

Volunteers and training

Training is a valuable part of supporting your volunteers to feel confident, capable and ready for their role.

Some volunteers love training seeing it as a chance to grow and part of their volunteering experience, also increasing their confidence and satisfaction. Others may feel unsure maybe they've had bad experiences in the past (could remind them of unhappy school days), worried about formality or don't feel the need. That's okay - the key is to make training feel well-planned, relevant, welcoming and useful.

Benefits of training

It might feel like planning and running training takes time, effort and resources, so why provide training:

- Builds confidence and satisfaction
- Helps volunteers understand their role and do it well
- Reduces mistakes and risks (for example health and safety, safeguarding, data protection)
- Supports volunteers to take on new challenges and develop skills, awareness and knowledge
- Creates a fulfilling volunteer programme
- An opportunity for volunteers to share knowledge with others
- Helps everyone to feel part of the bigger picture
- Can boost CV's and future goals
- Encourages teamwork and connections
- Recognises and values volunteer contributions
- Shows your organisation is committed to high standards
- Enables consistency in approach by different volunteers over time
- Demonstrates you genuinely value the time and effort volunteers give
- Some organisations have training courses as part of their volunteer recruitment

Design your training

Training should be shaped around:

- What volunteers need to know to do their role?
- What skills they need to learn to do their role?
- What attitudes or approaches they need to do the role?

You can find this out through; recruitment, induction, 1-2-1's, surveys, feedback, focus groups, participation groups, staff, those who access your surveys, changes in services or new projects. Can volunteers help develop input into the training?

Make sure your training:

- Fits the role
- Recognises existing skills and experiences
- Is accessible and inclusive (consider time, location, format and any support needs)
- Encourages discussion, interaction and shared learning
- Highlights the reasons why (benefits) and what's in it for them (outcomes), the organisation and the people they're supporting. It could be essential to do the role?

Ways to delivery training:

- On the task learning
- Practical demonstrations
- Modules
- Workshops
- Shadowing others
- Online course or webinars
- In-person group workshops or sessions
- Conferences
- Buddy systems
- Guest speakers
- Videos
- Role plays
- Quizzes
- Group problem solving, case studies or team discussions
- Visiting or connecting with other organisations
- Structured reading or resources

Offer a variety of formats – considering support needs and that some people learn best by listening and others by doing. Training can be delivered in-house, externally or jointly with other groups/organisations.

To consider inclusion: reasonable adjustments, breaking down so not all in one go, some aren't able to access online or in person.

Practical tips for training

- Plan how you going to do the training and the tools/resources you are going to use
- Keep language clear and welcoming
- Make it interactive and engaging
- Be mindful of things like venue, layouts, timings, access needs and breaks – are these inclusive
- Provide refreshments or cover costs if you can
- Encourage questions and feedback
- Create a safe, relaxed space where people feel comfortable taking part
- Remember training isn't just a tick-box – it's a meaningful way to support, include and empower your volunteers

To be aware that training provided needs to be relevant to the volunteers, not a perk or to say you must volunteer a certain amount of time to receive any training or specific training - as can be seen crossing into contractual obligations.

