentation Skills</li> <li>Co-ordinating Groups</li> <li>Media work-interview skills</li> <li>Facilitating the input of young people</li> <li>Creative communication (alternative ways of involving young people)</li> </ul>	X	Y	X	Y	X	Y
	X		X	Y	X	
	X		X		-	
	X		X		X	
	X		X		X	Y
	X		X		X	
	X		X		X	
<b>Networking</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managing Networks</li> <li>Relationship-building/ Consultation</li> <li>Liaising with other organisations &amp; individuals</li> <li>Linking in with young peoples organisations</li> <li>Chairing meetings</li> <li>Outreach work</li> <li>Team working</li> </ul>	X		X		X	
	X		X		X	
	X		X		X	
	X		X		X	
	X		X		-	
	-		X		-	
	X		X		-	
<b>Management Skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support and supervision</li> <li>Managing projects</li> <li>Managing through influence</li> <li>Managing volunteers</li> <li>Planning</li> </ul>	X		-		-	
	X		-		X	
	X		-		X	
	X	Y	-		-	
	X		-		X	
<b>Events Co-ordination</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workshops/seminars/conferences</li> <li>Planning</li> <li>Identifying Participants</li> <li>Booking venues</li> <li>Follow-on activities</li> </ul>	-		X		X	
	-		X		X	
	-		X		X	
	-		X		X	
	-		X		X	
	-		X		X	
<b>Resource Development and Education</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resource development</li> <li>Information materials development</li> <li>Educational tools and materials</li> <li>Collation of existing information</li> <li>Managing the input of others (designers, printers etc)</li> </ul>	-		X		X	
	-		X		X	
	-		X		X	
	-		X		X	
	-		X		X	
	X		X		X	

Skill Area	Volunteer 1		Volunteer 2		Volunteer 3	
<b>Training and Development</b>						
• Strategic planning	X	Y	-		X	
• Training needs analysis	X		-		X	
• Design	X		-		X	
• Implementation	-		-		X	
• Monitoring and evaluation	X	Y	-		X	
• Training Promotion	X		-		X	
• Accreditation	X		-		X	
<b>Policy/strategy work</b>						
• Strategic planning and management	X		-		-	
• Policy and strategy development	X		-		-	
<b>PR</b>						
• Media	X		X		-	
• Marketing	X		X		-	
• Newsletter	-		X		X	
• Writing articles	-		X		X	
• Information dissemination	-		X		X	
<b>Other</b>						
• Time management	X		X		X	
• IT skills	X		X		X	Y

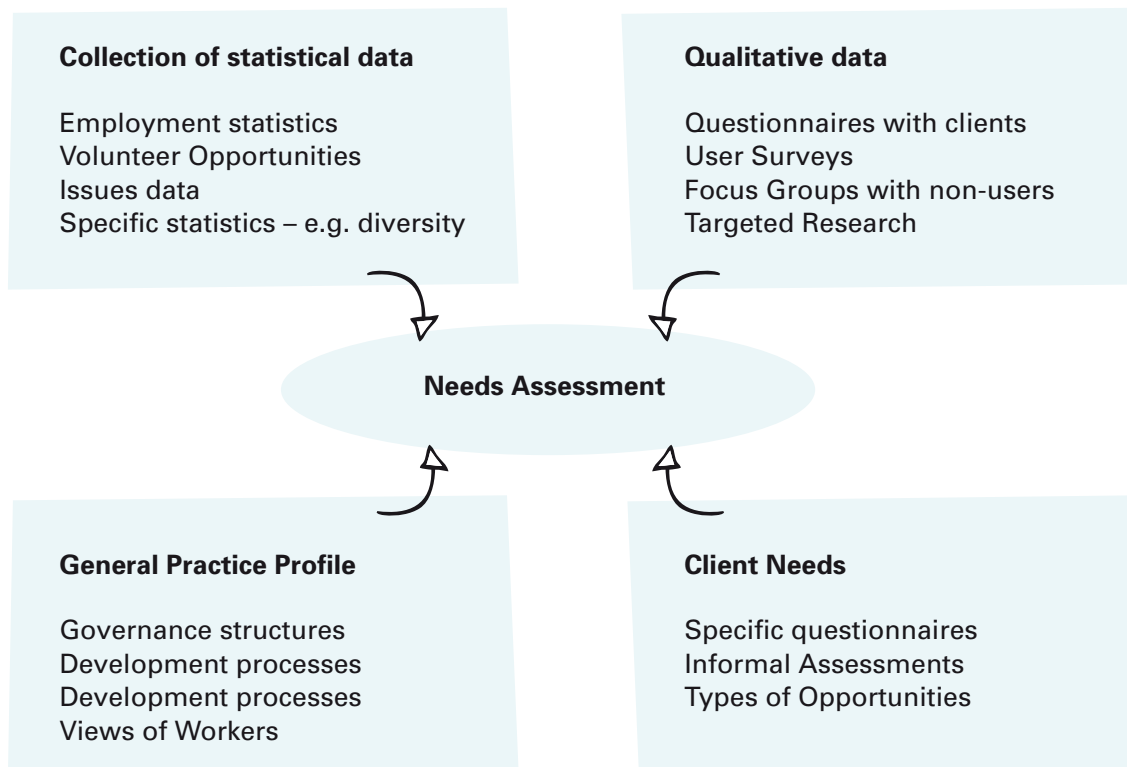
## Example Needs Analysis Framework

The framework works on the basis of identifying key information and representing this in a framework to assist decision making

### Key elements may include:

- Statistical data
- Qualitative data
- Information on general practice
- Information on client needs

These can be represented as follows:



## Supervision Recording Sheet

Supervisee: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Agenda:

Supervisee	Supervisor

Follow on items from last Supervision (if any):


## Summary of discussion

[illegible][illegible]

Next Supervision Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed Supervisee: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Recruitment Progress Chart

Task	Date	Initials
Identify who will be responsible Agree support resources		
Prepare relevant paperwork Advertisement Job Description Application Form Contact Details		
Agree participants in panel		
Place advertisement		
Collate applications at closing date		
Short-list Contact the successful candidates Communicate interview date, time and venue		
Interviews Make decisions on suitability Communicate acceptance or not		
Implement post interview process Take References Do Garda Vetting		
On completion of formalities Issue volunteer agreement Agree start date Prepare Induction process		

*Not all of the steps will apply to all. The progress chart is a suggested template that can be adapted to suit organisations and their existing processes. It is however an example of good practice in developing a progress path that addresses issues in order.*



## Reference Request

Reference required for:	Reference sought from:

*Please complete the following form as appropriate:*

How would you describe her ability to contribute to and promote the work of .....	
How would you describe her relationship building, organisational and facilitation skills?	
What competencies do you feel she has to enable her to manage a complex workload and work under pressure?	
Describe the personal qualities she can bring to this post?	
If relevant, would you employ X again?	
Any other comments you feel are relevant.	

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

# USEFUL CONTACTS

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## **National Youth Council of Ireland**

3 Montague Street  
Dublin 2  
Tel: 01 478 4122  
Website: [www.youth.ie](http://www.youth.ie)

## **Volunteering Ireland**

Coleraine House  
Coleraine Street  
Dublin 7  
Tel: 01 872 2622  
Website: [www.volunteeringireland.com](http://www.volunteeringireland.com)

## **Comhairle**

7th Floor  
Hume House  
Ballsbridge  
Dublin 4  
Tel: 01 605 9000  
Website: [www.comhairle.ie](http://www.comhairle.ie)

## **Volunteer Development Agency**

4th Floor  
58 Howard Street  
Belfast  
BT1 6PG  
Tel: 028 90236100  
Website: [www.volunteering-ni.org](http://www.volunteering-ni.org)

## **Volunteer Centres Ireland**

Website: [www.volunteer.ie](http://www.volunteer.ie)

## **The Equality Authority**

2 Clonmel Street  
Dublin 2  
Locall: 1890 245 545  
Website: [www.equality.ie](http://www.equality.ie)

## **Business in the Community**

32 Lower O'Connell Street  
Dublin 1  
Tel: 01 874 7232  
Website: [www.bitc.ie](http://www.bitc.ie)



# REFERENCE RESOURCES

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## Youth Work

Youth Work Act (2001)

National Youth Work Development Plan (2003-2007)

## Volunteering

"Tipping the Balance" (2002) Report by the National Committee on Volunteering

White Paper (2000) on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for developing the Relationship between the State and Community and Voluntary Sector

Report of the Task-Force on Active Citizenship (2007)

VOLT Working Group (2004) Report on volunteer vetting and screening

Equal Status Act (2000)

## Child Protection

Code of Good Practice Child Protection for the Youth Work Sector  
(Department of Education and Science)

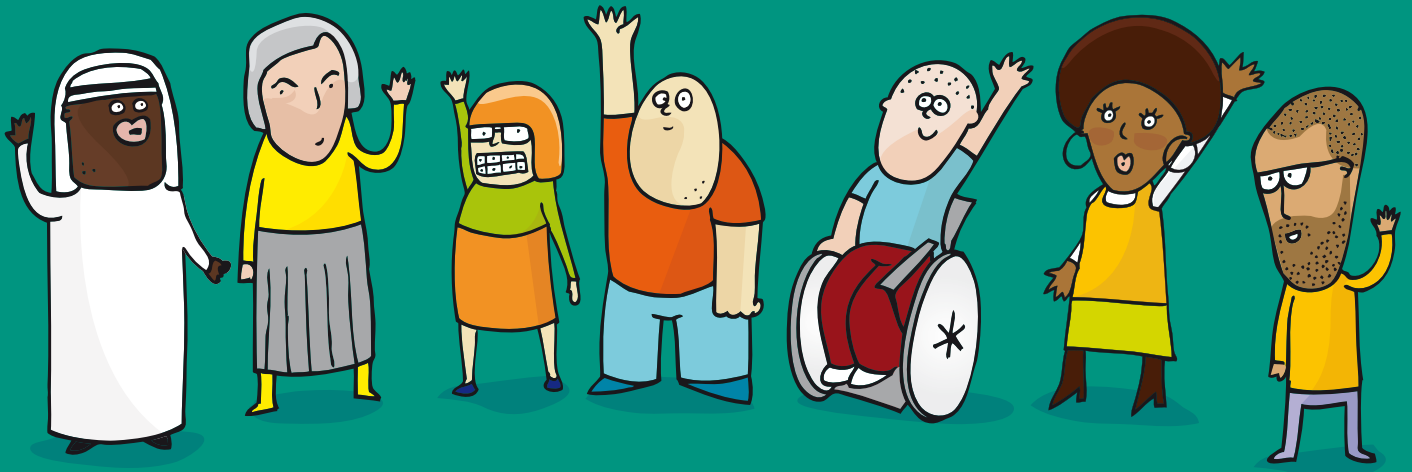
Our Duty to Care  
(Department of Health and Children)

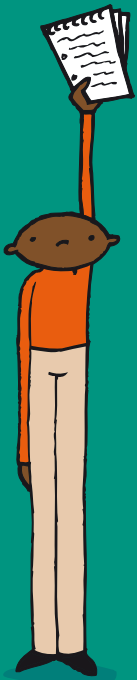
Getting it Right (2004)  
Volunteer Development Agency Northern Ireland)

Child Protection Awareness Programme (2007)  
Child Protection Unit, National Youth Council of Ireland



NYCI Policy on  
**VOLUNTEERING &  
VOLUNTEER SUPPORT**





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ISBN 1-900210-21-5

# NYCI POLICY



## Introduction

NYCI's policy on volunteering is the first formal step in the development of a support programme that will assist voluntary youth work organisations in the recruitment and retention of volunteers. NYCI recognises that Youth Work volunteers are among the prime deliverers of services to young people, and therefore seeks to reinforce a commitment to volunteering and volunteerism by the establishment and development of key support resources and structures. The work is being progressed by a working group acting as a sub-group of the NYCI Board and reporting to it. The work has also been advised by a seminar on volunteering in the youth sector which has provided the development and implementation recommendations that follow.

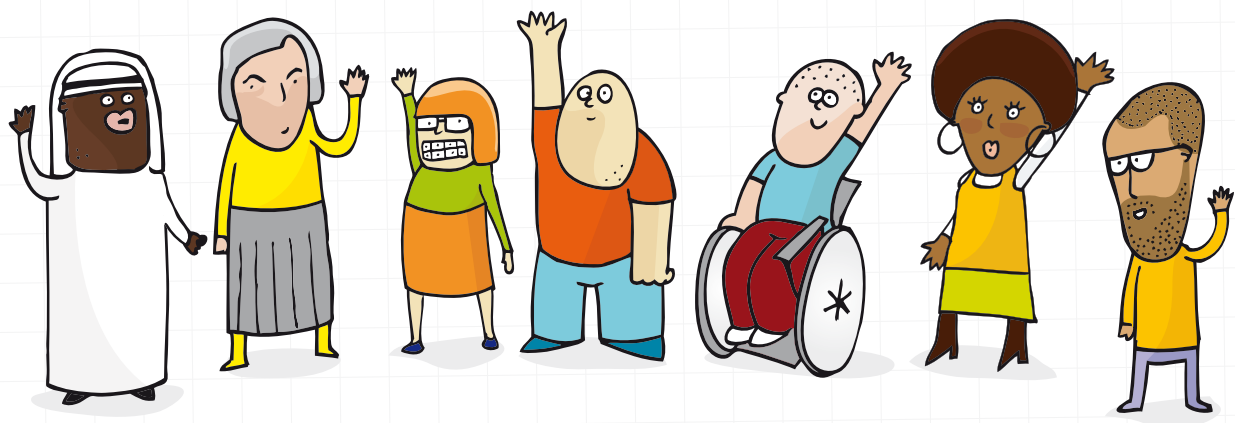
## Vision

NYCI is committed to promoting, developing and sustaining volunteering as being fundamental to society, and a worthwhile activity for people to engage in; and aims to support the development of best practice to ensure and support the involvement of volunteers in voluntary youth organisations and the youth work sector in Ireland.

## Mission

### NYCI will:

- Establish strategic partnerships to develop promote and support volunteering among policy and decision makers and the business community.
- Develop, promote, nurture and support volunteering within the youth sector and within NYCI, and develop resource materials and structures to help further the involvement of volunteers in voluntary youth organisations.
- Develop training initiatives, and with relevant agencies, support the development of accreditation systems that recognise volunteers' prior learning and experience.



## Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to reaffirm NYCI's commitment to volunteers and to be the first step in providing a series of implementation objectives that will provide for the development of support structures and resources for use by the member organisations of NYCI and any other voluntary youth organisation that may wish to engage with NYCI.

In developing both this policy and subsequent resources NYCI will always recognise the diversity of opportunities and roles of volunteers within the sector. As such, a common definition is not always possible and therefore NYCI's support resources will acknowledge the diversity and address varying needs and barriers that different roles require and experience. In implementing the policy NYCI will also recognise and value the specific expertise and skills that individual volunteers bring with them and will work with organisations to support the development of volunteering opportunities at all levels within organisations.

## Diversity of Volunteers within NYCI

NYCI is committed to promoting diversity in volunteering and the need to be flexible in terms of the varying ways in which people can give their time. There are three main types of volunteer currently engaging in and recognised by NYCI, which are as follows:

**Occasional Volunteers** - These are people who volunteer at events such as Dail na nÓg or help with projects, for example by helping with various consultations. They volunteer occasionally, perhaps a few times a year.

**Regular Volunteers** - These are people who take on a particular task, on an ongoing basis. Regular volunteers include those undertaking work in NYCI working groups.

**Board members** - These people hold positions of responsibility in the Governance of the organisation and have been elected by Assembly on the basis of their skills and experience.

## Implementation Recommendations

### 1 Internal Procedures

NYCI is committed to ensuring that there are specific internal procedures in place in order to ensure adequate recruitment, support and supervision of volunteers.

### 2 Recruitment & Selection

NYCI is committed to ensuring adequate and equal opportunities for all prospective volunteers. These procedures will reflect the philosophy outlined in the NYCI equality policy. NYCI confirms that volunteers shall be recruited on their ability to perform the task alone, and without discrimination on any ground.

NYCI will ensure that suitable role descriptions and support documentation are provided in all volunteer recruitment processes

### 3 Protecting and Safeguarding Children

Where a volunteer (or staff person) working on behalf of NYCI has substantial unsupervised access to a child as part of their work on behalf of NYCI the organisation will ensure that the volunteer (or staff person) shall be subject to a child protection proofed recreation and selection process that will include Garda vetting procedures prior to them taking up this role.

## **4 Induction**

Volunteers will receive an appropriate induction, which will include information on the aims, background and organisational framework of the organisation. Additional information will be provided to help the volunteer in their work. NYCI will strive to make the information sessions accessible and relevant to needs as appropriate. Opportunities to develop knowledge and skills will also be provided as appropriate.

## **5 Roles & Responsibilities**

NYCI recognise that volunteers require a clear, complete, and current description of the duties and responsibilities of the position which they are expected to fill. Prior to any volunteer assignment or recruitment effort, NYCI will ensure that a role description will be developed for each volunteer position. Role descriptions will be reviewed and updated regularly, or whenever the work involved in the position changes substantially.

All role descriptions should include a description of the purpose and duties of the position including details of management accountability channels; a timeframe for the performance of the role, qualification criteria, and a description of role benefits.

## **6 Training**

NYCI will ensure that volunteers will receive specific on-the-job training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their volunteer assignment if necessary. The timing and methods for delivery of such training should be appropriate to the complexity and demands of the position and the capabilities of the volunteer.

## **7 Support & Supervision**

NYCI acknowledge that volunteers should benefit from appropriate support and supervision processes and will therefore develop specific structures to ensure that this happens. Such structures and support information should be contained in a Volunteer Support Handbook. NYCI also recognises that some aspects of supervision will require specific emphasis and consideration of the demands on volunteers and be tailored accordingly.

## **8 Relationships between paid staff & Volunteers**

NYCI will support a culture of productive co-working between staff and volunteers to ensure the most effective delivery of the aims and objectives of the organisation. NYCI will ensure in developing staff and volunteer support structures that both cohorts understand and respect the needs and abilities of the other and the special and specific demands faced by each other.

## **9 Young people volunteering**

NYCI recognises the many varied and diverse roles young people (12-25 years) fill in youth organisations today and also in society in general.

NYCI also recognises the special and specific issues that engaging with young people (particularly under 18's) entails and will ensure the implementation of the necessary structures to protect both the young person and the organisation. This will include any necessary documentation including parental consent and the provision of proper adult supervision and support under the relevant Child Protection Guidelines

## **10 Recognition**

NYCI is committed to the recognition of volunteer contributions which should be part of the formal and informal operations of the program.

NYCI will influence the development, in conjunction with other relevant bodies of accreditation systems that recognise volunteer's prior volunteer commitments and experiences.



## **11 Health and Safety**

NYCI will, as far as is practical, care for the health, safety and welfare of its volunteers. Volunteers should be provided with copies of relevant organisational health and safety procedures and receive appropriate support and training.

## **12 Expenses**

Volunteers will be reimbursed travel and other approved expenses where provided for by NYCI's Expenses Reimbursement Schedule, on provision of the appropriate claims and receipts.

## **13 Participation**

Volunteers will be given opportunities at the appropriate forums to participate in discussion and consultation on issues concerning the organisation and its work. They should also be able to feedback through their appointed supervisor or management structure.

## **14 Personal Insurance Cover**

NYCI will ensure that adequate arrangements are in place to ensure that volunteers are suitably covered and protected whilst carrying out their duties on behalf of the organisation.

## **15 Grievance and Dispute**

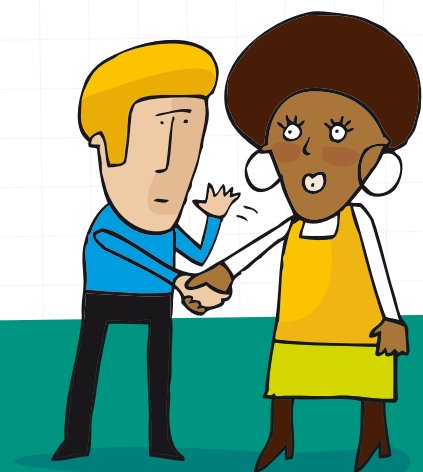
NYCI acknowledges that the relationship between the organisation and its volunteer workers is entirely voluntary and does not imply any formal contract. However, it is important that the organisation is able to maintain its agreed standards of service to those who use it, and it is also important that volunteers should enjoy making their contribution to this service. It is therefore essential that a structured procedure be in place to deal with any behavioural or performance issues. NYCI will put in place appropriate grievance and disputes structures for volunteers, details of which will be included in the Volunteer Support Handbook.

## **16 NYCI Commitment to Promoting Volunteering**

NYCI is committed wholeheartedly to working collaboratively with its member organisations and other institutions and organisations within the sector to promote and develop Volunteering in the Youth Sector, in NYCI itself and within its organisations.

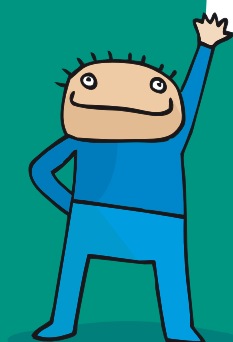
NYCI is committed to developing structures that addresses the needs of those volunteering in the youth sector (adults and young people in youth orgs), while also looking at the promotion of volunteering by young people in society in general.

NYCI will also regularly review the policies, strategic directions and procedures of the Volunteer strategy, ensuring continuous improvement.

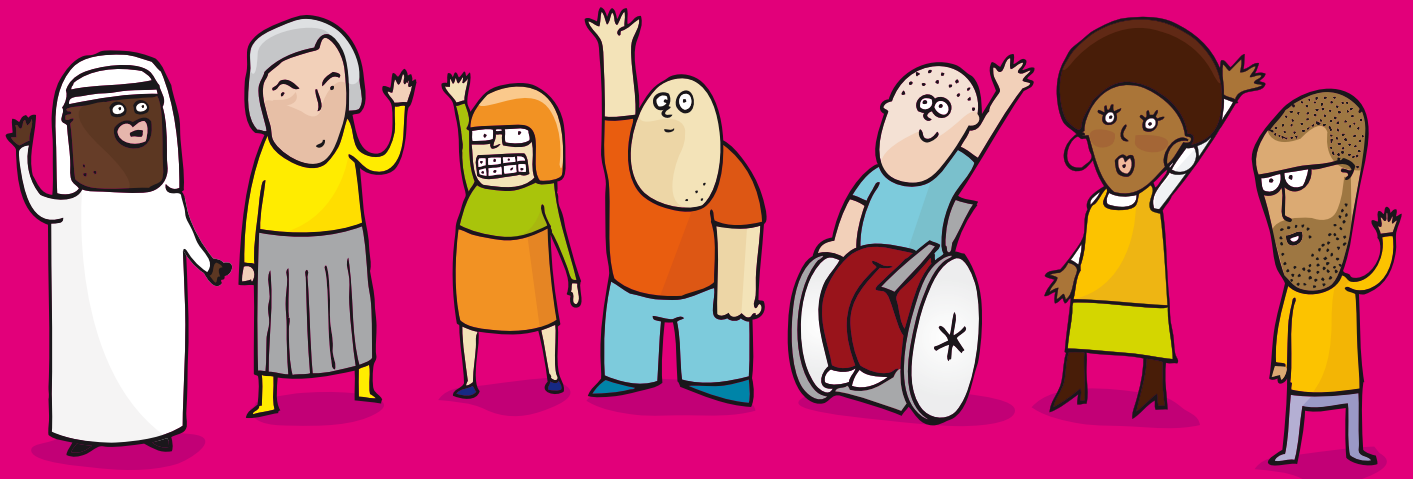


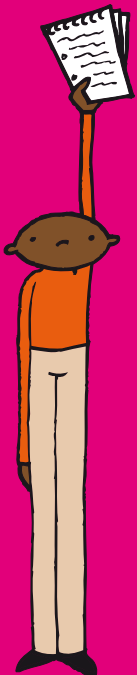
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NYCI Charter on  
**VOLUNTEERING &  
VOLUNTEER SUPPORT**

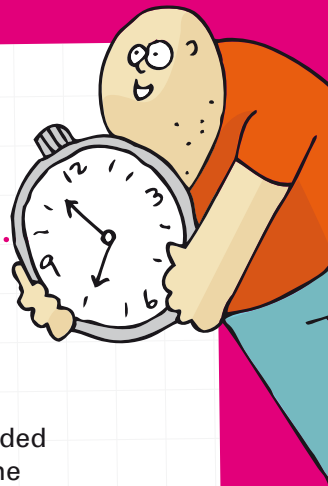




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# NYCI CHARTER

the  
gift  
of  
time..



## Purpose

The NYCI Charter on Volunteering and Volunteerism outlines the basic principles needed to ensure that volunteers are valued and supported in the unique roles they play in the youth sector.

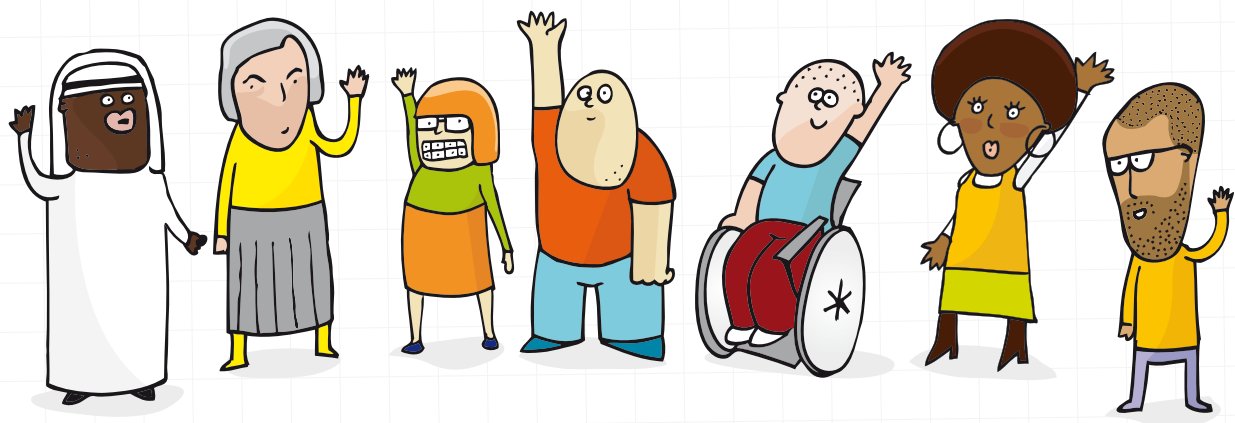
The Volunteering Charter outlines some of the benefits and challenges associated with volunteering while also providing some suggestions on how to overcome some of the more common challenges.

## Statement

Through adopting the Volunteering Charter, NYCI acknowledge that volunteers have the right to be treated equally and with respect. It also shows that NYCI are committed to a more structured approach to promoting volunteerism, supporting volunteers and recognising their unique contributions.

## Principles of Volunteering

- Volunteering plays a significant role and makes a positive contribution to improving the lives of people, and to strengthening communities and civil society
- Volunteering work is undertaken freely and without financial gain
- Sustainable volunteering is a means of creating and supporting a network of people who both work for and in some cases establish and manage organisations
- Volunteers should be valued primarily for their individual contributions, enthusiasm and commitment, as well as for the experience and skills they can bring
- Volunteering can take place at many levels in society, both locally in communities, and in structures at both regional, national and international levels.
- In voluntary organisations the role of volunteers and paid workers often exist alongside each other and are both complimentary and mutually dependant.



## Diversity of Volunteers

There are many varied roles which volunteers in the youth sector undertake, some of which are as follows:

**Occasional Volunteers** - These are people who volunteer at short term events such as summer projects or help by contributing specific skills ranging from driving buses, accountancy, mentoring, painting, facilitating sessions, international volunteers etc. They volunteer occasionally, for short periods, perhaps a few times a year.

**Regular Volunteers** - These are people who take on particular tasks, on an ongoing basis. Examples could include being a member of an ongoing consultation/working group, weekly volunteer at a youth service, etc.

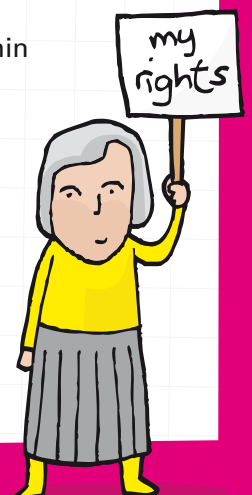
**Board members** - These people hold positions of responsibility in the organisation's governance and have usually been elected and/or recruited by the community, organisation members and/or staff on the basis of their skills and experience.

**Young Volunteers** – These young people can hold any of the above roles and/or act as peer mentors to other young people in organisations. There are also a number of specific youth initiated and managed voluntary organisations.

## Rights of Volunteers

**Volunteers should:**

- Receive adequate information and a clear role description of what is expected of them and to understand what they are doing and how it fits into the bigger picture
- Either take on or be assigned suitable jobs and be able to ask for another job if it is not what they signed up to do
- Have access to adequate and appropriate support and supervision from a trained individual
- Be respected by paid staff and other volunteers and acknowledged in terms of recognition and feedback on their work
- Within the agreement laid out in specific organisations, be reimbursed for the out of pocket and travel expenses incurred through volunteering work
- Be entitled to a reference when applying for another job
- Have an awareness of and access to all of the organisations policies and procedures
- Be able, where possible to attend appropriate forums to contribute to discussions and where appropriate take part in making decisions regarding organisational aims and objectives
- Be able to develop and enhance their skills and have access to suitable training and development opportunities
- Have their personal details kept in an appropriate and confidential manner within the organisation.
- Work in as safe an environment as possible



## Responsibilities of Volunteers

### Volunteers have the responsibility to:

- Agree to the organisational policy on volunteering along with any other relevant policies and guidelines and implement them to the best of their ability.
- Respect confidentiality
- Be reliable, honest and mindful of the organisation's good name
- Not commit themselves to an unmanageable workload and to only work to a specified role description
- Treat everyone they meet when representing their organisation with courtesy and respect
- Attend relevant training as needs dictate

## Rights of Organisations

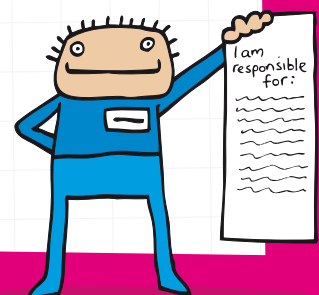
### NYCI member organisations have the right to:

- Look for certain qualities and skills in volunteers
- Select only volunteers who are suitable for the work
- Draw up a volunteer agreement or 'contract'
- Ask for tasks to be done in a particular way
- Ask for commitment
- Ask for reliability
- Ask for punctuality
- Deal with disciplinary and grievance matters
- Ask volunteers to leave if their involvement hinders the organisation achieving its goals or if they fail to adhere to policies and/or put other people at risk

## Responsibilities of Organisations

### NYCI member organisations have the responsibility to:

- Ensure the volunteering experience is a rewarding one
- Listen to volunteers
- Ensure equal access and not to discriminate
- Define clear, meaningful roles for volunteers
- Have policies and procedures for volunteers
- Provide all necessary information to volunteers
- Provide training where necessary
- Recognise the roles volunteers play and contributions they make
- Provide appropriate insurance cover
- Inform volunteers of all relevant organisational policies and protocol
- Provide adequate support and supervision where necessary
- Reimburse out-of-pocket expenses incurred in their role as volunteers
- Provide a safe working environment
- Develop a system of rewarding their volunteers



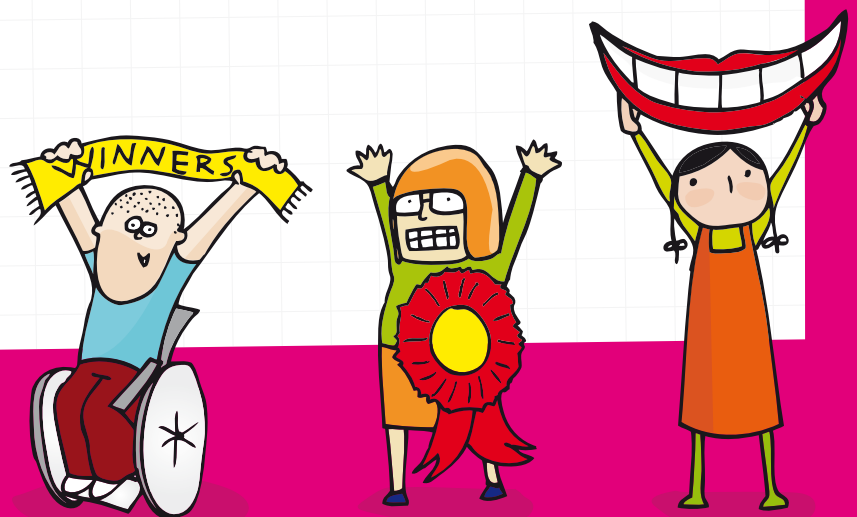


## Benefits of Volunteering

- People who volunteer learn a wide variety of new skills among which are leadership, programme development, mentoring, first aid, teamwork, and the protection of children and young people
- Volunteering further develops people's confidence and capacity and can contribute to maintaining a positive self image
- Feeling apart of the community and contributing to it's ongoing development
- Meeting new people and building a network while being valued in the community is a major bonus of volunteering
- Engaging in new activities in a fun and enjoyable atmosphere
- Being able to relate, listen to and understand young people is very rewarding and something which only happens when quality time is spent with them
- Making a positive to contribution to other people's lives in the community

## Challenges to Volunteering

- More complex lifestyles and a variety of personal and work demands on people's time can make volunteering difficult
- Young people have more of a social life in general, this combined with school commitments, exam pressures and the popularity of computers and the internet, does not leave them with much free time especially as they have more options on how to fill their time
- Life in general is more highly pressurised and people are less interactive with each other
- People's sense of community is changing as communities are developing; it takes time to develop a sense of community spirit and the interest in active citizenship
- Lack of specific skills/training can lead to further barriers as volunteers may not have the time required to devote to training as well as their actual volunteer work.
- The prospect of having to take on the commitment to attend training can also be off putting to volunteers if they have limited time to spare
- The sometimes large amounts of paperwork expected of volunteers in terms of keeping records, accounts and reviewing documents can be a challenge
- Fear around the issues of child protection and what responsibilities volunteers would have to take on can sometimes restrict the work some volunteers are willing to take on.
- Lack of reward/recognition for people who volunteer



## Overcoming Challenges to Volunteering

- Volunteering opportunities should be clearly promoted and the benefits of volunteering should be emphasized to make it more appealing to people. Learning new skills and experiences is an important aspect which should be recognised and advertised along with the networking opportunities
- Young people should be given the opportunity to become more involved in the decision making process within organisations. Research shows that young people are more likely to make a commitment to a program and/or services when they have been involved from the outset in the program's design and implementation plan. Having a youth participation charter can help to address this issue
- Volunteer job descriptions should be very clear. The implications of the role should be made clear as this offers a structure for both volunteers and the organisation as it's beneficial for all when roles and responsibilities are made clear. It's important to be creative when assigning roles for volunteers, especially with young people
- Allowing potential volunteers to experience the work of the organisation through open days could promote volunteer involvement
- All volunteers should receive basic Child Protection training. Training can be tailored to suit needs and time limitations and provides the opportunity for people to explore issues relating to Child Protection in the Youth Sector. This usually alleviates many worries and concerns people may have
- It is important to respect the fact that different volunteers can offer different time commitments. Volunteers should have the opportunity to review the jobs they undertake so that everyone feels valued
- There needs to be a tangible reward system as bonus/benefits are important, even some acknowledgement of time should be made, some small tokens of appreciation, hearing "Thanks" is often not enough. Awards ceremonies and other events of significance aimed at recognising and valuing the work done by volunteers are only some of the activities which could be explored

