Achieving Inclusive Volunteering in NHSScotland

**A practical guide for staff working with volunteers
June 2009**

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Introduction

A volunteer is a 'person who gives freely and willingly of their time to help improve the health and wellbeing of patients, carers and users of NHSScotland' CEL (10) 2008

In February 2008, through CEL 10 (2008), the Scottish Government launched the Refreshed Strategy for Volunteering in the NHS in Scotland with the purpose of achieving demonstrable benefits for service users, volunteers and staff. The CEL:
- outlined the strategic partnership with Volunteer Development Scotland and agreed the areas in which Volunteer Development Scotland would support the professional development of volunteering within NHSScotland's services;
- identified the importance of leadership and management when responding ,to and working with ,volunteers within all of the NHS in Scotland;
- committed the NHS boards to achieving the Investing in Volunteers (IiV) quality assurance standard by 2011 and secured the necessary support and guidance from Volunteer Development Scotland, Scotland's Centre for Excellence in volunteering; and
- highlighted the added value that managed and resourced volunteering can contribute to patients wellbeing.

The Investing in Volunteers (IiV) standard provides the framework by which safe, supported and effective volunteering can be achieved and the main barriers to involvement in volunteering can be dismantled.
- IiV is managed in Scotland by Volunteer Development Scotland.
- This guidance document illustrates how NHS staff can assist their boards to achieve the IiV standard and how they can contribute to creating fair, enabling and accessible volunteering environments.
- The ten indicators are noted in Appendix 1.

For more information on any of the issues covered in this document, please refer to the Additional Resources section at the back of this document or go to www.vds.org.uk

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The benefits of involving volunteers in NHSScotland

There are significant advantages in involving volunteers from a diverse range of backgrounds within NHS Scotland services. Enhancing patient experience through adding value to services is the main benefit but volunteers also gain a great deal from their involvement. The following is a summary of the key gains.

Benefits to patients and service users
- Volunteer involvement may enable a wider range of services to be offered across the different NHS settings thereby enhancing the patient experience.
- Volunteering provides non-staff contact for service users experiencing social isolation.
- Volunteers bring a wide range of skills, experiences and insight to their roles which may bring a freshness and creativity to patient-centred tasks.
- Service-users would become aware of the volunteering opportunities available within the NHS and may feel encouraged to participate.

Benefits to the NHS team, department, and wider organisation
- Significant added value can be achieved.
- As well as potentially increasing the range of activities, more time could be devoted to achieving them. Some tasks might *only* be possible with volunteer input.
- Engaging local volunteers further involves members of the local community in service provision and enhances the wider relationship between the NHS service and its immediate neighbourhood. The volunteer link can also improve local understanding of NHSScotland and increase knowledge of health issues.
- A more diverse team encourages wider interest, appreciation and participation from others.
- Volunteers bring additional skills, experiences and perspective into the team.
- Volunteers may become interested in seeking paid work within the NHS.

Benefits to volunteers
The benefits of volunteering vary from person to person but often include one or more of the following:
- Gain confidence
- Improve mental, physical and emotional health
- Share or gain skills and experience
- 'Give something back' to society or as a 'thank you' to a particular service
- Help others; feel satisfaction in making a difference to other people's lives
- Gain work experience and improve employment prospects
- Meet new people
- Try something different
- Overcome social isolation
- Do something useful
- Improve English skills
- Structure retirement time

Barriers that prevent inclusive volunteering

Everyone in NHSScotland has a part to play in:
- recruiting, recognising and retaining volunteers who reflect the diversity of the local community, and
- providing volunteers with a safe, supportive and welcoming environment, free from discrimination.

An inclusive approach to involving volunteers is one that:
- actively works to identify and reduce any barriers, and that
- deals with any additional issues positively and effectively.

The most important thing to remember when supporting people in volunteering roles is that each person is an individual. Each will have different and changing motivations, needs and skills to contribute. Our NHS is for everyone and volunteering within it is an opportunity for more people to get involved in the planning and delivery of our user-focused, mutual NHSScotland.

Most of us would find that the barriers identified on the following page would have some impact on our ability or desire to volunteer in a service or project. There are some simple steps listed below that you could take when considering how you could promote an inclusive environment for volunteering:
- Be alert to the barriers that institutions, environments and workforces can project to potential volunteers, especially to those who are currently under-represented in volunteering.
- Consider how these barriers arise and what you and your colleagues can do to ensure volunteering is more accessible to a broader range of people.
- Avoid stereotyping and second-guessing people's needs and abilities. If, for example, a disabled woman came forward to volunteer, would she ever get the chance to explain, say, that her biggest challenge in relation to volunteering is finding the time and not her disability?

Have a look at the barriers noted on page five. There are visible and invisible barriers to inclusive volunteering. In many ways, we can each create and contribute to these barriers without realising, sometimes simply by letting things continue just as they are. Take a fresh look at everyday practice and habits:

- **What can your team, department or service do to involve a more diverse range of people in NHS volunteering?**

- **What can you do?**

The visible and invisible barriers faced by volunteers

This diagram illustrates different types of obstacles to involvement. It is not uncommon for some individuals to experience several barriers simultaneously.

The key to enabling a wide range of people to volunteer is therefore to avoid labeling or problematising individuals and to consider instead how usual practices and processes can be made more inclusive for all.

Roles and responsibilities of NHS staff

The approaches detailed in relation to the three groups of barriers outlined below are not exhaustive and individual solutions can work best.

> **If you want to know how you can best assist someone, ask them.**

1. Practical arrangements

Achieving clarity about staff and volunteering roles, and implementing related support and procedural structures, is the key to successful volunteer involvement. It is the responsibility of the staff who have regular contact with volunteers to ensure that everyone knows what to do on a day-to-day basis.

a. Provide induction
- Provide induction appropriate to a volunteer's level of involvement.
- Enable volunteers to understand how they contribute towards NHS' goals.
- Ensure each volunteer is fully informed about their role and the support available.

> Victoria Hospice, Kirkcaldy, NHS Fife
>
> The supportive approach to volunteer involvement at the Victoria Hospice enables a wide range of people to contribute to services. Here are some examples of how barriers can be overcome without fuss, as part of the usual processes:
> - A visually-impaired volunteer sat down with the Voluntary Services Manager (VSM) and they found a font size that she could read. The VSM then changed the font size of the training material so that she could participate fully in the induction.
> - All new volunteers are 'buddied-up' with a more experienced volunteer doing the same role. This provided additional support for the person with the visual impairment without having to make special arrangements.
> - As palliative care may not be for everyone, a taster session is available for prospective volunteers.
> - Following consultation with existing volunteers, a volunteer charter was written and a new induction programme designed. A cognitive/ behavioural approach is adopted during induction and this assists with laying down boundaries and guiding practice. The new mechanisms appear to assist the less confident, or those with low self-esteem.

b. Reimburse out-of-pocket expenses
Volunteers must be reimbursed promptly for reasonable, pre-agreed expenses incurred as a result of their volunteering. Therefore:
- Ensure senior managers allocate an adequate budget for out-of-pocket expenses.
- Advertise the fact that agreed expenses are available and reimbursed quickly.
- Encourage volunteers to claim their expenses and show them how to do it.

- Ensure that there are clear systems in place.

c.   Consider those with caring responsibilities

Flexible volunteering should give carers who wish to volunteer the chance to participate fully. So:

- Be flexible in the hours that you need the volunteer to be with you and be understanding if caring arrangements change unexpectedly.

d.   Improve the physical environment

NHS settings should be accessible but where there are any permanent or temporary physical barriers in specific volunteering environments raise the issues with management as these obstacles will have consequences for all users and visitors. Therefore:

- Check if you can remove the obstacle(s) to create more space.
- Remind staff to keep their workspace clear of clutter and hazards.
- Where physical barriers remain, consider ways in which you could make changes.
- Ask volunteers about their needs and for any suggestions that they may have.

e.   Explore the availability of facilities or equipment

Occasionally a volunteer might require particular facilities or equipment in order to carry out a volunteering activity. So:

- Explore whether the necessary facilities and equipment can be made available, perhaps with other colleagues, the Voluntary Services Manager or your Human Resources department.
- Identify sources of help and discuss possible solutions or alternatives.
- If you have exhausted all possibilities, support the volunteer and, if they desire this, signpost them to other NHS projects or external organisations through, for example, the Volunteer Centre network.

2.   Work culture

Work culture can affect how volunteers may become engaged. Therefore:

- Remind all those working with volunteers how important it is to be friendly and appreciative towards volunteers. Simple actions like smiling, greeting, saying thanks, asking about their weekend or inviting volunteers to relevant meetings or events can really help to create an inclusive environment.
- Ask volunteers for their views and consider incorporating their suggestions.
- Ensure that volunteers feel part of a team.
- Encourage staff who have had a positive experience of volunteering to use that experience to inform how NHS volunteers should be treated.

a.   Communicate effectively

- Be aware of the ways in which language and images can exclude people.
- Develop a greater awareness of how we describe people, roles and environments.
- Speak about 'involving' or 'engaging' volunteers, not 'using' volunteers, or saying " she is *just* a volunteer"
- Provide information in a variety of formats and languages.
- Don't be put off if English isn't a person's first language. There are many benefits in involving volunteers who have experience of overseas healthcare systems or who can bring a different perspective to the role.

b. Ask people to volunteer!

Being asked to volunteer and hearing about volunteering opportunities through word-of-mouth are the most effective recruitment methods. Naturally, this will ensure that those already in the NHS loop, for example service-users, patients, carers, friends and family members – are the most likely to volunteer. Therefore:

- Ensure your work culture does not seek to exclude non-professionals.
- Promote the value of involving volunteers among your colleagues.
- Ask the people you and your colleagues speak with to volunteer.
- Think creatively about how to reach people you are not currently in contact with. Work with potential 'signposting' organisations in your area, such as your local Volunteer Centre.

c. Be flexible

It may also be that there are several ways in which tasks can be achieved, so be open to other possibilities. So:

- Don't be too prescriptive in how you talk or write about the volunteering roles you offer. Communicate clearly what volunteering is and what will be involved but don't restrict your requirements unnecessarily.
- Consider tailoring roles to suit an individual's skills and abilities.
- Invite prospective volunteers to get in touch with you if they'd like to discuss any aspect of the role or application process.
- Consider how others are supporting volunteers in different roles from those that you have on offer. Would they work in your context too?

d. Make people feel welcome

For any one or more of the barriers explored in this section, a volunteer may develop the feeling that they are not welcome and they may then leave. They may pass on accounts of their negative experience to others who will also be discouraged from volunteering. Therefore:

- If a volunteer tells you that they no longer wish to volunteer and they say that they have not felt welcome, try to get a deeper understanding of the issues.
- Consider the ways in which you promote the volunteering that you offer and establish how welcoming it appears to a diverse range of people.

e. Avoid stereotyping

- Don't pre-judge volunteers by only asking those whom you feel might be most pre-disposed towards it. You might be surprised who would say yes if asked.
- Avoid making assumptions about what people can do or might be interested in.
- Ensure service-users know about the opportunities and assist and encourage as necessary. Have procedures in place for involving service-users.

f. Understand and implement anti-discriminatory practices

- Try to be more aware of the perceptions you have of others.
- Ensure that your recruitment methods and materials appeal widely and demonstrate a real commitment to inclusive volunteering.

- Without further stereotyping, think of ways in which different roles could appeal to different people and groups and target your recruitment for those under-represented.
- Ensure that a fair and equal selection process is practised.
- Pro-actively develop good relationships with community groups and specialist organisations.
- Ask volunteers, staff, family members, friends and other contacts for their ideas about how to best involve and support others in volunteering.
- Ensure that NHS staff and volunteers understand that anti-discriminatory attitudes, for example racism and sexism, are not tolerated.
- Ensure that any comments or complaints from volunteers are taken seriously.

3. Individual needs and anxieties

Prospective volunteers can easily talk themselves out of volunteering by assuming that something is not for them or that barriers cannot be overcome. Common underlying reasons may include literacy and numeracy concerns, lack of time, personal health or disability, worries around welfare benefits complications or other money issues, lack of confidence or awareness of own abilities or a belief that they wouldn't fit in.

a. Health and disability

One of the biggest barriers to volunteering for a person with a health condition or a disability is often the discouraging and discriminatory attitudes of those around them. Therefore:

- Focus on a person's abilities, not their disability or health condition. Focus on 'seeing the person'.
- Encourage volunteers to disclose any needs that you can assist them with and seek their thoughts on how this could be achieved.
- Consider how you can promote volunteering opportunities to service users. Be aware of the health and well-being benefits for patients and users who volunteer.

Mental Health Partnership - West, **Gartnavel Hospital, Greater Glasgow and Clyde**

Ellen* is in her late-50s with a history of alcohol-related mental health problems. Originally a Nursing Assistant, she had to give up paid work on health grounds.

- Ellen had been involved with a basic skills training scheme aimed at helping people move towards volunteering/training/employment but project staff had difficulty finding a suitable placement for her.

- Her life revolves around routines - she lacks confidence and requires a high level of support.

- Ellen has now been volunteering in an elderly care ward 2 days a week for a number of years. The VSM provides regular support sessions (weekly if possible) to ensure that she feels comfortable about what she is doing and her ability to do it. This arrangement works well.

* This person's name has been changed

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b.   Anxieties around literacy and numeracy

One in five adults in Scotland is estimated to have difficulty with literacy and numeracy. So:

- Be aware of the literacy and numeracy barriers that many adults face.
- Don't over-rely on written recruitment materials.
- Be open to people taking information and forms home.
- If a volunteer discloses that they have difficulty with reading, writing or using numbers, ask them how you can support them.

> ### Mental Health Partnership - West, **Gartnavel Hospital, Greater Glasgow and Clyde**
>
> - If potential volunteers have literacy or numeracy difficulties, the VSM offers to help with form filling.
> - Induction is adapted to enable volunteers to cover the material in the Volunteers' Handbook.
> - Risk assessments acknowledge issues with literacy or numeracy and volunteers are placed accordingly, offered a higher level of support and encouraged to engage with local literacy projects.

c.   Perceptions of time commitment

If potential volunteers are not accurately advised about the time commitment or they are given insufficient information, they will speculate and may think that the role requires more time than they have available. Therefore:

- Consider your real needs. Have you described the time commitment in a way that might discourage some people?
- Consider volunteers' needs. Can you shape roles around these needs?
- Be flexible in your requirements. Publicise this in your recruitment message.
- Some volunteers might only be able to make a short-term commitment. A healthy turnover can also be a benefit so adapt your volunteering roles to accommodate shorter term offers of help too.
- Check that volunteers do not feel overwhelmed or over-committed.

d.   Image of a 'traditional' volunteer

Research reveals that the traditional image of a volunteer as being a "white, middle-class, middle-aged woman" reflects the majority of volunteers in healthcare settings. So:

- Don't neglect your 'traditional volunteer' while you seek to broaden the diversity of your volunteer base.
- Be creative in developing a range of recruitment methods which will engage people from the wider community.
- People from all walks of life use NHS services. Challenge their views on what volunteering with you would be like.
- Appeal to those who might be interested in gaining experience for NHS jobs.

e.   Issues around belief and culture

A volunteer's belief or culture might mean that they have reservations about volunteering in certain contexts. Therefore:

•   Be open and friendly with new and existing volunteers so that they can feel free to express their needs and explore solutions with you.
•   Consult people and documents within the NHS, or beyond, for guidance. For example, the NHS has produced A Multi-faith Resource for Healthcare Staff.
•   If you become aware of dates or customs that are special to any of your volunteers, see if there are ways to recognise them.

f.   Lack of confidence; fear of expectations and failure

Some volunteers lack confidence and may be easily knocked in new situations. So:

•   Offer short taster sessions.
•   Take the time to see how volunteers are getting on.
•   Consider assigning them a volunteer mentor or buddy.
•   Don't overload people and review the commitment regularly.
•   Acknowledge how their contribution is making a difference.
•   Thank them for what they do in a way that is personal and meaningful.

Further top tips

•   Use a regular slot on your team meeting agenda to discuss volunteer involvement.
•   Make the links between involving volunteers and achieving key work objectives.
•   Consider the roles that you have (or could have) and think about the ways in which you could promote these opportunities to a wide audience.
•   Consider how service-users or NHS staff members could be encouraged and supported to volunteer.
•   Consider in any evaluation work how barriers to volunteering are taken on board. Arrange exit interviews to find out why people no longer wish to volunteer. You will discover more about the range of barriers that prevent participation or impact on retention.
•   Share your good news and range of experiences with others.

West CHCP, **Glasgow, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde**

A Volunteer Coordinator within the Health Improvement Team works with volunteers that have been referred through the Glasgow West Regeneration Agency. The people being referred are those furthest removed from the labour market and are likely to have little or no experience of work environments for complex reasons to do with their health or social circumstances. Although the overall project is employment-focused, the approach adopted is best described as representing a 'holistic pathway' for the individuals concerned, with no pressure regarding employment outcomes. The programmes aim is to enable individuals to contribute to services, to feel a sense of purpose and to improve their health and well-being. The Volunteer Coordinator attributes the success of the volunteer placements to some key factors:

- Arranging for each volunteer to have a placement mentor that will offer guidance and support.

- Being honest and realistic with the volunteer and with the placement mentor. Talk openly about what is involved and don't set anyone up for a fall.

- Securing a range of good quality volunteer placements where staff have the capacity and the outlook to enable volunteers to contribute fully.

- Promoting the aims of the programme as being mutually beneficial to volunteers, mentors and services. Those involved report that all parties benefit.

- Getting to know your volunteer. Don't assume what they might like to do and what sort of environment would suit them.

- Taking the time to match a volunteer with a suitable placement. Consider the needs of the individual, the staff and the service.

- Establishing helpful partnerships with other services that have the same needs and approach to volunteer involvement. Between you, you can enable more people to get involved.

- Training and personal development courses are available to volunteers as and when needed to support them in their pathway to employment.

- Maintaining good, active communication between all parties to ensure that everything is working well and to intervene early if necessary.

Good practice checklist

Area	Guidance
Lead	• Model good practice in volunteer involvement to others. Explain to peers and managers why something that you have done has worked well. Don't keep success a secret!
Communicate	• Ensure your verbal and body language encourages and supports others, regardless of their personalities or circumstances.
Reimburse	• Encourage volunteers to claim expenses due to them. Not everyone wants to claim but all should be encouraged and shown how to do it. Some volunteers will depend upon being reimbursed and they must not feel that there is any stigma attached to this.
Implement policies and processes	• The policy and practice framework that underpins volunteer involvement in your board is there to support and safeguard everyone involved. If you notice any gaps or have suggestions for improvement, especially around areas of risk, advise management.
Support	• Some volunteers may be especially sensitive to a lack of encouragement or warmth because of a lack of confidence or because they are in a new environment. • Take the time to get to know your volunteers. • Provide support in a way that is personal and appropriate to the individual. Supported volunteers perform well, enjoy their roles and recruit others.
Involve	• Ensure the volunteers you work with feel part of the team. Think of ways to involve them, seek their opinions and implement their ideas. • Support service-user volunteering. • Consider volunteering within an NHS setting. You could gain a new insight into a related field or it may be that you are working towards a new role within the NHS.
Recognise	• Value and recognise the volunteers you work alongside. Say thank you meaningfully. Explain to volunteers why you liked how they completed a task and how particular contributions make a real difference to you, service-users and other staff. • Be fair and inclusive in how you recognise volunteers.
Evidence	• Gather different types of evidence of the impact that volunteers make and share this widely. • Report successes and ongoing achievements with managers and other staff.

Additional resources websites and reading

Useful websites

Investing in Volunteers [www.investinginvolunteers.org.uk]

Volunteer Development Scotland [www.vds.org.uk]

The Volunteer Centre Network Scotland [www.volunteerscotland.org.uk]

Further reading

Danson, M., (2003) *Review of Research and Evidence On Volunteering*. Stirling: Volunteer Development Scotland. [www.vds.org.uk]

Commission on the Future of Volunteering (2008) *Volunteering in the Public Services: Health and Social Care. Baroness Neuberger's review as the Government's Volunteering Champion*. London: Commission on the Future of Volunteering. [www.volcomm.org.uk]

Scottish Executive (2004) *Volunteering Strategy*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive. [www.scotland.gov.uk]

Volunteering Australia and National Health and Medical Research Council (2003) *Working with Volunteers and Managing Volunteer Programs in Health Care Settings*. Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council. [www.nhmrc.gov.au]

Appendix 1 Investing in Volunteers' ten indicators

For more information on Investing in Volunteers please go to
www.investinginvolunteers.org.uk

1. Ensure there is an expressed commitment to the involvement of volunteers

2. Commit appropriate resources

3. Ensure that NHSScotland is open to involving volunteers who reflect the diversity of the local community

4. Oversee the development of appropriate roles for volunteers

5. Protect volunteers from physical, financial and emotional harm

6. Use fair, efficient and consistent recruitment procedures

7. Take a considered approach to taking up all references and official checks.

8. Establish clear procedures for introducing new volunteers to the organisation

9. Ensure NHSScotland staff are aware of the need to give volunteers recognition.

10. Take account of the carrying support needs of volunteers.