

Evelyn Oldfield Unit

# Working with Volunteers



**A management guide for refugee community organisations**

by Kate Bowgett and Lynne Gillett

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Thanks to Chris Badman of the Refugee Council for the section on immigration issues

# Introduction

We hope that you will find these guidelines useful. They have been designed specially for Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) after learning from organisations involved in our project. RCOs often find it hard to take time away from pressing client needs to look at their organisation's working practices and structures; we have therefore made these guidelines as short as possible as a tool for workers with little time to spare.

RCOs depend on volunteers to deliver their services, and most already appreciate the great contribution these volunteers make to their communities. But we also believe that by investing more in volunteers, and creating better structures to support them, RCOs can maximise this amazing community resource for the benefit of their organisations. This does not necessarily mean formalising the way volunteers work; it is about creating efficient structures behind their work to support them and to support your organisation. Volunteers who receive good support and training are more likely to stay longer, take more responsibility and be more resourceful. This also enables members of your community to make better use their skills as a route to employment or for their own personal development.

These guidelines are a brief introduction to the subject of volunteer management. There are many more detailed guides available, particularly from local volunteer centres or one of the national organisations that advise on volunteer involvement, such as Volunteering England. Contact details for these are included on page 41. We wish you success in your volunteer involvement – please do let us know if there is anything that has worked well for you, and we can share this resource with other RCOs.

**Jack Shieh, Chair of Evelyn Oldfield Unit**

## Definition of volunteering

Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society, local communities, individuals outside the immediate family, the environment or other causes. Voluntary activities are undertaken of a person's own free will, without payment, except for the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses.

Please note: in this guide we refer to volunteers delivering services and administration in RCOs. This does not apply to management committee members or trustees, who operate in a different legal structure and have a different organisational function.

## Key facts and figures

- In 2002 on average fewer than 5% of RCOs had a full- or part-time paid volunteer co-ordinator post, as opposed to over 60% in other voluntary organisations.
- Asylum seekers are permitted to volunteer as soon as they arrive in the country. This includes people who are in the process of appealing against a decision to refuse them asylum (see Immigration issues, page 39).
- 22 million adults are involved in formal volunteering each year in the UK.
- 10 million people volunteer each week in the UK, amounting to 90 million hours of work.
- Volunteers contribute an average of 66% of the working hours in RCOs – the equivalent of five extra full-time staff per organisation each year. But RCOs only spend an average of 4.6% of the organisation's annual budget on volunteers, despite the fact that volunteers' time is worth roughly £85,000 a year to each RCO.

# Planning volunteer projects

## Why do you want to involve volunteers?

Before starting to plan a volunteer programme, it is useful to take some time to consider *if* and *why* your organisation should involve volunteers.

### Volunteers:

- widen the scope and flexibility of your organisation's work
- increase diversity
- allow greater participation by the local community
- complement paid work and bring 'added value' to your work
- have a chance to learn new skills and take on challenges.

## Why is planning your volunteer involvement important?

- Volunteers are a huge resource for your organisation, giving time, skills, experience and energy, but they are not free of cost. They need proper management so that the experience is equally useful for you and for them.
- If you want to make the most of your volunteers, it is always worth making a real investment in volunteer training, support and personal development.
- If you use targeted recruitment, you can match volunteers' skills and

experience exactly so that you have the right volunteers with the right skills for exactly the tasks that need to be done.

- Funders recognise and appreciate investment in volunteer involvement. Most funding applications are stronger if they include some volunteering. They are more likely to be successful if you can show clearly that you understand that volunteers need and deserve proper supervision, training and expenses.

## What kind of structure do you need?

### Creating a structure for volunteering could include:

- designing volunteer policies
- implementing standard procedures
- giving regular individual or group supervision
- supporting volunteers' training and personal development needs
- clarifying boundaries and roles
- designing a whole project focused on volunteer development
- recruiting or designating a member of staff as a volunteer co-ordinator
- carrying out safety and risk assessments which cover the way volunteers and clients work together.

'Volunteers are the lifeblood of our organisation but sometimes it is hard to rely on them.' **RCO in Ealing**

## Won't formalising volunteering put off some of our community volunteers?

Many smaller organisations are worried about 'formalising' their volunteering, and worry that it will put off some community members who 'just want to help'. However, planning the structure of your volunteer involvement doesn't need to include formal agreements or a formal management style for volunteers. The important thing is that the organisation itself reviews and plans its volunteer involvement to make sure that volunteers are used in the most effective and developmental way – an advantage for you, for them and for your clients.

## Involving other staff

Volunteers are often a large percentage of the team in RCOs, so increasing their role or numbers will impact on the whole organisation. It is very important to involve all existing staff, management committee members and volunteers themselves in planning their involvement. If everyone in the organisation understands why volunteers are there and everyone takes some responsibility for welcoming and supporting them as a vital part of the organisation, volunteers will feel more involved and, as a result, will want to stay longer.

## The benefits of investing in your volunteers

- You will recruit more volunteers more easily.
- They will be able to contribute more to your organisation.
- They will stay longer because they feel valued and are enjoying developing their skills and self-confidence.
- Your organisation will develop a good reputation in the wider community when volunteers talk about you to others (you never know who they might know at home) such as potential funders!

### Useful contacts

Evelyn Oldfield Unit (London and Manchester) 020 7700 0100 can provide consultancies for RCOs on planning volunteer programmes.

Volunteering England 0800 028 3304 can give advice on whether your plans follow best practice.

# Budgeting

## Essential issues

- How much training will volunteers need? Where will it come from? How much will that cost?
- What sort of support will volunteers need? How much supervision should they have? Are there any specific risks involved? Will volunteers face particular pressures?
- Do you want to offer personal development to volunteers as part of the project?
- Will volunteers have any specific access needs such as childcare or physical disability?
- What project resources/materials will they need?
- What input will your organisation need to make?

**Tip** If you are involving 10-20 volunteers, your training budget would probably be £1,000–£5,000 per year. Around £2,000 is recommended for a really strong motivational, developmental training programme.

## Paid volunteer management posts

See Volunteer co-ordinator posts, page 15.

## Overhead costs

If the funder allows it, you could claim up to 10% of the total you are applying for as general management costs. Check their guidelines carefully.



## Social events

As any payments apart from volunteer-related training and exact expenses would jeopardise volunteers' benefits and your employer status, occasional social events for volunteers are usually very much appreciated as well as being motivating. Budget around £200–£300 per year for a volunteer celebration or 'team exercise' that can involve socialising, sharing food and having fun, perhaps during Volunteers Week or Refugee Week, both of which are in the first half of June.

## Running costs

Remember to include some running costs for the general organisation, if there is room in the budget, for stationery, rent, heating, lighting, management time etc. This should not usually be more than 10% of the total application budget.

## Evaluation costs

Any funder will need a report on the project, and it can be very useful for further fundraising. An external evaluator can cost £200–£1,000, but if you evaluate internally you may want to charge for extra staff hours, or for the costs of an event that would involve your volunteers and service users in the evaluation. You should also include the costs of printing several copies of the report so you can send them to other potential future funders and share what you have learnt with other organisations.

## Police checks

If your organisation is working with vulnerable people as clients or as volunteers, you may need to have police checks done on some staff and volunteers. It may be worth registering your own organisation for this if you have over 10 volunteers and staff who need checks. There are likely to be changes, as the system is under review. Contact the Criminal Records Bureau or Volunteering England for guidance and information about registering and umbrella bodies:

**Criminal Records Bureau**  
Website: [www.crb.gov.uk](http://www.crb.gov.uk)  
Helpline: 0870 909 0811

## **Volunteering England**

Website: [www.volunteeringengland.org.uk](http://www.volunteeringengland.org.uk)

Telephone: 0845 305 6979

Email: [information@volunteeringengland.org](mailto:information@volunteeringengland.org)

## **Interpreting and translation**

You may want to translate your volunteer policy or recruitment materials, or provide interpreters for training.

## **Capital items and other project resources and materials**

You may need a desk, computer and so on for the volunteer manager, or for an increased number of volunteers so that you can use their time constructively. There may also be items needed for the specific project, such as books, maps, noticeboards etc.

## **Volunteer expenses**

These will normally include exact travel costs and lunch expenses, and sometimes care costs. But in order to budget, you will have to estimate these according to where you think your volunteers will come from and what groups you will recruit from? For example, will most be very local and only have bus fares? Will some be women travelling after dark who need taxis? Will they be working all day and need lunch expenses? See section on expenses (below) for further details. Remember, volunteers will not be working 365 days a year. The examples below are based on the assumption that they will do around two days a week each for 45 weeks of the year.

## **Examples of volunteer costs (based on London fares in 2006)**

### **Example of travel costs**

These must be paid at exact cost, but you will have to make an estimate for your budget.

4 volunteers on £3 bus expenses per day (= £1,080) and 1 on £6.30 travelcard (£567) = £1,647 total estimate.

### Example of meal costs

These should also be paid at the exact cost, but some organisations also set a maximum amount volunteers are allowed to spend on a meal, for example £4 or £5.

5 volunteers x 2 days per week x £4 x 45 weeks = £1,800 per year.

### Example of childcare costs

You should probably estimate a minimum of around £5 per hour for childcare costs (this must be the national minimum wage, at least), but it is unlikely that more than one or two volunteers per year will need to claim it.

2 volunteers x 5 hours per week @ £5 per hour x 45 weeks = £ 2,250

Make sure you explain in the funding application exactly how you have worked these out.

## Volunteers budget checklist

- Staff (recruitment ads, salary, travel, training)
- Administration/office overheads
- Volunteer training
- Volunteer expenses (travel, lunch, care costs)
- Police checks
- Internal supervision
- External supervision
- Project materials (translation, leaflet production, volunteer packs)
- Social events
- Capital items ( computer, overhead projector, books, personal alarms)
- Evaluation.

# Fundraising

It is significant that fewer than 5% of refugee-led community organisations (RCOs) have a dedicated volunteer project or volunteer co-ordinator, compared to around 70% of mainstream organisations.

## Probable reasons for this

- Refugee-led community organisations do not consider making applications specifically for this.
- When they make funding applications for volunteer programmes they focus on the service delivery and not on investing in support for their volunteers.

It is therefore important to consider making funding applications for your volunteer involvement, as a separate item from your core services.

It is also important not to underestimate how much volunteer investment will cost (see Budgeting section, page 8). Many applications are rejected by funders because they leave out costs that are important to the success of the project.

‘It is important to be realistic. You should apply for an amount that allows you to run the project professionally and creatively... Submitting an unrealistically low budget will not increase your chance of funding.’

**Grants Officer, COV Volunteering Projects Funder**

## There are 4 ways to fundraise for volunteer costs

- 1 Make applications for small grants (around £1,000–£10,000) just for volunteer expenses and training.
- 2 Include volunteer costs as part of your organisation’s general overhead costs in all funding applications.

- 3 Include proportional volunteer costs in project applications if the project involves volunteers.
- 4 Fundraise for a whole volunteer project including paid staff to manage volunteers (£10,000–£40,000).

### **What service do you want to provide?**

- Could the service benefit from volunteer involvement? Or is it specifically volunteer-focused (such as a befriending project, or a project providing personal and career development for ex-service-users)?
- What roles would volunteers have?
- What support and training would they need to deliver these roles successfully?

### **What is the need for the service?**

- Have there been client requests? Is there a gap in local services? Is an existing service you provide over-stretched? Would you like to improve or extend a successful service?
- How can you *prove* that there is the need? Can you provide statistics of casework or research?

### **Would the service benefit from volunteer involvement? Would it:**

- increase number of workers at little extra cost?
- increase client trust?
- increase the organisation's range of skills, diversity of knowledge and representation it provides?
- develop the potential for users to become volunteers later?

### **Or should the whole project be specifically volunteer-focused?**

- Are volunteers going to be the main deliverers of the service (such as befriending)?
- Should the focus therefore be on their support and training rather than on a paid worker?
- Should the paid worker therefore be a volunteer co-ordinator?

## **What support and training will volunteers need to deliver these roles successfully?**

See Training section, page 27.

### **Top tips for making an application**

- Plan in the context of your organisation's existing work.
- Create a draft 'ideal' project plan and costs.
- Research appropriate funders.
- Understand your funders' priorities, and speak to them in person if you can.
- Explain exactly why the project is needed and how it will work.
- Don't give more or less information than is asked for.
- Prepare in good time and ask someone outside your organisation review the application.
- Be realistic about expected outcomes. Consider when to modify the size and range of work (such as target area, groups targeted, users or volunteer numbers, staff hours). Re-estimate your budget after any modifications.

# Volunteer co-ordinator posts

## Staff recruitment

Most funders will require you to follow a clear equal opportunities-based recruitment process. You should therefore include a realistic amount in the budget for staff recruitment via the local or national press as well as through your other networks.

## Salaries

The average salary is probably about £16,500–£20,000 for volunteer co-ordinator/manager posts in London depending on how administrative or managerial the post is (figures apply at time of going to press). It might be helpful to check salaries in similar posts in other organisations or in *The Guardian* newspaper's Wednesday job adverts.

## Job description

Remember that any dedicated volunteer co-ordinator post will probably include recruitment, policy and practice development and supervision, reporting to funders and planning the work. This level of responsibility should be reflected in the salary and position of the post in your organisation, so it should be comparable to a project co-ordinator or middle-management post.

## Job title

Usually 'Volunteer Manager', 'Volunteering Project Co-ordinator', or project-related, for example, 'Befriending Project Co-ordinator'.

## Responsibilities to consider for a volunteer manager role

### Project/service development

- Expand services by recruiting more volunteers
- Diversify the volunteer team, such as by recruiting more ex-service users/young people/host community/asylum seekers as volunteers
- Review, design or develop volunteer roles
- Create a project plan and realistic exit strategy
- Fundraise for the continuation of the project
- Develop or improve volunteer policies and procedures.

### Project co-ordination

- Provide project service cover
- Match volunteers appropriately to clients, manage and assign their workloads and monitor and supervise their work
- Keep volunteer and service statistics for evaluation.

### Supervision and training

- Provide day-to-day/regular/monthly/weekly one-to-one and/or team supervision of volunteers
- Develop and deliver internal/external training for volunteers
- Assess individual development needs of volunteers and design training programmes to support their personal and professional development.

### General duties

- Provide monthly/weekly/annual written reports to the management committee/steering group/funder/director
- Network with other relevant projects in the borough/region/nationally
- Develop written resources/a library/information for the project
- Administer the volunteers' expenses
- Manage the project budget in co-ordination with the finance worker/director.



## Further information

Talk to organisations of a similar size and type to your own who already have a volunteer co-ordinator in place – the funder you are applying to may be able to put you in touch with them.

Check *The Guardian* newspaper job section on Wednesdays to get ideas and compare salaries and job descriptions. The full version of many of these can be accessed on *The Guardian* website at:  
<http://jobs.guardian.co.uk/browse/charities/index.jsp>

Volunteering England, your local Volunteer Centre or local Centre for Voluntary Services (CVS) may also be able to advise.

# Designing volunteer roles

## Why have specific roles?

Many organisations recruit general volunteers and then decide what work they will be doing. But if you do it the other way round – define specific roles, and then recruit people for these roles – a lot of things will be easier.

1. You can look at the services that you offer and work out exactly where volunteers would be most useful.
2. It is much easier to select the right volunteers if you have a role description which describes what skills you need and how much time they have to give.
3. People are more likely to stay if they have chosen a role they think involves work that they're good at or is a way of gaining skills and experience and is also fun.
4. It's much easier to plan what training and supervision you need to offer if you know exactly what volunteers will be doing.
5. If the volunteer, other staff, and service users know what the volunteer is meant to be doing, you are less likely to have problems with boundaries, volunteers doing the wrong thing, or volunteers being asked to take on too much work.
6. Clear roles give volunteers status and a sense of responsibility so they will be more reliable.

You will need to look at the kind of work volunteers do in your organisation and work out which roles they might possibly take on.

## Key roles

- Assistant advice workers (eg benefits, housing, education)
- Advocates (eg interpreting and rights support)
- Befrienders/mentors (eg elders, new arrivals, unaccompanied young asylum seekers)
- Support group leaders (eg parenting group)
- Trainers/speakers (eg health promotion)
- Community champions (eg representation at local meetings)
- Events organisers (eg social events, celebrations)
- Fundraisers (eg applying for small grants for events).

## Support Roles

- Administration roles (eg reception, database, office work)
- Computer maintenance
- Newsletter/website editor
- Translator (eg leaflets, posters)
- PR (eg distributing leaflets, posters).

## Writing a role description

You will need a description for each role which states:

- what tasks you want the volunteer to do
- what kind of skills they need to have
- what hours you need them to work
- how long you need them to stay
- who will be supervising them
- what training they will get.

Be realistic. Your description shouldn't describe the perfect volunteer; it should just list the skills, time and commitment you realistically need for each role. When you are designing roles remember:

- You can't expect volunteers to have the same skills as paid staff. Part of the reason most people volunteer is to gain experience.
- Very few volunteers can, or want, to work full time. It is easier to find three people to work one or two days a week than one person full time.
- Volunteers can and will leave. If a role is really important break it down

into several smaller roles so that you don't have to rely on just one person. If you can't do this then you may have to look for funding to make it a paid role.

- Volunteers won't stay if they don't enjoy what they're doing or don't find it rewarding. It 's better to give really boring or unpleasant jobs to paid staff.
- If you replace paid staff with volunteers, you could end up with lots of legal problems – at worst your organisation could be taken to tribunal and sued.
- You can always change and adapt roles to suit different people or different services.

# Recruitment

Once you have designed specific volunteer roles, you will find recruiting volunteers much easier. You will know how many people and what skills you need from these groups. You might want to recruit:

- **Current or ex-service users:** they will know your organisation well and may want to give something back.
- **Other people from your community:** they may want to help their own community. They will know your culture and will have appropriate language skills.
- **People with similar experiences to your service users:** refugees from other communities may not know your language and culture but may have been through similar experiences to your service users.
- **People with special skills:** for example, if you wanted someone with legal skills, you might think about recruiting trainee lawyers who have the skills but need experience.
- **Host community:** people in the host community may have specific knowledge of the locality or have knowledge of services that would be useful for your organisation.

Look at your role description and decide who would be most appropriate for it. You will also need to think about which groups are most likely to benefit from volunteering for you. Then you can decide where to target your recruitment for best results. But do remember, if you only target one group, fewer people are likely to come forward.

## Recruitment methods

### Word of mouth

The most common way for people to hear that an organisation needs volunteers is when someone tells them. Make sure that all your current

volunteers, staff and service users know that you are looking for volunteers so they can tell anyone they know, who they think might be interested. Lots of organisations rely on word of mouth to recruit people. This is all right but it will mean that you only recruit from your own community, so you may find it hard to involve the host community or get people with specialist skills.

### **Advertising**

Advertising for volunteers is just like selling a product. You need to tell people why you need them and what they will get out of helping you. A volunteer recruitment advert should:

- attract people by presenting the need for volunteers
- describe how they can help
- dispel some of the reasons that might put them off helping
- sell the position to them by describing how they will benefit from volunteering for you.

Once you have written your advert you can:

- make posters or leaflets and distribute them wherever you think potential volunteers might see them (such as libraries, other RCOs, schools, colleges etc)
- put it in your newsletter, local paper etc
- make leaflets and hand them out at any events that your organisation is attending.

### **Volunteer centres**

Most boroughs have a volunteer centre which has a database of different volunteer opportunities in their area. If people are not sure where they want to volunteer, they will often go to a volunteer centre and look through the vacancies on the database. It is usually free to register your vacancies with them and once you've registered you will also be able to access any other services that they offer, such as training and support for volunteer management.

However, most volunteer centres only provide the contacts; they do not actively recruit or manage volunteers for you, so you will still need to interview and, if necessary police check people they send.

## Recruiting service users

It is good to involve your service users as volunteers; they are the people who know your service best. However there can be problems if someone is using a service as well as volunteering in it.

- You need to be clear when someone is helping out, and when someone is *being* helped, otherwise people will get confused. You could decide that people may not volunteer and use your services on the same day, or, if you have several different services, you could decide that people can only help a service that they are not currently using.
- Volunteers have access to information about other service users. You need to have a clear confidentiality policy and make sure volunteers follow it.
- Service users who are volunteering should not receive a better service than other people as this can create conflict. Most funders will expect you to show that everyone receives an equal service.

# Selection

## Why select?

Not all volunteers are suitable for all roles but if you make sure that someone is right for the role before they start, it will save a lot of time and effort. If you have decided the volunteer is right for your organisation and the volunteer feels that your organisation is right for them, the relationship is much more likely to be successful.

'I only volunteered for a couple of months for my community because they only wanted volunteers for administration, but if I could have used some of my skills from my previous youth work in Bosnia, I might have stayed much longer...'

## Selection procedures

Volunteer interviews need to be very different from paid staff interviews. The volunteer has to decide whether they want to help you just as much as you have to assess whether they have skills you can use. You will not need formal selection procedures like those for paid staff. The best way to decide whether someone is right for your organisation is to invite them in for an interview. Some organisations ask volunteers to fill out application forms, but if you are interviewing them, this should provide all the information you need, so you don't really need them to fill out a form as well.

The interview is a chance for you to decide whether the volunteer is suitable; it is also a chance for the volunteer to find out a bit more about your organisation and decide whether they want to work with you. You will find out much more about them if there's a relaxed atmosphere where you and the volunteer feel comfortable and relaxed. You will need to find a space where you won't be interrupted and make sure that everyone knows that you are in an interview and shouldn't be disturbed.



## Role descriptions

It's much easier to select volunteers if you have a description for each role that says:

- what you want the volunteer to do
- what kind of skills they need to have
- what hours you need them to work
- how long you need them to stay.

The description shouldn't describe your perfect volunteer. It should list the minimum skills, time and commitment you realistically need to get the work done. (See section on Designing volunteer roles, page 18).

The role description will be your basic selection guide and you will need to check in the interview that the volunteer meets all the needs you have listed. Do remember that if someone is good but is missing one of the skills you need, you might be able to offer training or split the role into two and look for another volunteer with the missing skill. If you are having problems finding anyone suitable, it could be because you are expecting the volunteer to do too much. Try dividing up the role. You will probably find that it is easier to find five volunteers to work one day a week than one volunteer to work full time.

## Interviews

As well as checking that volunteers meet all the needs that you have identified in the role description, you will also need to check the following issues.

- Why do they want to volunteer for you? If they have a particular reason (such as training, getting a reference, meeting new people) and your organisation can't provide that, then they are not likely to stay with you for long.
- Are they happy with the level of support your organisation can offer? If they will be expected to work on their own and be in charge of their own work, you will need to find out if they can cope with this.
- Are there any resources that they would need in order to volunteer (such as childcare expenses, special equipment)?

## At the end of the interview

- Make sure that you offer them a chance to ask you any questions they might have and give them information about your organisation to take away.
- Agree about what will happen next and when you expect to be in touch again.
- If you definitely don't think they are suitable, tell them immediately, but firmly and kindly, and try to refer them on for more support (perhaps to a job club or support group) or to another voluntary organisation, or to your local volunteer centre so they can volunteer for someone else who might need their skills.

## References

If the volunteer will be working with people or handling money, it is best to ask them for references. References don't need to be from a past employer; two references from people who have known the volunteer for over three months should give you a good idea of whether they are suitable. It is a good idea to say that the references cannot be from someone's close family because family members are not likely to say if they think there is a problem. The easiest way to obtain a reference that will tell you what you need to know is to send a copy of the volunteer's role description and ask the referee to comment on whether they think they are suitable to undertake it.

# Training

Your volunteers will need to be trained to be able to carry out their roles. The type of training you need to give will depend on what your volunteers are doing. You need to think about the following issues.

## What will they need to know?

- How your organisation works.
- What policies and procedures they have to follow.
- Health and safety information.
- The specific issues and needs of the community you serve and the context of your work in the UK.
- How to do their job. Remember, the culture and style of service delivery differ between cultures and countries, and extra orientation will be important so your volunteers understand both the client group and the host community context.

## Will they need training before they start volunteering?

- For some roles (such as giving advice or emotional support) it wouldn't be safe for the volunteer to start until they'd been trained. These roles will need formal training. You may want to train groups of new volunteers together or consider the possibility of sending volunteers on external training courses.
- With other roles (office work, practical tasks) the volunteer can learn the necessary skills by working with a staff member or another volunteer, who can show them what to do. For these roles you will still need to think about ongoing training. You might want to run training sessions for your whole volunteer team on important topics or make sure that all staff training is open to volunteers.

## Who will do the training?

- You could run your own training sessions. If you want to learn how, a number of organisations run courses on delivering training. These will cost around £150–£300.
- Check with your local CVS. In some areas there is a lot of free training available for volunteers via local statutory or voluntary organisations. However, these will be general courses so they may not be culturally appropriate or suitable for people who are not confident with their English.
- You could pay an external trainer to deliver custom-made courses for groups of volunteers, specialised to your needs, this will cost about £350 per day.
- Remember to budget for venue hire costs, refreshment costs and creche costs for your training sessions.

Funders are usually very happy to see applications that include volunteer training costs – it proves you want to support them and help them to work professionally and safely.

## Volunteer management training

Many local volunteer centres run training courses on basic volunteer management that are free to local organisations. They can also advise you on where you can find more in-depth courses. These generally cost between £150 and £300.

You may also want to train other staff and your management committee on working with volunteers. Volunteer projects are usually far more successful and sustainable if the whole organisation understands and values volunteer involvement.

# Supervision and retention

Support and supervision are very important for volunteers. If someone is giving you their time for free and feels bored, are stressed, or feel they are not respected and that their work is not important, they will leave. You have to supervise volunteers to make sure they are doing the work you need them to do, and to support them to make sure that they are happy.

## Induction

The first few days that a volunteer is with you are really important. They will be deciding whether your organisation is right for them. If they feel nervous or confused, they may not come back. It is a good idea to plan an induction for them, to make sure that they feel comfortable, and know what is expected of them.

## Ongoing supervision

Even if your volunteers are very skilled and independent, you will need to supervise their work to make sure they are doing what you want them to do and are happy with their work. It is important that each volunteer has a person who is monitoring their work, who they can go to with any problems. This could be someone who is responsible for all the volunteers in the organisation, or it could be the person who is responsible for the part of your organisation they work in.

Through support and supervision you can let volunteers know what they are doing well, discuss any problems with their work, and check whether they are happy. There are several different methods.

## **Formal**

Regular one-to-one meetings (usually monthly). Formal supervision is best when the volunteer has a complicated or difficult role. It is useful when a volunteer wants to gain work experience because you can check how they are progressing and help them plan how they could develop their work.

## **Informal**

Regular contact with the volunteer – making sure you spend five minutes chatting with them every time they come in. This works best when the volunteer is based in your office and you have regular contact with them. It only works if you make sure you spend time regularly with each volunteer.

## **Group**

Volunteers regularly meet up as a group to discuss their work. This type of supervision works best if you have lots of volunteers performing similar roles. It is good because it means that volunteers support each other but you still have to make sure you have informal contact so as to be aware of individual problems.

## **External**

If your volunteers will be dealing with difficult emotional issues for clients (such as domestic violence, counselling), it may be appropriate to involve an external supervisor for their casework.

## **Whatever method you use, you need to make sure you:**

- thank them for their time and praise any work you feel they've done particularly well
- discuss current work, future plans, any problems they may have, or any that you have with their work
- ask what aspects of their role they enjoy and which bits they don't like, and see how you could develop the role
- check if there's anything you could do to make their role easier or if there's any training they feel they need
- ensure they feel part of the organisation, not just service providers. Ask them if they have any ideas for the whole organisation and tell them whether and how this can be acted on.

## Dealing with problems

It is much easier to deal with problems if you have clear roles so that each volunteer knows exactly what they are meant to do and when they are meant to come in. It is also a good idea to have a ‘volunteer agreement’ saying what you expect from your volunteers. You will need to ask them to:

- stick to your organisation’s rules and procedures
- come in when they have said they are going to, or let you know in advance if they won’t be able to make it
- attend training and supervision sessions.

If someone is not carrying out their role properly or is not sticking to the agreement, you will need to discuss it with them as part of their supervision. It is a good idea to have a disciplinary procedure so everybody knows how problems will be sorted out.

### Sample disciplinary procedure

- If there is a problem with your work we will discuss it with you and try to find a solution.
- If a problem recurs over and over again, we may need to ask you to leave.
- If you are violent, abusive, break the law or do something that might harm someone, then we will have to ask you to leave straight away.

## Getting them to stay

People have lots of different reasons for volunteering. You will keep your volunteers for longer if you find out why they are volunteering and you make sure that you are supporting them and meeting their needs. For example, if a volunteer wants to meet new people, don’t make them work in a room on their own. If a volunteer wants to learn new skills, don’t give them just very basic work to do.

Through support and supervision you need to find out what each volunteer’s aims are and see if there is any way you can help to achieve them. If a volunteer wants something that you definitely can’t provide, it may be better for them to go to an organisation which can.

Volunteers are more likely to stay if they know they are appreciated and that your organisation values their work. You can do this by:

- reimbursing expenses
- including them in staff meetings and decision making
- featuring them in newsletters and annual reports
- holding events where volunteers can socialise and have fun
- having ongoing training
- giving them references for work or education
- developing their roles to help them gain the skills they want
- saying thank you.



# Safety

## What's your legal responsibility?

As an organisation you have a legal obligation called a 'Duty of Care' towards staff, volunteers and clients. This means you have to do everything you can to make sure that no one is hurt or harmed. If someone is harmed and it is your organisation's fault, your organisation or management committee can be sued. The court would investigate whether you had reasonable safety procedures in place. If they felt you didn't, they could order your organisation to pay compensation. If the organisation didn't have enough money then the trustees/management committee may be expected to pay.

## Four steps to make sure your organisation is safe

### 1. Do a risk assessment

Look at what your organisation does and write a list of things that could go wrong, these are your 'risks' or 'hazards'. Once you have your list look at each item and see if there are any policies, procedures, rules or training that could stop the hazards occurring.

Example: A lunch club for elderly people

Hazard: People getting food poisoning

Solution:

- All volunteers preparing food must have training in food hygiene
- Notices on the wall in your community language about food care

### 2. Have safety policies and procedures

The solutions you find will include ideas for policies and procedures. These don't have to be very complicated, in fact the simpler you make things, the

easier it will be to apply. Once your policies and procedures are in place you will have to decide how to let people know about them, otherwise there's no point in having them.

### **3. Make sure everyone is trained**

Giving volunteers training to do their role is important. Remember that training doesn't have to be expensive or formal. It could be a current volunteer or member of staff showing someone how to perform a task, or one person from your organisation going on a course and sharing what they have learnt. Some roles do not need much training but some are very high risk (such as giving health advice). You need to make it clear that only volunteers who have received proper training should carry out these roles.

### **4. Make sure your insurance covers volunteers**

Employers Liability or Public Liability Insurance can cover volunteers, but you need to make sure your insurance company knows that you have volunteers and that they are included in your policy. This doesn't usually cost any extra money. If you haven't told them, they could refuse to pay out for an incident involving a volunteer.

## **Working safely with vulnerable people**

'11% of people experience sexual abuse as a child. 82% of these are abused by someone from their own community.' **NSPCC prevalence survey 2000**

If your organisation works with vulnerable people, you will need to be particularly careful that you have training, policies and procedures in place to make sure they are not harmed. Your risk assessment will need to take into account any extra hazards resulting from working with children or elderly people.

You are legally allowed to run a police check on any staff or volunteers who will be working with:

- people under 18
- people with learning or physical disabilities
- people with a physical or mental illness including addiction to drink or drugs
- elderly people who are frail.

Many organisations are worried about applying for police checks but if a vulnerable person was abused and you hadn't done the check, you would be failing in your duty of care. Don't decide that police checking isn't right for you because you are a community organisation. There is a lot of support, information and advice available to help you make the right decision for your organisation.

### **Useful contacts**

Volunteering England: 0845 305 6979 can advise you on your legal duty, police checks and volunteers

Criminal Records Bureau: 0870 909 0811 can advise you on how to arrange police checks

# Writing a volunteer policy

If you are involving volunteers, you will find it useful to have a volunteer policy. This policy should say how your organisation manages volunteers, and should refer to other policies like health and safety, confidentiality and equal opportunities that affect volunteers.

## **Your volunteer policy:**

- makes it clear to everyone (including potential funders) how and why you involve volunteers
- means all your volunteers are treated equally
- gives you a simple plan of how you manage volunteers.

Involve volunteers, staff and management committee members in developing the policy. It's more likely to be useful if everyone can contribute ideas.

Most importantly, try to keep the policy simple and readable, and only create policies that you will actually put into practice in your work. Policies do not have to be long, but they must be accessible – you may want to have copies in your mother tongue as well as in English. A cupboard full of policy files is not useful if the people in the organisation who should be using it cannot read them and no one knows what is in them!

## What should be in it?

### Why do you involve volunteers?

- Try to think beyond ‘We can’t afford to pay’ to ‘We can involve the whole community’, ‘It gives us a chance to involve service users’ etc.
- Consider which are volunteer roles rather than paid roles and why?

### Recruitment and selection

- Where will you advertise for volunteers?
- How will you select volunteers? Will you have an application form or will you interview people?
- Do you ask for references or carry out police checks?
- What are your policies?

### Induction and training

- Is there a Volunteer Agreement which tells volunteers what you expect from them?
- Do you have a list of items that will be included in volunteers’ induction?
- What initial training do you give?
- What ongoing training do you give and how do volunteers access it?

### Expenses

- What expenses will you reimburse?
- How do volunteers claim expenses?

### Supervision and support

- Who is responsible for supervising volunteers?
- How will they be supervised?
- What is your disciplinary procedure?

### Equal opportunities

- Do you have an equal opportunities policy?
- Does it cover volunteers?

## Health and safety

- Does your health and safety policy cover volunteers?
- Have you done a risk assessment on your volunteer roles?
- How will volunteers be trained in health and safety issues?
- Are volunteers covered by your insurance?

## Confidentiality

- Does your confidentiality policy cover volunteers?

It might be useful to look at other organisations' policies. Volunteering England can send you sample policies. They have a free good practice guide on writing a volunteer policy called *Getting it right from the start*. You can download it from their website at [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk) or they will post it to you free. They also offer a free policy review service where they will look at your policies and advise you.

# Immigration issues

## **Volunteers from the European Union**

There are no restrictions on volunteering by people from European Union countries or from Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland.

## **Volunteers from outside the European Union**

People from outside these countries are not allowed to take up work, paid or unpaid without a work permit. Theoretically this means that they cannot volunteer.

However, the Home Office has made a concession to allow people from outside the European Economic Area (EEA) to volunteer if they meet the following criteria:

- the activity is purely voluntary
- the activity is either for a charitable organisation or a registered charity
- the activity is unpaid and directed towards a worthy cause
- the activity is closely related to the aims of the organisation
- the activity is fieldwork involving direct assistance to those the charitable organisation has been established to help
- the person intends to leave the United Kingdom at the end of their stay.

## **People from countries for which a visa is needed to travel to the UK must obtain one before travelling.**

Unless they have a visa that specifically permits volunteering, visas must allow the person to take up employment in the UK. Visas that prevent a person from working, such as the visitor visa, also prevent them from volunteering.

### **Students**

Since mid-1999, students from outside the EEA no longer need permission to take part-time or holiday work, including volunteering. However the combined hours of volunteering activity and work should not exceed the total hours allowed to work, which is currently 20 hours a week.

### **Refugees**

People who have refugee status or who have exceptional leave to remain, and family members, are allowed to do any type of work including voluntary work.

### **Asylum seekers**

Since April 2000, asylum seekers (people in the process of applying for refugee status) and family members have been allowed to volunteer. This includes the period while they are appealing against a decision to refuse them asylum.

This is based on information provided by Volunteering England and the Home Office in 2005. Please check the Volunteering England website for any changes: [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)



# Contacts

## **Criminal Records Bureau** [www.crb.gov.uk](http://www.crb.gov.uk)

Helps organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors by identifying candidates who may be unsuitable to work with children or other vulnerable members of society. The website explains all you need to know about police checks.

Tel: 0870 90 90 811 (calls charged at the national rate)

## **Investing in Volunteers** [www.investinginvolunteers.org.uk](http://www.investinginvolunteers.org.uk)

The UK quality standard for all organisations that involve volunteers in their work. The standard enables organisations to comprehensively review their volunteer management, and also publicly demonstrates their commitment to volunteering.

## **VolResource** [www.volresource.org.uk](http://www.volresource.org.uk)

Provides information for voluntary and community organisations on anything to do with running a voluntary organisation (community group, charity or other non-profit body).

Fax and voicemail: 070 9235 7720 Email: [webinfo@volresource.org.uk](mailto:webinfo@volresource.org.uk)

## **Volunteer Development Scotland** [www.vds.org.uk](http://www.vds.org.uk)

The national centre for excellence which aims to develop knowledge, policy and practice to maximise the positive impacts of volunteering on individuals, groups, organisations, communities and society. The Information Service offers information and advice on any aspect of volunteering or volunteers.

Stirling Enterprise Park, Stirling FK7 7RP Tel: 01786 479593

## **Volunteering England** [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)

England's volunteer development agency which works to promote volunteering. Offers training for volunteer managers and many other services. The website offers a range of resources for anyone who works with or manages volunteers as well as to those who want to volunteer. Has a free helpline for queries on any aspect of volunteering or managing volunteers.

Regents Wharf, 8 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL

Tel: 0845 305 6979 Email: [information@volunteeringengland.org](mailto:information@volunteeringengland.org)

Helpline: 0800 028 3304

## **Evelyn Oldfield Unit publications**

*Investing in the Future of Refugee Communities*

A Unit review, 1994–1996

*Making a Difference by Learning from Each Other*

A Unit review, 1997–1999

*Guidelines for Providers of Counselling Training for Refugees and  
Guidelines for Refugee Community Organisations Providing Counselling  
Services*

The Unit with the Refugee Mental Health Forum, 1997

*Families in Transition – Conflicts and Concerns Within Refugee Families*

The Unit and the Refugee Mental Health Forum, 2001

*Out of Exile – Developing Youth Work with Refugees*

The Unit with Barbara Melunsky Fund and National Youth Agency, 2000

*Compassionate Leadership – A Question of Gender? The Experience of  
Women Managers in Refugee Organisations*

The Unit with Margaret Page of MAYA Consultancy, 1998

*Renewing West London – Refugee Communities: Their Hopes and Needs*

The Unit with Michael Bell Associates, 2002

*Refugee Settlements – Can Communities Cope?*

The Unit with Charities Evaluation Services, 2002

*Refugee Integration – Opportunities and Challenges: Report of a  
conference held in July 2003 and organised by the Co-ordinators Training  
and Support Scheme (COTASS), a forum of the Evelyn Oldfield Unit*

The Unit with COTASS, 2004

*The Changing Role of Refugee Women – Conference Report*

The Unit with the West London Women's Forum, 2003

*Somali Conference Report*

The Unit With the Somali Forum, 1997

*Effective Governance: A seminar for refugee community organisations*

The Unit with the Charity Commission, 1998

*Refugee Volunteering: Integration in action*

A unit conference report, 2004

**Further details on publications from the Evelyn Oldfield Unit – contact  
details on back cover.**

# About the Volunteering Development Project

The Evelyn Oldfield Unit began its Volunteering Development Project in 2002 by surveying 25 Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) in West London. It found that there were huge differences in resourcing for volunteer management between RCOs and mainstream voluntary sector organisations.

The project delivered training, consultancy and information work on fundraising for volunteer costs, recruiting volunteers, managing volunteers, policies and legal issues concerning volunteering. This was delivered to over 100 RCOs over three years, all specially designed for RCOs' needs. The project used what it learnt from this project to produce the guidelines in this handbook as a tool for all RCOs.

Building on the success of the previous project, a new three-year, London-wide project started in 2005, funded by the Big Lottery Fund. This is developing the services established in the original Volunteering Development Project and also includes a new volunteering sharing scheme. The aim of this is to improve the rapport between RCOs and their local mainstream agencies, through:

- an exchange of volunteers
- sharing expertise, learning and other resources
- raising awareness within mainstream agencies about volunteering in RCOs.



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