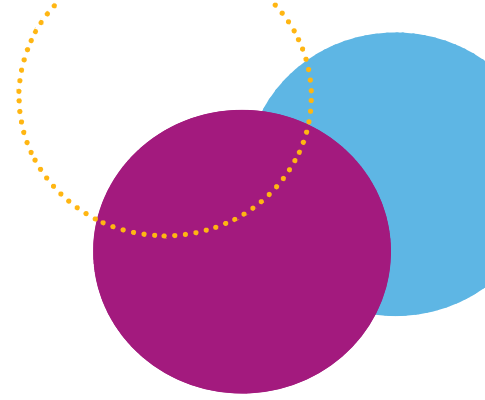


# 3

## Why involve volunteers?



There are many positive reasons why an organisation may involve volunteers in its work. Whatever the reasons it is worth bearing in mind that involving volunteers effectively is an investment. It takes resources such as the time to recruit, manage and support people, provide workspace and equipment, and reimburse out-of-pocket expenses.

### So why make this investment?

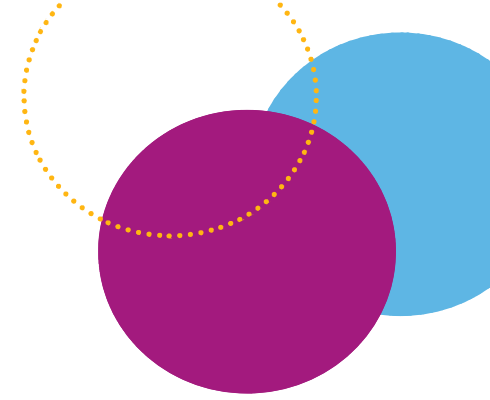
- To enable your organisation to operate effectively, or offer more support or services to your users
- To widen participation or involve more diverse groups of people, or allow channels for more local input. Volunteers can bring with them a different perspective to an organisation - one that reflects the views of the community or client group
- For volunteers' energy and enthusiasm
- Volunteers have a different relationship with your users than that of staff, it can be good to know they are there because they want to be - not just because it is their job
- For smaller organisations, volunteers bring a variety of skills, experience and enthusiasm that may otherwise be unavailable to them
- Volunteers can add credibility to an organisation – people giving their time suggests that the work must be of value

Volunteers should not be taken on just to do those tasks that no-one else wants to do. Nor should they be used as a substitute for paid staff positions.

Plan ahead before recruiting volunteers:

- Be clear about your reasons for wanting to involve volunteers
- Think about why people might want to volunteer, and why they should choose your organisation
- Define the roles and responsibilities that volunteers will take on
- Establish that you have enough resources to support volunteers
- Be prepared to explain how and why volunteers will contribute to the overall aims and objectives of the organisation

If funding or finding resources to support your volunteers is a problem, talk to your local CVS (voluntary sector support and development organisation) for advice about how to incorporate the costs of volunteer management into your funding applications and project bids. Most funders will see it as a legitimate part of your overall budget.



### **Volunteering is most likely to work well if:**

- The organisation has clear reasons for involving volunteers and acknowledges and recognises what they contribute
- Trustees, managers, staff, volunteers and users are all clear about why volunteers are there, and committed to supporting them
- The roles of volunteers are clearly defined, so that paid staff do not feel undermined or threatened and volunteers feel secure about what they are doing
- There is an organisational culture which values the involvement of volunteers and makes sure it has the resources to support them properly
- You have something to offer volunteers, for example: the chance to make a real difference, a great training programme, getting out in the fresh air, learning new skills, staying active, meeting new people, a change of direction...