

# Volunteer Management Info Sheet

It is the role of an effective board to ensure that volunteers are managed and supported.

## Involving Volunteers

In 2016 Northern Ireland, just under a third (32%) of respondents to the Department for Social Development's volunteering survey indicated that they had carried out voluntary work within the past year.

Many voluntary organisations indicate that they cannot manage without their volunteers.

Management Committees have therefore a key role in ensuring that systems and structures are in place to ensure that volunteers are effectively involved, managed and supported. By doing so, they are ensuring that the organisation can operate essential functions and achieve its objectives.

## Why involve volunteers?

Volunteering needs to be recognized and promoted as a two-way process, bringing benefits to both the volunteers and the organisation.

For some organisations, volunteering is simply part of the fabric and ethos of what they do and how they do it: their entire service would be undermined were their staff paid. For others, the reasons for involving volunteers are more complex and often at some level involve the reality of limited financial resources. However, regardless, volunteering needs to be recognized and promoted as a two-way process, bringing benefits to both the volunteers and the organisation.

The Management Committee must ensure that the organisation's involvement of volunteers is underpinned by a clear understanding of why and how volunteers are involved in the organisation and the unique contribution which they bring. This supports positive engagement of volunteers in achieving the organisation's goals and formally recognises the significance of their contribution.

## Need advice?

[Volunteer Now](#) provides resources for people and communities to promote and develop volunteering. From training to support, research to campaigning, networking to running events, Volunteer Now has a range of services and expertise available.

Effective involvement of volunteers should be underpinned by a written policy, which should outline the organisation's value base as well as the principles governing how volunteers will be recruited, selected, involved and managed within the organisation. This tool helps ensure that the value placed on volunteer contributions is shared throughout the organisation and informs its practices and procedures.

For more advice on developing your volunteer policy, download the Volunteer Now's [Resource Guide 2: Planning for Volunteers](#).

Click to access a [Volunteer Policy Framework](#)

## Effective management

Volunteers are able to maximise their contribution to the organisation when effective and clear structures for management and support exist. This principle also applies to the voluntary members of Management Committees themselves.

Source: [www.diycommitteeguide.org](http://www.diycommitteeguide.org)

When involving volunteers, organisations should ensure that clear roles, fair recruitment and selection procedures, induction, training, support (including practical support, such as payment of out of pocket expenses) and supervision systems are all in place. These should all support the principles outlined in the organisation's volunteer policy.

Go to Volunteer Now's [Volunteer Involvement Resource Guides](#) - a practical resource for organisations wishing to develop and implement good practice standards in volunteer management.

The sector's quality standard for organisations that involve volunteers, [Investing in Volunteers](#), indicates the benchmark for standards of good practice in volunteer management across the sector.

Managers of volunteers can also use the [Volunteer Managers National Occupational Standards](#) as a checklist for carrying out specific tasks, helping to ensure that their activities are meeting expected standards of practice.

## **Legal issues**

Management Committees need to ensure that recruitment, selection and management practices and procedures keep a clear distinction between volunteers and paid staff, to avoid potential legal implications.

It is important to remember that volunteers are not employees and should not be treated as such. Volunteers come with very different motivations from employees, not least the fact that they are not seeking direct financial gain from their contributions. Employees are protected by a range of employment legislation. Management Committees therefore need to ensure that all recruitment, selection and management practices and procedures keep a clear distinction between volunteers and paid staff, to avoid potential legal implications.

However, although volunteers are not employees, Management Committee members do need to be aware of a range of legal issues which affect how volunteers are involved in the organisation. For example, volunteers still have a right to a safe working environment and should be insured for the activities they undertake.

## **Volunteers and expenses**

This is a common pitfall area for organisations. It is good practice for volunteers to be reimbursed for reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred whilst volunteering. However, by its very definition volunteering is unpaid activity. Volunteers should not be provided with any form of 'payment' or flat-rate expenses, as this may be seen to give them employment status with the associated protections (including the right to the minimum wage). Payments can also affect benefit rights and taxation responsibilities.

Download: [Volunteers and Expenses](#)

Download: [Volunteers and the Law](#)