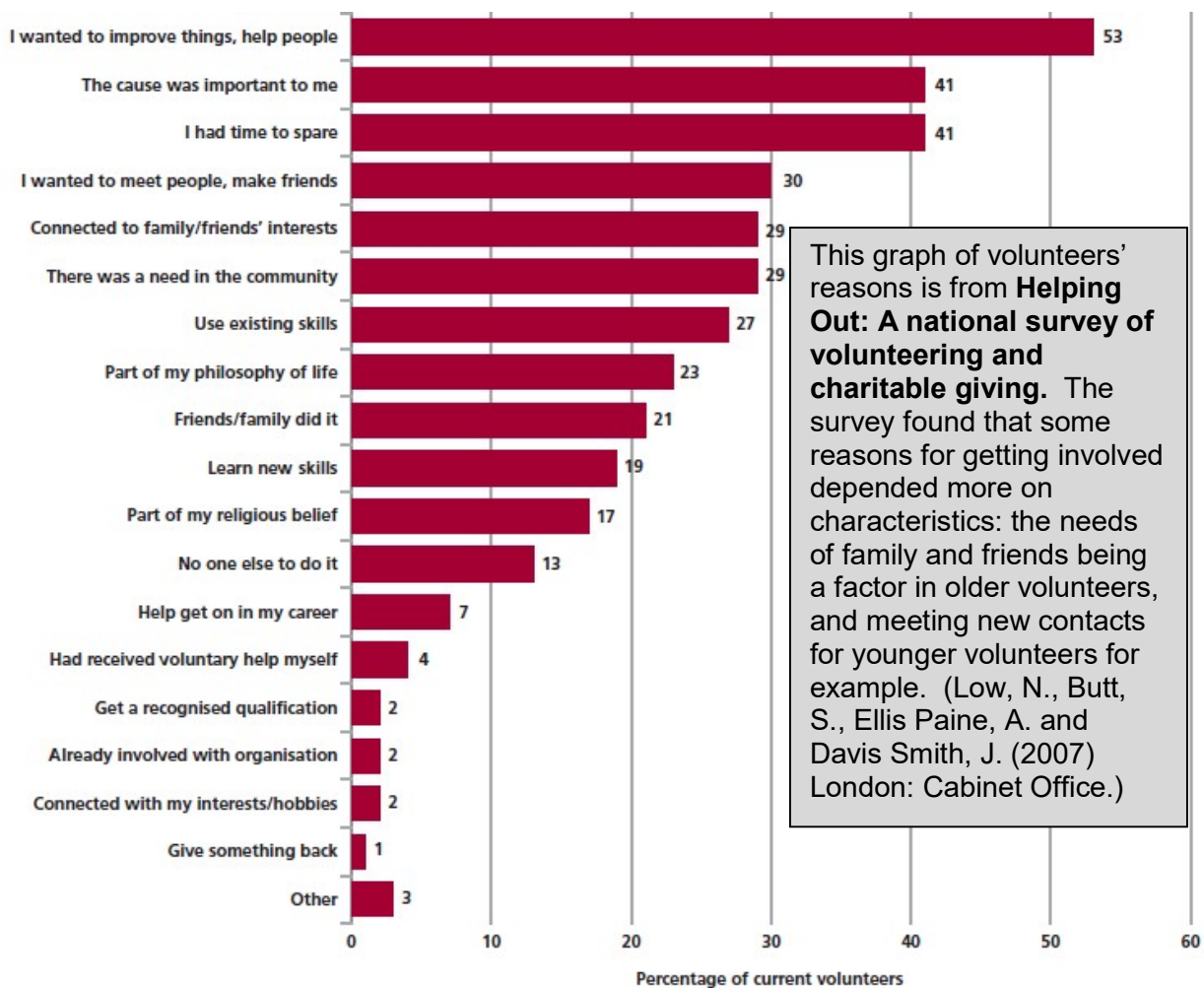


Why People Get Involved.

What creates and sustains active citizenship? Research in 2011 concluded that volunteers' personal motivations are many and varied, including:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helping others • developing relationships • exercising values and beliefs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having influence • for personal benefit • being part of something |
|---|---|

<http://pathwaysthroughparticipation.org.uk/resources/>



This graph of volunteers' reasons is from **Helping Out: A national survey of volunteering and charitable giving**. The survey found that some reasons for getting involved depended more on characteristics: the needs of family and friends being a factor in older volunteers, and meeting new contacts for younger volunteers for example. (Low, N., Butt, S., Ellis Paine, A. and Davis Smith, J. (2007) London: Cabinet Office.)

Base: All current formal volunteers (n=1,351-1,352). Percentages sum to more than 100 as respondents could choose more than one reason. Don't know/refusal responses excluded.

Young People and Volunteering: Five broad categories of motivation for volunteering have been identified among young people: personal feelings (e.g. satisfaction, feel good), personal needs (e.g. pastime, relationships), altruism, experience (e.g. skills and work prospects) and personal inducements (e.g. qualifications) **HOWEVER...** the same research also suggested that a stereotypical perception of volunteering and who volunteers (middle-aged, middle-class, women) still exists amongst many young people.

Ellis, A. (2004) *Generation V: Young people speak out on volunteering*, London: Institute for Volunteering Research.

What Do Volunteers Bring to your Organisation?

One of the best ways to review why you involve volunteers is to think about what volunteers offer or bring to your organisation. This may include particular skills, experiences, or perspectives that paid staff aren't currently able to offer.

Volunteers can:-

- ❖ Help you to deliver a more flexible service, eg extended /different opening hours
- ❖ Open up your organisation to communities not currently accessing services. For example, a volunteer with language skills may attract service-users who don't speak English as a first language
- ❖ Help you to involve under-represented communities, eg a refugee volunteer may encourage other refugees to start volunteering
- ❖ Introduce new ideas or perspectives drawn from their life experiences or work experience in other sectors
- ❖ Know the geographical area, be in touch with local people, and have a good understanding of their needs, helping to inform planning and service-delivery
- ❖ Raise awareness of your organisation. Even if the volunteer's role doesn't include marketing, they will probably spread the word about your work to friends, family and neighbours
- ❖ Demonstrate your organisation's real commitment to working in partnership with the local community, including increasing levels of consultation, accountability and openness

- ❖ Offer skills that are missing (finance, business planning, fundraising, counselling, IT, legal) or that paid staff can't necessarily deliver (befriending, mentoring, home visiting)
- ❖ Help to direct your organisation at strategic level through involvement as trustees/management committee members
- ❖ Be a critical friend. Committed volunteers will want to see your organisation flourish, and they can offer constructive criticism from within the organisation. They can often offer objectivity and detachment, or raise things that paid staff feel uncomfortable about voicing
- ❖ Enable large-scale service-delivery. Some organisations run services predominantly delivered by volunteers, who far outnumber paid staff. Without them there would be no service.
- ❖ Make services more approachable/accessible to people who dislike or feel nervous of bureaucracy or institutions
- ❖ Act as informal volunteer recruiters – volunteers who enjoy volunteering with your organisation are quite likely to encourage their peers to get involved
- ❖ Energy and stamina, especially if they only volunteer for a few hours each week/month
- ❖ Bags of enthusiasm – people volunteer because they want to, not because they have to, and will usually be very committed to your aims because they have chosen to share their skills and time specifically with your organisation.

Writing Task Descriptions and Person Specifications: A Few Good Reasons Why...

I don't have time to sit down and write person specifications and task descriptions!

As a Volunteer Co-ordinator, it can be time-consuming to be asked for new tasks every 15 minutes by your volunteers. If you spend some time writing a task description at the outset, you will save time in the long run, as you won't constantly be interrupted. Volunteers and other staff will also feel more confident taking initiative or delegating, so more will be achieved.

We find that volunteers don't stick around for long in our organisation, and some of our volunteers seem quite demotivated.

Research shows that two of the major factors causing dissatisfaction amongst volunteers are not having enough to do, and not knowing exactly what they are supposed to be doing. A well-written task description will explain the tasks you expect the volunteer to perform and they can refer to it to see what they should be doing if they forget or are unsure.

We often recruit volunteers that are not well-matched to the role. We end up trying to find other things for them to do, or asking them to leave.

A task description and person specification help the volunteer and the organisation to decide if the match is right for both parties before the volunteer starts. It can save you recruitment time and a lot of unnecessary upset. You can use the person specification as an assessment tool during interviews or informal discussions with prospective volunteers.

Volunteers often ask me for references if they are moving on to paid work. Sometimes I don't even know where to start, and it takes me ages.

A task description provides a valuable tool when writing a reference – you can see at a glance a list of the tasks the volunteer has performed in your organisation.

Some of the volunteers I work with lack confidence in their skills and abilities, especially if the volunteering involves something they have never done before.

A task description can be empowering and can help to build confidence, as volunteers can use it to demonstrate their capabilities and the tasks they have performed.

There is sometimes confusion or conflict over what volunteers are supposed to be doing.

A task description should clearly list the tasks the volunteer will conduct and it will have been agreed at the start of the volunteering placement. It should help to prevent any arguments or misunderstandings. It can also be very helpful if the usual co-ordinator is and a colleague needs to supervise temporarily.

We are finding it difficult to attract potential volunteers.

A task description and person specification can help you to recruit. People are much more likely to offer their support for a role they can imagine themselves doing. You will be approached by 2 sets of people; those interested in your organisation, and those interested in a specific role.

Isn't it more flexible and inclusive to define roles solely around volunteers' individual skills and aptitudes? Don't task descriptions and person specifications exclude people?

Actually the opposite is often true. If you don't work out what your organisation's needs and boundaries are, it will be difficult to judge whether an individual has the skills you need and whether you can offer them the support they need. You could end up either being very conservative and narrow about the pool of volunteers you take on, or you could take on inappropriate volunteers then leave them floundering with no clear role. The process of developing task descriptions makes you think realistically about what support you can offer volunteers.

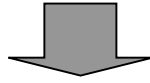
Writing Task Descriptions

- Keep tasks specific: then you can pick and choose for different volunteers
- Keep a list of core tasks, and other more specific tasks: marketing, websites etc.
- Be realistic –some skills will definitely be needed, but don't aim unnecessarily high
- If a volunteer needs a lot of support maybe they could be matched with another?

Things to think about:

- What tasks do you have that you need volunteers to do?
- How might these tasks be combined to create a role?
- How much training could you give?
- How much support and supervision can you give?
- Are there any areas of role development?
- What skills would the volunteer need to have already?

Hmmm, I think we should involve volunteers...



Get everyone's commitment

Volunteer Policy

Allocate a budget

Identify a worker

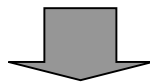


What are they going to do?

*Task description
Person specification*

Where will they work

Who will supervise

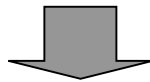


How will we respond to all the interest we are going to generate?

*Phone/email response
Website information*

*Information packs
Information evenings*

Allocating workers

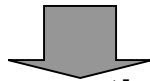


How will we make sure we are involving appropriate volunteers?

*Application forms
Interviews*

*CRB checks
References*

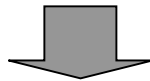
Who will select and when



How will we make sure the volunteers know what they are doing?

*Planning when
training/induction takes place*

*Who delivers the training/induction
Volunteer handbook*



How will we advertise?

Different Methods of Induction

The type of induction methods that your organisation uses will be dependent on the aims of your induction programme, the volunteer role, the resources you have available and what type of organisation you are. There are number of different methods that you can use to induct volunteers. These include:

- Reading a volunteer handbook
 - This method should not be used in isolation. It can be introduced to the volunteer and the important parts can be explained. They can refer back to it when they are not busy.
- Group induction session
 - This method will only be useful if you recruit lots of volunteers at once. It allows for discussions to take place and enables volunteers to start to build relationships and provide a support system for each other.
- Buddying or peer mentoring
 - Volunteers could be teamed up with a more experienced volunteer who would be able to help them through any problems they may encounter.
- Talk
 - They could have a talk with paid staff and established volunteers about their roles in relation to volunteers and the organisation as a whole.
- Showing them around
 - They should be introduced to other staff and volunteers.
- Shadowing or coaching
 - Shadowing can help them to find out more about the organisation and their role but should not be used in isolation.
- Email or telephone contact
 - This is a very unusually method of induction and is only sufficient if the role requires the volunteer to work from home.
- Training
 - New volunteers should be provided with sufficient training so that they can undertake their volunteering role.
- Quizzes
 - New volunteers could be given quizzes on tedious parts of the induction, such as Health and Safety.

Volunteer Inductions: Key Documents

Most organisations will need to include these documents. The length and content will vary depending on roles, and your organisation.

Orientation checklist

For example: who buys the tea bags? Where does scrap paper live? Where can you lock your bike? Are there pigeon holes? It can be a written document and checklist, or just a checklist. Put yourself in the place of the volunteer, and see what practical information you need to know about the building and staff.

A summary of the activities of the organisation

This could be in the Volunteer Policy or included in a handbook, or even showing someone a poster on the wall with a list of aims, and activities.

Volunteer policy

You may want to use the whole volunteer policy, or a summary document. Within the volunteer policy, or in another place if you wish, you will also want to give your new volunteer:

- A chart of the structure of the organisation
- A summary of the EOPS policy
- A summary of the confidentiality policy

Information about where to find other policies

It's great to give your volunteer enough information so that they feel involved and informed, but you don't want to overwhelm them. Make it clear, perhaps in one short document, where they can find out more or who to ask.

Health and Safety information

This could be where to find the health and safety policy, and/or health and safety information included in the orientation checklist.

Confidentiality agreement

This may be appropriate for your organisation. It is a separate document to your volunteer agreement.

Volunteer agreement

This may be a clear agreement that states no contract of employment has been created, or a letter welcoming the volunteer and expressing what both sides hope for the future, or perhaps a form to say all the induction information has been received and read.

Next of kin details form

As an organisation you have a duty of care to the volunteers you involve, and you need to be able to contact relatives/friends in case of emergency. You may want to include other information on this form, such as a start date and the volunteer's role.

Task description

Volunteers could receive just their specific role, or there could be a more informal list of possible tasks for the whole organisation.

Volunteer Plan/Training Record

A record of the volunteer's goals, and what they have to offer; and space to record achievements. (see attached sheet)

SAMPLE VOLUNTEER PLAN

Welcome! This plan helps all volunteers focus on what they want to achieve from being here, and make sure that they get the best experience from us. It also helps us make good use of all your skills.

With your supervisor, You can use the task description of your role to decide which aspects you feel confident about, and which parts you would like some support with. Then you can make a note on this form.

When you and your supervisor review your volunteering you can use this record to look back at what you've achieved.

Name of Volunteer	Start Date	Volunteering Role
<p>What skills and experience do you have that you'd really like to use while you're here? (Recently completed IT training, previous volunteering experience, experience working with an older person etc) <i>[These hints are to give volunteers ideas without putting them off. Try and make them varied and appropriate to your organisation]</i></p>		
<p>What would you like to learn while you're here; through experience, coaching or training? (Practice on a particular IT program, telephone experience, communication skills, confidence talking to people etc) <i>[Once again these hints should be varied and appropriate]</i></p>		

SAMPLE VOLUNTEER TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE RECORD

Name of Volunteer	Start Date	Volunteering Role
--------------------------	-------------------	--------------------------

Date	Training/Activity Completed	Time	Supervisor	Comment
<i>25/4/06</i>	<i>Using access to input data</i>	<i>1 day</i>	<i>RT</i>	<i>Shown what to do, and worked on own</i>

Goal Setting

Setting goals is important for anyone. The goal may be simply to have fun – it's still a goal, and if you don't monitor this as an organisation you'll lose the volunteer. However – all volunteers have different motivations, and roles vary immensely. How do you make sure you keep track of the goals your volunteers have in an equal and easy-to-manage way?

Think about the following tricky situations...

How would you adapt the Volunteer Plan and Experience Record to suit a volunteer coordinator working with 100 very informal volunteers who turn up once in a while to help clear a particular part of the River Lea?

Imagine this: an organisation has started a project with specific funding to involve volunteers, with some quite strict guidelines. The volunteer coordinator has set up a good system of induction and it's going well. It is however creating a tension between the 'new' volunteers and the other volunteers who have been informally involved for many years. Many of the other volunteers were also involved in the creation of the organisation. How do you all work to create an equitable system of induction and goal setting?