**Fact sheet 1b: Common ways of involving volunteers**

Volunteers carry out unpaid activities for organisations and businesses such as charities, community groups, voluntary organisations and fundraising bodies. They are also involved in supporting the work of public sector organisations such as local and county councils. Common ways in which organisations use volunteers are:

1. To support and enhance the work of paid staff

It is a common practice for third sector and public organisations to recruit volunteers for this reason. Volunteers work closely with paid staff who delegate tasks to them. If this is how you want to involve volunteers, make sure you consult with staff to find out how volunteers could support their work. There may be projects or tasks that they can’t get around to or lack the skills to carry out. A volunteer could assist with one or more tasks or projects.

2. To expand the organisation’s activities

If volunteers are to run a new activity or area within the organisation, make sure you:

* Involve volunteers in the visioning and initial planning stages to ensure they have a sense of ownership
* Consider the levels of innovation and accountability that volunteers are given, and how decisions will be made, and by whom
* Consider the relationship between the new operational area and existing areas of work.

3. Event management and support

It has become increasingly common for organisations to involve volunteers in promotional, fundraising and outreach events. They can be recruited to help manage overall organisation or for specific duties during the event, such as stewarding. Factors to consider include:

* How volunteers will be managed – good communication is key
* Adapting administrative procedures and recognition of volunteers to fit short-term roles
* The short term nature of the volunteering role, which might be several months, or several hours. It is wise to plan what information you will give volunteers about your organisation as they will be its public face during the event

4. To help improve service users’ quality of life

Across the public and third sector, a significant proportion of volunteers assist and/or care for individuals in hospitals, hospices, nursing homes and numerous disability services. If you plan to use volunteers in this way, make sure you:

- Consult with service users to find out their views on how volunteers could be involved in meeting their needs

- Create a legally and ethically appropriate framework for their involvement, including appropriate policies, vetting procedures and training. For support with this, see our resource library section [*Volunteering and the Law*](https://www.wcava.org.uk/resource-library/volunteering-and-law)

- Consider the kinds of skills and personal qualities needed for carrying out the role

- Decide on suitable tasks that volunteers could carry out when working directly with service users. It is usual practice that volunteers do not carry out personal care tasks, for example.

5. As a way of being involved with one’s local community

This approach can be found in community centres, where the entire organisation is focused on developing a well-connected and meaningfully involved community. It is productive to involve volunteers at all levels of the organisation, and they might be used in all of the ways listed above.

6. Volunteers are the group or organisation

Within this kind of organisation, it is just as important to develop a well thought out approach as there might be multiple ways in which volunteers are involved. Things to consider include:

- Developing a clear rationale for volunteer involvement

- That everyone understands why and how volunteers are involved

- How the volunteer programme and experience will be organised: this will involve thinking about administrative systems, how volunteers will be recruited, trained, managed, supported and recognised.

Further 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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