

DIVERSITY IN VOLUNTEERING

What is Diversity in Volunteering?

Diversity in volunteering means diversity in terms of the people involved and diversity in the opportunities available. Volunteering should be an inclusive process in which people from diverse backgrounds and with diverse skills can participate, regardless of race, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation etc.

Diversity in volunteering is:

1. A varied body of volunteers, and
2. A varied selection of roles that volunteers can carry out.

These two aspects of diversity in volunteering are inter-linked. Different kinds of people are attracted to different activities and so it follows that if you offer a diverse range of volunteering roles they should attract a diverse range of volunteers.



Why is it important?

Diversity in volunteering provides many advantages including:

- The creation of a more positive and inclusive image
- Being representative of the wider community by the involvement of volunteers from different backgrounds
- Being more able to understand and respond to the needs of your local community
- New ideas and fresh approaches generated by people from different backgrounds and with different outlooks
- A broader range of skills and abilities
- Helping your volunteers to be role models which will encourage others from similar groups to volunteer and help increase their aspirations
- More confidence in working with people from different backgrounds
- Eligibility for wider sources of funding

How to get started

Considering diversity in your volunteer opportunities will mean you will have to take action in 3 key areas:

1. **Research** – examine how your organisation currently stands with regard to diversity. Are you doing all you need to do? The [Equalities Act 2010 guidance](#) is a useful source of information if you need any help.
2. **Policy and Practice** – this is about what your organisation does and how it is done in practice. You will need to make sure you build diversity into all your volunteer policies and procedures and training where appropriate.
3. **Image and Information** - this is about the image you project and how you communicate information about your organisation to your volunteers, staff members, clients, user groups and the general public.

Removing barriers

It is important to consider if your organisation may unwittingly be creating barriers to some people getting involved. Organisations that are successful in attracting volunteers often adopt a range of approaches. These include:

- Paying out-of-pocket expenses.
- Offering a variety of different types of volunteering opportunities requiring various levels of skill and commitment.
- Organising transport where necessary.
- Ensuring that buildings are fully accessible.
- Making it clear in recruitment literature that volunteering is open to all.
- Targeting recruitment campaigns at specific under-represented groups known as positive action.
- Adopting non-rejection policies for people who want to volunteer and linking volunteers into alternative opportunities.
- Adapting roles to suit individual volunteers needs known as reasonable adjustment.
- Providing appropriate training and support.
- Minimising the amount of form filling and bureaucracy directly involving volunteers.

Promoting diversity

Consider how you promote your organisation as inclusive and welcoming to all:

- Use words and images that convey a range of people whilst reflecting your ethos and activities.
- Advertise opportunities to volunteer as widely as possible using a variety of means such as leaflets, posters, volunteering development agencies, social networking sites and local media.
- Ensure that all policies and procedures incorporate diversity are relevant, easy to understand and simple to put into practice.

Why not ask yourselves:

- How are differing ideas heard and valued?
- What do we do to make this happen?
- What examples can we give of where ideas have been



Useful links

[Equalities Act 2010 guidance](#)