



## Volunteering Schemes

### Contents

1. Introduction
2. Business models/scheme types
3. Establishing volunteer schemes – practical advice
4. Demonstrating the benefits
5. Risk and mitigation
6. Bibliography

## 1. Introduction

Whilst Public Service delivery has never been immune from change, the ongoing financial crisis has significantly exacerbated the rate and scale of that change. As demand increases and funding decreases, changes to the way public services are delivered has seen a wide range of government organisations now depend on, or involve other parties to help implement policy and/or deliver services. This 'externalisation' of public services, may involve working with any combination of the private sector, public sector partners, volunteers, and increased co-production with clients and service users themselves.

The percentage of people in employment who work in the public sector is the lowest since records began and the trend looks set to continue as Central Government Departments and Local Authorities face further significant reductions in budgets in the years ahead.

However volunteering remains an important part of British life. According to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) 29% of adults in England said they had volunteered formally at least once in the previous 12 months with 15.2 million adults undertaking some form of volunteering activity at least once a month. Furthermore it is estimated that some 23% of all UK volunteering now takes place within the public sector.

Fire & Rescue Services have witnessed a general shift towards externalisation of services, either through increased collaboration through a wide range of partners or by encouraging residents and businesses to take responsibility for their own safety as part of a co-productive approach to achieving safer communities.

As part of this approach a number of Fire Services now use community volunteers to either increase capacity or support the organisation in a wide variety of ways. Examples include everything from cadet and youth scheme instructors, museum curators, back office support through to commissioned services delivering Safe and Well visits and other services to vulnerable citizens.

The vast majority of volunteer schemes suggest staff and volunteer experiences are generally favourable. If managed well additional capacity, skills and enthusiasm emerge as clear reasons for continued and potentially wider use of volunteers.

However there are pitfalls for the unwary and some Services have had experience of a small number of troubling and negative issues from both staff and volunteers.

For those with existing Volunteer schemes or thinking of developing one, it is argued that if some of these concerns are not addressed, there is the potential for organisational risk and harm.

This guide has been developed using examples of existing practice from a number of Fire and Rescue Services across England. There is no right or wrong model for using volunteers but there are some distinct advantages and pitfalls that organisations and managers should be aware of.

It is important to consider why you want to involve volunteers in your organisation and to think carefully about what tasks are appropriate for them to do.

It is also important to involve paid staff within your organisation in this process to ensure that collaborative working is achieved and some may relish the opportunity to volunteer themselves. Ideally volunteers should not replace paid work, but rather they should add value to what is already being accomplished. However it is acknowledged that continuing fiscal pressure may provide a business case for greater use of volunteers.

This guide is designed to assist Fire and Rescue Services either considering the use of volunteers for the first time or those looking to review the effectiveness of existing programs as part of their overall Service Delivery plan.

A key part of the guide is an on line repository containing a wide range of example documentation including policy documents, tasking models, risk assessments, training protocols, budgets and evaluation and reward methodologies.

These have been submitted to be used by FRSs as a reference point, when considering either establishing a Volunteer network, or remodelling their existing volunteers service.

## **2. Business Models/ Scheme Types**

There are a wide range of volunteer scheme business models that Services may wish to consider. The following types of structure are currently in use and are all worthy of consideration:

### **Internal scheme**

The internal scheme option is where a volunteer's scheme is embedded within the organisation. Volunteers will be directly part of and managed by existing and/or dedicated staff. A complete set of policy's and processes will need to be put in place as existing staff policies should not be used.

Governance models include:-

Unincorporated Association (including charitable unincorporated association)

Charitable Trust

Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)

Charitable Company

### **Advantages:**

Probably the easiest option to set up.

Direct control and influence over volunteers.

Integration of volunteers into organisation

### **Disadvantages**

Danger of creating an organisation within an organisation

External Funding opportunities may be restricted

### **Unincorporated association (including charitable unincorporated association)**

An unincorporated association is a membership organisation. It can be whatever its members want it to be, and carry out whatever activity you choose. It is the easiest, quickest and cheapest way for a group to set itself up.

You do not have to seek approval of any kind before setting up an unincorporated association, nor do you have to register with any regulatory body.

If your group has charitable aims, this makes you a charitable unincorporated association (a type of charity). If you are a charity and have an annual income above £5,000, you are required to register with the Charity Commission

If your group wishes to be a Charity you have to demonstrate that you have charitable aims and that your work is for public benefit. This must be set out in your constitution. It may be best to adopt the Charity Commission's own model constitution for a Charitable Unincorporated Association or model constitution for small charities.

### **Advantages:**

Simple and flexible. No need to have the constitution agreed by any outside body (unless you are registering as a charity).

Cheap to run. No need to submit accounts to anyone outside (unless you register as a charity, or funders request it).

If you have charitable aims, you can register as a charity and gain advantages. For example, some funders will only give grants to registered charities.

### **Disadvantages:**

Some funders may prefer a more formal structure, especially if you are looking for big sums of money.

Your group has no separate legal existence – it is a collection of individuals. This means that:

Individual members of your management committee are personally responsible for the group's obligations and debts, and are liable if, for example, it is sued

It cannot enter into contracts – if it wants to rent premises or employ people, this is done in the eyes of the law, by individuals on behalf the group  
It cannot own property in its own right  
If you become a Charitable Unincorporated Association you will have to comply with Charity Commission guidelines on political and campaigning activities.

### **Charitable trust**

A charitable trust is not a membership organisation but is run by a small group of people, known as Trustees. It is set up by means of a trust deed.

Naturally the aims of the trust must be charitable and the trust will need to register with the Charity Commission if it has an income over £5,000 per year. A trust is usually set up to manage money or property for a charitable purpose.

Trustees can be appointed for life when the trust is set up, or can be changed regularly. This means, for example, a representative of the local authority could be invited to become a trustee. Trustees must not receive any remuneration from the trust or receive any personal benefit from its activities.

Like an Unincorporated Association, a charitable trust does not have its own legal existence. This means that actions taken by a charitable trust are the responsibility of the individual Trustees. The Trustees make all the decisions and have all the responsibility. However, new or existing charitable trusts can choose to become a 'Foundation' Charitable Incorporated Organisation, which gives the group a legal existence and gives Trustees more individual protection.

### **Advantages**

It is fairly cheap to establish and there is no registration fee.

It is fairly simple to set up. The Charity Commission publishes a model declaration for a Charitable Trust (trust deed). However if you are at all uncertain about the trust deed it is sensible to get legal advice, as the deed is a formal document.

It gives continuity to the group, and regulation by the Charity Commission gives a 'seal of approval' to its activities.

Funders may find the more formal and stable structure reassuring. Some funders will give grants only to registered charities.

### **Disadvantages**

As a registered charity, your group has obligations. Among other things, you must draw up your annual accounts and report in a particular way and send a copy to the Charity Commission. For more information on annual reports and accounts see our information sheet: Charity Reports and Accounts.

A charitable trust cannot own property in its own right.

A charitable trust cannot enter into contracts – if it wants to rent premises or employ people, this is done in the eyes of the law, by individuals on behalf the group.

A charitable trust is an unincorporated organisation which means that its trustees are personally liable for its obligations and debts. You can limit the liability of your trustees by becoming a 'Foundation' Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

### **Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)**

This is a new form of charitable organisation created by the Charities Act 2006, which became available in 2013. It gives a charity the main advantages of a Charitable Company – a legal personality and limited liability – but without having to send reports to Companies House as well as the Charity Commission, as Charitable Companies must do.

A CIO is registered with and regulated by the Charity Commission only. It is required to submit its annual accounts and trustees annual report to the Charity Commission. There is currently no charge for this.

**Advantages :**

Similar to Charitable Trust.

**Disadvantages:**

Lengthy registration process (not recommended for organisations wanting to set up rapidly, e.g. to respond to crises).

It may be difficult to get loans from banks because CIOs don't need to keep a public record of liabilities, like charitable companies.

If a CIO stops being charitable under the Charity Commission's criteria, it will cease to exist and be forced to close.

A CIO has to comply with Charity Commission guidelines on political and campaigning activities.

Further information about CIOs and updates on the registration process can be found on the Charity Commission website

For more information on this process we recommend 'Charitable Incorporated Organisations' by Gareth Morgan, which is available in the Resource Centre reference library.

**Charitable Company**

A Charitable Company is a limited company with charitable aims. It is an incorporated organisation which means that it has a legal identity separate from its members. In law, a limited company is considered to be a person and it can therefore own land or enter into contracts. The directors are agents of the company and are not personally liable for its debts.

Until 2013 this was the only option for an organisation which had charitable aims and also wanted the benefits of being incorporated. Such organisations can now choose between being a Charitable Company or a CIO.

A Charitable Company is a membership organisation. However, unlike an unincorporated association, members must be named and a list of members forms part of the Company Register. To be classified as "charitable", a company must demonstrate, through its Memorandum & Articles of Association (its governing document), that it is accountable to the community and charitable in its aims. The directors of a Charitable Company are also its trustees and perform the role of the management committee. The Charity Commission provides a model Memorandum & Articles of Association for a Charitable Company but you would be well advised to seek legal help in drawing these up. Establishing a Charitable Company involves registering with both Companies House and the Charity Commission, and then submitting your annual report and accounts to both bodies annually.

If your group is an unincorporated association which is already registered as a charity, there may come a point when you wish to become incorporated. This is done by forming a Charitable Company to take over the affairs of the unincorporated charity, or by becoming a CIO. The Charity Commission has a Charitable Company application pack, together with advice and guidance on its website which makes the process quicker and easier.

**External Schemes**

External schemes are those where the voluntary organisation, regardless of its constitution, is a separate entity to the FRS. This will mean that the voluntary organisation will have its own Policies and procedures that are separate from the FRS, and will be responsible for its own funding and daily management, however it may choose to organise itself. The voluntary organisation will make its own determination of the range and scope of services it will deliver for the FRS, and may also choose to deliver services for other agencies.

**Advantages**

Costs to the FRS may be fixed through an SLA or MOU with the voluntary organisation

Minimum commitment of FRS resources to management of the voluntary organisation

Opportunities for the voluntary organisation to undertake a wider scope of activities, outside of the FRS Remit

### **Disadvantages**

FRS has minimal control over the activities of the voluntary organisation, including recruitment of volunteers, structure of the voluntary organisation, policies and procedures

Potential barriers associated with separate organisations collaborating to achieve common goals

### **Collaboration Schemes**

The Police and the Fire Services nationally are collaborating to promote public safety and drive efficiencies by sharing functions.

The Home Secretary recently announced proposals for a much closer relationship between police forces and local fire and rescue services to make savings, cut crime and reduce fires.

Utilising one cohort of volunteers for both services builds on this model to enhance service delivery and share the costings of the scheme.

### **Advantages**

Financial savings and better use of resources

Mutual Support between services

Stronger united voice

Knowledge, good practice and information sharing

Broader recruitment arena

Share the risk

### **Disadvantages**

Savings can take time to materialise

Cultural differences between organisations

Competition between partners

Resistance to change

### **How to overcome barriers**

Experienced leadership (volunteer manager)

Clear and agreed mutual outcomes and collaborative advantages

Consultation with stakeholders

An example of collaboration can be found in the knowledge bank.

### **Commissioning / Social Investment**

Commissioning is the process that public services can use to select an appropriate provider to deliver a service, in this case a volunteer scheme.

The voluntary sector can transform public services, not just through delivery but also by shaping service design, and supporting service use and volunteer involvement. The close connection to users in local communities makes the voluntary sector a useful partner.

### **Advantages**

Short term contract / Payment by results

Social Value through service delivery

Identifies service criteria which meet local need

### **Disadvantages**

No guarantee of delivery / reputational risk

Lack of knowledge re organisational procedures / policies

High set up costs

### **3. Establishing volunteer schemes – Practical Advice**

#### **Getting started**

Volunteer schemes cannot succeed unless there is a clear understanding at the highest level of the organisation of exactly what the volunteer scheme is expected to achieve, and a commitment to supporting the scheme to achieve it.

The next step will be to determine which scheme you consider will best meet your needs, from the examples described in section 2. This may involve internal and external consultation, including obtaining legal and professional advice to ensure that appropriate documentation is drawn up, registrations are made etc.

Once you have established this, you will need to consider some of the practical considerations such as what premises, vehicles, management resources and other consumables you will need to dedicate to setting up and running the scheme

The Knowledge Bank will provide examples of how some FRSs have managed this, and includes the contact details of professionals from within the sector who have faced similar challenges and who can provide further advice and guidance.

In addition, there is a CFOA Volunteers Forum, where questions can be asked and issues raised

#### **Involving staff and other stakeholders - Preparing the organisation**

It is important to ensure that other stakeholders within your organisation recognise and support the need to set up a volunteer programme. For example some staff may be unsure or indeed fearful about the value that volunteers could make to your organisation, or they may be afraid that volunteers will be used to replace paid posts. By discussing your ideas for volunteer involvement with other staff at an early stage, you should be able to put their fears to rest, and demonstrate to them that volunteers, rather than being a hindrance, can actually be of huge benefit, not just to the organisation, but to its end users and the wider community too.

#### **Costs**

Whilst volunteers give their time for free, it is unfair to expect them to be left out-of-pocket for any volunteering activity they carry out for your organisation. Therefore, it's good practice to have a budget so that you reimburse their expenses.

It is also important to acknowledge the skilled and complex role of staff who manage volunteers.. With the exception of the very smallest organisation, every organisation will probably need one person who is the main Volunteer Co-ordinator/ Manager if you choose an internal scheme. In an external scheme, this will either be a volunteer or paid member of staff appointed by external voluntary organisation. If you are intending to recruit a new post, then you will need to factor this into any funding bids for your volunteer programme.

You will also need to consider any other costs incurred by your volunteer programme. For instance:

- training for volunteers and the Volunteer Co-ordinator/ Manager that will enable them to fulfil their roles
- publicity materials for recruiting volunteers (you may also want to consider providing information in alternative formats and other languages, depending on who you are targeting).

- Out of pocket expenses for volunteers, such as travel costs, meals, the provision of uniform and PPE

## **4. Demonstrating the Benefits**

### **Organisational Benefits**

Volunteers serve in many capacities within organizations by contributing time, energies or talents that help to fulfil the organisations' mission. Volunteers generate enthusiasm and interest and help to create a positive image of the organisation in the community. Volunteers extend and augment the work of paid staff and often broaden the demographic diversity of the whole organisation. They can focus on individual clients or subject areas and thus bring new insights, energy and time to the work. A successful scheme clearly contributes to the organisations corporate social responsibility agenda and enables vast opportunity for social action.

Volunteers can fulfil many roles generally falling into four categories of work: direct service, administrative support, fundraising, and leadership. However, individual activities vary greatly. They may organize events, participate in fundraisers, provide clerical support, develop new resources, provide logistical support, develop programmes, assist with promotional events, and provide leadership and guidance. The roles volunteers can fill are only limited by the vision of the organization.

### **Volunteer Benefits**

The individual volunteer benefits by having the opportunity to pursue an interest and consequently gain new information, develop new skills or enhance existing knowledge. Volunteers form leadership and social skills as they interact with paid staff, clients and other volunteers. They develop personal pride and satisfaction as they help within the communities they serve, and gain status while becoming recognized experts in a specific area. Volunteers continue to develop their knowledge, often gaining considerable expertise from the volunteer experience.

### **Community Benefit**

Communities benefit from volunteers' contribution in that the services they provide helps individuals, families and the community to address local needs and problems. Greater enthusiasm and rapport develops when volunteers share their enthusiasm for the work they are doing and the organization they are affiliated with. They often encourage others to become involved. Recognition of outstanding volunteers can contribute to overall community pride. This overall benefit can also lead to better social cohesion, social inclusion and social action.

### **Evaluation**

As volunteering moves and changes with the issues and challenges of our time, it has become vitally important for volunteer schemes to be able to capture and describe what the presence of volunteer's means to those served, and how volunteers contribute to organized mission and goals.

When gathering evaluation information, there are two sources of data typically available to you.

Primary data is first-hand information. This type of information is generated for the specific purpose of evaluation. Perhaps you might conduct a volunteer or client satisfaction survey.

Secondary data sources are those reports and records that have been generated as part of regular organizational record keeping, such as budget reports or committee meeting minutes.

Also ensure as many groups are involved in your evaluation including:

- Volunteers
- Paid supervisory staff
- Other paid staff not directly involved in the volunteer program's day-to-day operations
- Volunteer coordinator
- Outside experts
- Administrative decision makers
- Community representatives
- Board members
- Consumers of your services

When you plan your evaluation, there are a number of applicable evaluation techniques to use. Your selection of techniques or methods depends upon the type of data you need to generate and the overall design of your plan. Some evaluation techniques to consider:

**Quality Assurance Surveys;** mail or telephone contact with all or a sample of volunteers or recipients of your volunteer services.

**Before and after designs;** using questionnaires or interviews to solicit information from volunteers or organizations before and after program participation.

**Data reporting;** reviewing, summarizing, and/or comparing information such as numbers of volunteers, hours, money (spent or saved), number served

**Case studies;** describing the experience of individual or small groups of volunteers, using a combination of records, interviews and/or observations.

**Consultations;** using outside observers to describe the program delivery and impact, drawing on key participants reactions or case studies.

**Content or process analysis;** presentation and review of program content or the step-by-step flow of activities to describe program efforts.

**Social Return on Investment (SROI);** there are a number of relatively simple on line tools to give an indication of volunteer social return on investment.

As result of proper evaluation your programs will be more community-focused. You will have more information with which to change, expand and or enhance your Volunteer involvement. You will have success stories to share with management, volunteers and the community and volunteers efforts will be more effective.

## **5. Risks and Mitigation**

### **Risks**

Careful consideration needs to be given to the environment in to which volunteers are being introduced. The Fire Service has an established and well respected 'brand.' Some staff can be distrustful of volunteers and this can manifest itself in unconscious obstruction of a successful volunteer scheme. Some staff will want to validate the capabilities of volunteers and their use.

Volunteers also need to understand about the value members of staff place on being part of the fire service. And that they will be expected to uphold the standards of the service whilst representing it as volunteers.

As Firefighter numbers decrease, it is natural that some will see volunteers as a threat to their future employment, leading to resentment.

Similarly, without internal performance management arrangements, volunteers can feel underutilised or, if they are used exclusively for repetitive tasks such as leafletting, undervalued and leave.

Undoubtedly, some Volunteers will see volunteering as a path to paid employment with the Fire and Rescue Service, in the capacity of a Firefighter or in other roles. While some organisations are explicitly making volunteering an exclusive route to paid employment, where this is not the case, this must be made clear from the outset, to avoid disappointment and disillusionment

The expectations of some volunteers will be high. They will expect to join a professional and well managed organisation. If sufficient resources are not in place to effectively manage and task there will be a risk of frustration, high turnover and potential reputational damage.

### **Mitigation**

The most effective way of mitigating these risks is regular and effective liaison and communication between the Volunteer Manager and Service Managers through performance meetings and between Volunteer Team Leaders and Fire Service Delivery Managers through planning meetings. Good practice also suggests that the establishment of a staff / volunteer forum where issues and opportunities can be discussed on a regular basis is worthwhile.

Advice and guidance included within the Knowledge Bank will help towards the delivery of a properly structured well managed scheme.

## 6. Bibliography

### **CFOA Knowledge Bank**

CFOA will provide capability for a knowledge bank of information relating to setting up and running a Fire Service Volunteer Scheme.

This will be hosted on the CFOA Communities system and contain a range of information from services currently operating volunteer schemes, to include policy documents and standard operating processes.

### **Volunteering England**

Independent charity and membership organisation, committed to supporting, enabling and celebrating volunteering in all its diversity

[www.volunteering.org.uk/goodpractice](http://www.volunteering.org.uk/goodpractice)

### **NCVO - Home**

[www.ncvo.org.uk](http://www.ncvo.org.uk)

National **Council for Voluntary Organisations** (NCVO) is the largest umbrella body for the voluntary and community sector in England.

[www.do-it.org](http://www.do-it.org)

[www.knowhownonprofit.org/people/volunteers](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/people/volunteers)

### **Institute for Volunteering Research: Home page**

The Institute for Volunteering Research (**IVR**) is a specialist research and consultancy agency focusing on volunteering

[www.ivr.org.uk](http://www.ivr.org.uk)