**Fact sheet 4d: Training and Development for Volunteers**

Good volunteer management includes ensuring volunteers are trained to fulfil their roles effectively. Volunteers generally need less formal training than employees as their involvement in the organisation is usually limited to a specific set of tasks. Here are a number of factors involved in training volunteers that you will find useful to consider.

**1. Training rationale and strategy**

In order to have a uniform and fair approach to training volunteers, it’s helpful to develop a rationale for the kind of training volunteers can access, and why. This should be consistent with your organisation’s principles, and will probably be based on the following factors:

**a)** **Competent performance of tasks and role:** the most obvious reason to provide volunteers with training. This ensures your organisation maintains consistency and quality in its services, thereby protecting and enhancing its reputation.

**b)** **Managing risk:** a significant factor that helps to safeguard your organisation’s reputation and the safety and wellbeing of all of its stakeholders. Providing training on topics such as Data Protection, Health and Safety and Equality of Opportunity to staff and volunteers will help to minimise the possibility of claims being made against your organisation. You can read more about managing risk when involving volunteers in [Fact Sheet 2d: Health and Safety](http://drive.google.com/open?id=0BxM5UHfVB7YWaG1ONUNnNWZzdFU) in the ‘Volunteering and the Law’ section of our online Resource Library.

**c) Volunteer development:** it is good practice to provide volunteers with opportunities to train and develop through their involvement in volunteering.

A word of caution, however:it can be tempting to use training opportunities as a benefit in order to attract new volunteers or encourage existing volunteers to do more. Do make sure that training is related to the role, in order to avoid potentially significant problems for both volunteers and organisations:

* Organisations, because unrelated training could lead to the volunteer being considered an ‘employee' – and therefore might be entitled to claim related benefits such as payment of the National Minimum Wage and paid holidays.
* Volunteers on state benefits, because employee status is likely to affect their entitlement to them.

For more information on this issue, download [Fact Sheet 2c: Avoiding the pitfall of creating employment contracts](https://drive.google.com/open?id=0BxM5UHfVB7YWbVAwdmNMdE1Cam8) in the ‘Volunteering and the Law’ section of our online Resource Library.

For more information on developing a training rationale and strategy, visit:

* The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD)’s web page - [Learning and Development Strategy: an Introduction](https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/strategy/development/factsheet)
* Community Toolbox web page: Section 4: Developing Training Programs for Volunteers.

2. Training approaches

There is no one right way to provide volunteers with training; much depends on the organisation, the nature of the volunteer role and the individual volunteer. There are however common good practice approaches to training volunteers. These include the induction process, ‘on the job’ training during shifts, group training sessions, online learning and external training events.

Once a volunteer has completed their induction and settled into their role, additional training needs can be identified and discussed in supervision sessions. These might have been identified by the volunteer or line manager in the course of their volunteering activities, and/or emerge as a consequence of discussion in supervision sessions.

Working to a tight budget means that many organisations run internal volunteer training where possible, as opposed to paying for external training. Internal training

for volunteers usually involves being trained by a line manager and/or volunteer coordinator and/or shadowing more experienced volunteer ‘buddies’. This kind of

training is often part of the induction process. For guidance on developing volunteer inductions, see [Fact Sheet 4a: Volunteer Inductions](https://drive.google.com/open?id=0BxM5UHfVB7YWQjdMZmVEeTEyZG8) in the ‘Supporting and Managing Volunteers’ section of our online Resource Library. For budgetary reasons, some organisations choose to train volunteers and employees together on topics applying to staff both paid and voluntary, such as first aid training, for example.

Some volunteer roles require more specialist training, such as those involving working with vulnerable adults and/or children. It is common to outsource specialist training: [Skills Platform](https://www.skillsplatform.org/) is a useful website that provides information on mandatory, health and charity-focused courses from recommended training providers.

**3. Accreditation: formally recognising volunteers’ learning**

Some organisations will be in a position to accredit volunteers’ learning according to an external framework such as [National Occupational Standards](http://www.ukstandards.org.uk/Pages/index.aspx). Not all organisations will be in a position to offer externally accredited opportunities, however. Providing a volunteer with a reference could, however, be viewed as a form of internal accreditation. This is something that all volunteer involving organisations should be able to do for volunteers as a matter of course.

For more information on accrediting volunteers’ learning, see [Knowhow Non Profit](https://knowhownonprofit.org/people/volunteers/training/accreditation)‘s information page, or contact us (see back page).

**4. The volunteer’s perspective**

It’s important to consider volunteers as individuals when planning training. Influenced by their reasons for volunteering, volunteers’ interest in training and development will vary widely. Some will want enough training simply to do their role properly, whilst others, particularly those volunteering to gain work experience, may want as much training as possible.

It is important to try to make volunteers feel comfortable and competent when learning. If someone feels nervous, it can slow down their thinking and interfere with their ability to absorb new information. People vary in confidence levels, learning pace and learning style, so it’s important to plan training that takes individual differences into account.

**For more information**

[National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)](http://www.ncvo.org.uk)

NCVO champions the voluntary sector and volunteering across Britain by connecting, representing and supporting voluntary organisations. It has a reputation as an authoritative voice for the sector.

* [www.ncvo.org.uk](https://www.ncvo.org.uk/) Phone: 020 7713 6161 Email: ncvo@ncvo.org.uk

NCVO Knowhow Nonprofit

Knowledge and e-learning for charities, social enterprises and community groups. Learn from experts and peers, and share your experiences.

* [www.knowhownonprofit.org](https://knowhownonprofit.org/)

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