

Equity, diversity and inclusion in volunteering

Part 1 of this factsheet aims to provide information about the benefits of recruiting a broad range of volunteers and the principles that should be applied. Part 2 covers information about working with different types of diversity and how to avoid discrimination, which we hope will help you embrace a diverse team of volunteers and improve your organisation's approach to diversity and inclusion. Finally, Part 3 includes a glossary of terms and additional resources.

We would recommend visiting [NCVO's webpage](#) which has an introduction to equity, diversity and inclusion to help you get started in understanding why this matters and where to seek further advice should you need it.

Note on NCVO links: the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has a wealth of resources to help you. These are currently free to download from their website, but you will need to [register](#) on their site first. This will mean that the NCVO links within this document won't be downloadable for you unless you have registered/logged in to their website.

Part 1: Broadening the diversity of your volunteers

It is a good idea to think about the diversity of your volunteer base. It's important to recognise that everyone should be able to make a difference through volunteering and, whatever their background, your organisation should treat its volunteers with equity and fairness.



Benefits to improving diversity

There are great benefits to improving the diversity of your volunteer base for your organisation and the communities they serve. Some of these include:

- Bringing new ideas and perspectives to organisations
- Opening up skills development to everyone
- Helping people from different backgrounds to work together and understand each other
- Making organisations more representative of the communities they serve.

How to diversify your volunteer base

You will want to attract applicants from diverse groups in a fair and legal way. NCVO has produced a useful guide: [Identify and address obstacles to diversity](#) which focuses upon trustee volunteering, however the principles can be applied more broadly to help you to understand what the potential barriers are to attracting a diverse volunteering base. In understanding the barriers, you can seek to address them and will therefore hopefully improve the diversity of your volunteer workforce. Some general top tips from NCVO include:

- Value and embed diversity at all levels and invest in ways to improve it
- Have processes that are easy to understand and that welcome all volunteers
- Reach out to those under-represented among your volunteers and help them to get involved
- Encourage and support volunteers to be themselves and listen to what matters to them
- Create flexible volunteer roles that you can adapt to people's needs
- Collect data and information to understand who volunteers for you and why
- Seek out any barriers that may exist for current volunteers and take action to remove them
- Use language and images that reflect and welcome diversity
- Offer and provide training and development opportunities to volunteers.

Using a broad range of advertising methods will also help you to attract a more diverse range of volunteers. Our [Finding Volunteers](#) factsheet has tips on how to use social media, local media, your website, newsletters and other resources which will really help you to tap into the potential volunteer market. [Lloyds Bank Foundation's list of recruitment sources](#) is a really useful tool to access. Our online volunteering directory, [Volunteering in North Yorkshire \(VINY\)](#) allows you to find and advertise volunteering opportunities for free. Please [contact us](#) if you would like to advertise a role and we will be more than happy to help.

Part 2: Working with a diverse organisation

The world is a full of diverse people and good volunteering welcomes everyone. Just as if you were employing someone in a paid position, volunteers should be treated equally and with respect, and organisations should follow the guidelines listed in the [2010 Equality Act](#).

Protected characteristics

The 2010 Equality Act lists protected characteristics. It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of a protected characteristic. Areas covered by the Act include:

- age
- gender reassignment
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave
- disability
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.



A full definition of each of these characteristics can be found on the [Equality and Human Rights Commission Website](#) and you can learn more about the Act and how it applies to your volunteers on the [NCVO website](#).

Recognising protected characteristics

It is important to recognise protected characteristics so that you can ensure additional support is put in place if required. This may be a challenge if someone's particular needs are not understood or there is a lack confidence in how to approach people. Some top tips include:

- Before any meetings ask if people need any additional support
- Add a message onto the end of emails asking people to let you know if there are any reasonable adjustments that can be made
- Make sure your promotional materials are representative of all people
- Give people choice to promote independence
- Don't be afraid to ask the person questions, but be respectful and kind.



How to be a good ally

It can be difficult to fully be yourself at work, at home, or in your local communities. That's why we all need allies. Being a good ally is about being an active friend or support to someone else. To live in a world where all people are accepted without exception, we all need to be part of the solution. There are lots of opportunities to change the hearts and minds of people around us.

As allies to each other, we have to be able to listen, ask how someone is doing and be aware that other people's lives and experiences will be completely different to our own; especially in terms of discrimination and prejudice. Be respectful of each other and enjoy learning about all the differences and diversity in the communities around us.

The importance of educating and empowering yourself

Do some research, read up online and learn. Confront your own assumptions, prejudices, and biases. There are a number of courses available online which explore unconscious bias. If you would like to learn more about this topic there are a number of free training courses on line.

Challenging discriminatory attitudes and behaviour

If you hear people making negative comments or using hurtful or abusive language towards others, challenge it, if safe to do so. If it's online, report it. You might not always have all the answers or know exactly what to say and that's OK. Here are some tips to think about when challenging:

- Make sure you stay safe and don't put yourself in danger
- Check the person is OK
- Encourage them to report it
- Keep calm and explain why the language is wrong
- Try saying something like 'Stop, this is wrong' and explain why.



There is a difference between someone saying the wrong thing and using the wrong language because they do not understand or have never been educated about the correct words to use, and someone harassing or bullying an individual in a discriminatory way. For more detailed guidance and information on this topic, you may wish to consult with [NCVO's webpage about responding to discrimination](#). You will also find lots more links to relevant resources on this subject on this page.

The volunteering role and the Equality Act

Volunteers themselves will need to understand how the Equality Act relates to their role. They shouldn't discriminate against anyone who uses or is part of the service. This includes other volunteers and paid staff.

One way to ensure volunteers understand this is to build it into the induction process. You could explain what volunteers can do to support this and how you expect them to behave whilst volunteering. You could share your equal opportunities policy with your volunteers and discuss it with them.

Part 3: Glossary of terms and additional resources

General terms

Accessible - if a place or building is accessible to people, it is easy for them to reach it or get into it whatever their disability.

BAME or BME – Black and Minority Ethnic

Equality - the same status, rights, and responsibilities for all the members of a society, group, or family **Equity** - being fair and reasonable in a way that gives equal treatment to everyone

Discrimination - the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex

Diversity - the inclusion of people of different races, genders, religions, etc. in a group

Harassment - behaviour which is intended to trouble or annoy someone, for example repeated attacks on them or attempts to cause them problems

Inclusion - the act of making a person or thing part of a group or collection

Inclusivity - the fact or policy of not excluding members or participants on the grounds of gender, race, class, sexuality, disability

Prejudice - an unreasonable dislike of a particular group of people or things, or a preference for one group of people or things over another

Gender, identity and sexuality

Gender - often expressed in terms of masculinity and femininity. Gender is largely culturally determined and is assumed from the sex assigned at birth

Non binary - refers to someone who does not identify as exclusively male or female

Pronouns- gender-neutral pronouns are defined by [the LGBT Resource Centre](#) as providing an identity for a singular person who does not identify as he/him or she/her. The word "they" is used as a gender-neutral singular pronoun. It is important to ask how someone likes to be referred to, for example She/Her, as not everyone identifies with He/Him or She/Her. Some people prefer to use gender-neutral pronouns They/Them.

Some people put pronouns on your workplace signature or name badge. This invites those that use They/Them to know that they can introduce the use of their preferred pronouns in their volunteer placement.



The LGBTQ + Alphabet

LGBTQIADP

Lesbian - a woman who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards women

Gay - a man who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards men. Also a generic term for lesbian and gay sexuality, some women define themselves as gay rather than lesbian

Bisexual - an umbrella term used to describe a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards more than one gender

Trans - term used to describe a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with their birth sex. The opposite of this is cisgender which refers to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex.

Queer - used by those wanting to reject specific labels of romantic orientation, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Although some LGBT people view the word as a slur, it was reclaimed in the late 80s by the queer community who have embraced it.

Questioning - process of exploring your own sexual orientation and/or gender identity

Intersex - used to describe a person who may have the biological attributes of both sexes or whose biological attributes do not fit with societal assumptions about what constitutes male or female.

Intersex people may identify as male, female or non-binary.

Asexual – a person without sexual feelings or associations. Asexual individuals may still experience attraction but this attraction doesn't need to be realised.

Demi sexual - a person who does not experience sexual attraction unless they form a strong emotional connection with someone.

Pan sexual - a person whose romantic and/or sexual attraction towards others is not limited by sex or gender



References

General

[2010 Equality Act.](#)

[NCVO's Equity, Diversity & Inclusion in Volunteering](#)

[NCVO's Volunteer Rights](#)

Gender, Identity and Sexuality

[Stonewall Strategy - LGBTQ+](#)

[LGBT Foundation](#)

[Personal Pronouns Resource](#)

[Trans Student Educational Resources](#)

Disability

[Disability Rights UK](#)

[Scope](#)

Young People

[Power of Youth Campaign](#)

[North Yorkshire Youth](#)

Additional support

Community First Yorkshire can help you with many aspects of Volunteer Management, from recruiting and training volunteers to looking after and retaining them. Simply fill in an [enquiry form](#) and we'll get back to you.

You can also join our [Volunteer Co-ordinators' Network](#) and sign up for our news bulletins [here](#):

- Our monthly Funding Bulletin lists updated funding opportunities.
- Our weekly newsletter has information about the charity sector, including training.