Developing Volunteering in a Community Hub - best practice toolkit

Your hub: a community or faith based centre offering a focus for community activity

Responsible for or help run a community or faith based centre?

Leading on the development of volunteering in your centre?

Have a range of services and groups operating within your centre?

...then this toolkit is for you...
Developing volunteering in a community hub – best practice toolkit was developed in partnership by Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation (GMCVO) and Greater Manchester Youth Network (GMYN) through the Volunteering Greater Manchester Big Lottery funded project.

**GMCVO** is the voluntary sector support organisation covering Greater Manchester, striving for a responsible, accountable and influential voluntary sector. We support voluntary action by local people and work in partnership with the voluntary, public, private, academic and faith sectors, across the city-region.

GMCVO hosted the **Volunteering Greater Manchester** project, which provided strategic support for existing volunteering services, increased the sharing of best practices and volunteer involvement.

**GMYN** is a charity with a vision to make volunteering, social action, entrepreneurship and positive activities available to all young people regardless of their ability, status or background.

GMYN is also an infrastructure organisation supporting organisations to create safe, meaningful and integrated volunteering opportunities for young people and support development of volunteering within youth provision.
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Introduction

Who is this toolkit for?
This toolkit is for centre managers, committee members, volunteer leads and people like you, *whatever your role title*, aspiring to improve volunteering throughout your centre. (We refer to these centres as community hubs).

This toolkit is also useful for support organisations like Volunteer Centres, CVSs, and registered social landlords.

Why do I need this particular toolkit..? 
Because community hubs, *like their people, groups and wider community*, come in all shapes and sizes, with their own unique needs and deeds!

This toolkit is from a community hub’s perspective, based on the real life experiences of community hubs developing and expanding their volunteer involvement. It addresses common issues, explores challenges and identifies opportunities for joint work with user groups. Offering top tips and tools to get the answers you want and asking the questions you might not have thought of even asking.

This toolkit is designed to be used in conjunction with general guides on developing a volunteering programme, which you can access from Volunteer Centres, Volunteering England and other support agencies.

‘*Working together to share the responsibility of volunteer involvement can help quality, consistency and offer volunteers a package of support,*’ event attendee

How was it developed?
The toolkit has emerged from the Volunteering Greater Manchester project, which worked with three community hubs to review their practices around involving volunteers.

A launch event (June 2014) further explored challenges for community hubs and attendees’ views, and both have been incorporated into this toolkit.

Thanks goes out to hubs and Volunteer Centres who made this toolkit possible:
- Bury Third Sector Development Agency (B3SDA)
- Langworthy Cornerstone, Salford
- Oldham Unitarian Chapel, Oldham
- The Mosses, Bury
- Volunteer Centre Oldham
- Volunteer Centre Salford
Volunteering
What is volunteering..?

NCVO defines volunteering as “any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives. Central to this definition is the fact that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual.” This definition can include formal activity undertaken through public, private and voluntary organisations as well as informal community participation.

Our definition...a volunteer is someone who chooses to spend time unpaid to benefit someone or something outside of their family and friends.

Recognising the diversity of roles and tasks undertaken by service users and volunteers

Terms you may use to describe individuals’ contributions to your hub:

Volunteers – roles, services and how often are some ways to review and monitor a wider range of volunteer activity within the hub.

Micro or virtual-volunteer – these are online or remote volunteers often away from the building spending their time completing small tasks to benefit the hub. This can be on an ad hoc basis like posting pictures or news through your social network channels or a more structured role like completing administration tasks.

 Helpers or ‘spontaneous’ assistants – individuals who may not consider themselves volunteers, but rather as participants in their community centre - who regularly take on a helping role to set up rooms, register individuals into a group or make the tea.

If you are new or unfamiliar to volunteering

Developing a volunteer vision within your community centre: this is a reoccurring theme throughout the toolkit. You can visit the Planning Section for support on developing your vision.

Before engaging volunteers for the first time or increasing and diversifying your volunteer base it is crucial to ensure you have a shared enthusiasm, commitment and vision for how volunteers can be integrated and play a fundamental and valued role for the hub.

Tips: discover the views and perceptions of volunteers/ volunteering within your organisation at all levels. Consider the anxieties and fears, as well as expectations people may have around volunteer involvement – refer to Step 2.1 Getting People ready to accept volunteers.
Are we a community hub?

A community hub is a building open to all, offering a range of services and space for group activities

Our more comprehensive definition of a community hub would be a building in a neighbourhood that acts as a central place for local people to access and influence.

The hub often offers access to support, various activities, rooms to hire and a place to make and meet friends. Organisations and individuals often hire rooms to meet or run activities and the managing organisation (from the public or voluntary sector) often runs projects themselves. Hubs include youth centres, community centres and faith based centres.

Why hubs should think holistically about volunteering in the hub

What happens in your hub affects your reputation. You have a ‘duty of care’ to all your beneficiaries (user groups, staff, volunteers, users, partner organisations).

Your hub has a right to influence the management of volunteers, especially as poor management could result in unhappy volunteers and damage to your reputation.

Smaller user groups who may not want external support for their volunteers but may welcome some support from the hub.

Having an understanding of volunteering in your hub will demonstrate your impact and level of inclusion and, help strengthen funding applications.

You may also discover opportunities for more efficient use of resources through joint work with user groups and some consistency in recruitment, management and support could make it easier for volunteers to move between activities or user groups.
Top 10 challenges for community hubs improving and enhancing your volunteer offer…

Ring any bells?

This overview of topics and areas for discussion provides a flavour of what will be explored in further sections. Identified by hubs and endorsed at our launch event.

1. **Being able to create a volunteering ethos**
   - Ensuring a shared vision, commitment and ethos around volunteering with buy-in from the board, staff, users and volunteers.

2. **Recognising volunteers as a hub’s most valued resource**
   - Acknowledging the need for investment - whether time, energy or resources – in order to avoid leaving volunteers feeling undervalued and unfulfilled to the detriment of the sustainability and growth of the hub as a whole.

3. **Recognising mutual benefit**
   - Understanding that an investment of time in volunteer support can result in an ability to capacity build services, and fulfil a hub’s wider aim of promoting social cohesion and supporting the health and wellbeing of members of the community.

4. **Recognising the role a hub can play in supporting ‘vulnerable’ volunteers**
   - Being honest and realistic about the level of support needed, the nature of roles on offer and whether hubs can meet the needs of volunteers with support needs.

5. **Identifying Clear Boundaries**
   - Putting in place some ground rules in order to manage expectations and ensure the safety, protection and wellbeing of service users, volunteers and staff.

6. **‘Growing your Own’ volunteers**
   - Being able to navigate the transition of service users to volunteers, through planning and acknowledging the different roles and putting appropriate safeguards in place.

7. **Ensuring joined-up thinking across the hub**
   - Ensuring that user groups are engaged, thereby avoiding isolation and a lack of communication and engagement within the hub as a whole.

8. **Understanding levels of accountability within the hub**
   - Including the relationship with and between user groups.

9. **Addressing complex and historical relationships in existence within a hub**
   - Understanding how complex relationships at all levels, from trustees through to staff, volunteers, user groups and individual members can affect the workings of a hub, especially if left unchallenged.

10. **Ensuring diversity within a hub**
    - and that volunteers reflect and represent the community it serves.
How to use the toolkit

The toolkit is divided into sections, each colour coded section containing steps and resources to help you think through volunteer involvement.

We recommend that your hub starts by working through section 1 – **Reviewing and Thinking about volunteering**, which outlines the process. Hubs in the pilot study were encouraged to form a working group to explore volunteering, share responsibilities and identify goals, milestones & actions.

Even if your hub is not aware of any problems with volunteering, the activities listed in this section will give you a clearer picture of how volunteering operates in your hub, the strengths, areas of potential concern and opportunities for developing volunteering across the hub. Use the self-assessment template mentioned in **Step 1.3** to gain an overview of volunteering in your hub.

Once you’ve worked through **section 1** you will then be in a better position to pick and choose the steps, outlined in **sections 2-6**, that will help you to address issues in a structured way.

These sections will help you consider the issues that hubs may encounter when Planning, Recruiting, Supporting, Developing and Evaluating a volunteer programme.

*If your hub is faced with particular challenges the table on page 9 and 10 will guide you to the relevant steps to take.*

‘A bad volunteer experience can really jeopardise a hubs reputation,’ event attendee
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<th>Section</th>
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1. Thinking about and reviewing volunteering...

Setting the Scene
Before you turn the page...
Whether you are a new emerging hub or a well established centre now is the time to think, reflect and ask questions to inform where you take volunteering next!

Self Assessment
Q1. When was the last time you brought together volunteers, staff and trustees to discuss volunteering?

Q2. Does everyone in your hub share an appreciation & understanding for volunteer involvement?

Q3. Do you have a clear vision for volunteering and a plan to make it happen?

Knowing your hub and the community you serve
The tools provided in this section will allow you to explore the internal workings of your hub. To also explore the wider context and external factors that could affect or determine the needs of volunteers and how you will ensure mutual benefit for individuals, your hub and the wider community.

Challenges considered:
1. Volunteering ethos, 2. Valued resource
3. Mutual benefit, 7. Joined-up thinking
8. Accountability, 9. Complex relationships

In this section:
• STEP 1.1: Establish a working group
• STEP 1.2: Identify someone to keep you on track
• STEP 1.3: Meet and undertake various activities
• STEP 1.4: Devise a brief action plan

Resources:
• Hub SWOT analysis
• PEST analysis
• Self assessment template
• Hub-GRAM
• User group audit questionnaire
• Write an action plan
**STEP 1.1: Establish a working group**

Too often one person, either out of design or scarce resources, is solely responsible for everything volunteering. Don’t fall into this trap, develop and delegate to existing people and recruit a range of new people that have the skills and interest in developing this.

Try to include a range of people like a committee member, key staff, volunteers and representatives from user groups.

**Benefits:** This diversity of people, roles and perspectives is the formula for healthy discussions, new ideas and shared responsibility across all levels within your hub.

**Tips:** Keep numbers manageable up to 8 people is ideal. Anymore and meetings become long, drawn out and purely discussion focussed. The group needs to be about taking action and leading the way.

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**STEP 1.2: Identify someone to keep you on track**

This person plays a crucial role in keeping momentum, focus and representation from all parties.

Decide if this person should be someone internal or external.

**Advantages of an external rep:** Relieve pressure on staff, question internal or historical processes, impartial, takes responsibility for organising people, keeping records and staying on task. *This could be a representative of your Volunteer Centre, a partner organisation, GMCVO or GMYN*

**Advantages of an internal rep:** The individual is already knowledgeable about the hub, meetings/tasks, and pace can be built around internal priorities.

**Benefits:** A key challenge for all hubs is capacity and as a result the development of volunteering can be put on the desirable or rainy day list. Although this role isn’t essential, *working with hubs has shown us that this can be invaluable and can ensure that progress is made!*

**Tips:** If you decide not to use an external facilitator, identify individuals to take the lead on different sections. This way they can familiarise themselves with the activities and adapt them to meet the needs of your hub. The narrative provided will guide you through each activity and the templates create a system for you to record your discussions and actions.

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**STEP 1.3: Meet and undertake various activities (refer to resources):**

1. **SWOT and PEST Analysis** – 2 well known tools to help you explore your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (the internal picture) followed by an exploration of the external environment and its impact on your hub considering political, economical, social and technological influences.

2. **Self-assessment template** – assess volunteering in your hub against a series of questions.

3. **Hub-o-gram** – use this visual tool to map the groups in your hub and volunteer involvement.

4. **Audit user groups** – questionnaire to conduct with user groups to gather information about their volunteering activity and needs.

**Benefits:** Some people can be resistant to exploring the wider context and issues surrounding volunteering. However, these discussions allow you to think beyond the hub and develop your volunteering ethos. These activities can inform the decisions you make on your future direction and recognise the impact your volunteer engagement could have on bigger community and society issues. *As well as applauding and celebrating your efforts so far!*

**Tips:** It may look like a big task but all the resources provided make light work of this step. If you do have a restricted amount of time then prioritise the tasks you undertake based on your knowledge gaps and development areas. The self-assessment template activity will help you.
STEP 1.4: Devise a brief action plan

By this point you have gathered a bank of information that should allow you to articulate a clear vision for volunteering in your hub. This should include your key aims, priority areas and desires for what you hope to achieve.

It is at this point that each member of the working group can identify an area of focus, use the toolkit to help with this process and set actions or activities from the toolkit for each member to work on, contributing to your overall action plan. The template will help you record this.

**Benefits:** Step 3 is all about questioning, analysing and reflecting, whereas this step is about taking that information and insight and turning it into a clear vision with tangible tasks. We all know an action plan allows us to remain focused, committed to timescales and monitor progress. But it will also save you time, allowing you to identify your key focus areas, what needs your immediate attention and what can wait.

**Tips:** Be reflective and question the decisions you make. When identifying your aims and creating actions to achieve your goals, consider why this is important and what impact it will have on your hub and the wider community.

**Practice Example:** the volunteer coordinator, Cornerstone, Salford – when reviewing the process of working with the Langworthy Cornerstone Hub the coordinator said she had found it ‘invaluable’ to have had external individuals leading the volunteer review and development process. The external perspective offered insight whilst discussing key challenges and achievements. The hub benefited from someone independent who kept the hub on task, to time and took the lead on arranging and following up on meetings and actions. A function which was crucial to ensure the hub completed the process.

‘It can be isolating – get allies around you,’ event attendee

**In Summary**

This section revolves around the importance of investing time to develop your hub’s volunteering ethos – the need for a shared understanding, and desire for volunteering to be integrated into everything your hub does with buy-in from the board, staff, users and volunteers.

This shared understanding and ethos around volunteering not only creates a unified approach and focus to inform the future shape of volunteering in your hub, but it also ensures it is at the forefront of everyone’s minds from influencing service delivery to board decisions. When volunteering is not integrated into everything you do misunderstandings and tensions easily develop which can undermine your volunteering offer and make retention of volunteers difficult. *It is best to have the conversations now to avoid future challenges!*
**HUB SWOT Analysis** (see step 1.3)

**Activity:** Working Group Discussion

A SWOT exercise allows you to explore your hub as a whole. Focusing on volunteer engagement work as a group to look at your Strengths, your Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats to volunteering.

**Tips:** It might be easier to use post-its and a flip chart. Try to keep it fast paced and as a group discuss the issues, then agree which are the most important and any relevant actions to take.

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<tr>
<th>Strengths e.g.</th>
<th>Weakness e.g.</th>
<th>Opportunities e.g.</th>
<th>Threats e.g.</th>
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<tr>
<td>the good reputation you hold in the community and the role this plays in making your organisation attractive and welcoming for volunteers.</td>
<td>a lack of support or interest at board level or your lack of representation when exploring the demographic of your community.</td>
<td>an initiative to encourage volunteering best practice across the setting or new creative roles to enhance the volunteer team.</td>
<td>resistance or red tape, misinformation on volunteering or a lack of capacity.</td>
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Now you’ve looked internally at your organisation the next tool is to look at the external environment. Identify factors and drivers that are affecting individuals, communities and society as a whole and their relationship with volunteering and your hub.
**PEST (Political, Economic, Social and technological) Analysis (see step 1.3)**

**Activity:** Working group discussion

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<th>Political drivers</th>
<th>Economic drivers</th>
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<td>allow you to consider government policy, reforms, volunteering, work programmes and the impact they have on individual’s perceptions, motivations and barriers.</td>
<td>explore the financial factors influencing individuals, your community and the hub from both a positive and more negative perspective.</td>
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<th>Social drivers</th>
<th>Technological drivers</th>
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<td>encourage you to consider community relations, responsibilities, conflicts, demographics, needs and new emerging communities.</td>
<td>allow you to question the role of social media, the internet and new technology in the context of volunteering. This could include discussions regarding raising the profile, advertising, promotion and developing new links and partnerships.</td>
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**Self-assessment template** *(see step 1.3)*

The following questions are a good starting point for your working group to develop a shared view of what steps you need to prioritise.

Start this activity by briefly discussing these 3 questions to get everyone thinking about volunteering.

1. Why involve volunteers?
2. What are the key strengths and challenges currently influencing your volunteer involvement?
3. What are the aspirations and concerns in relation to developing volunteering in your hub?

Now complete the self-assessment questions in the table below. You can either do this as a group or individually and gather everyone’s responses.

*All these questions are listed in the toolkit, at the start of each section.*

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<td><strong>Thinking about and reviewing volunteering</strong></td>
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<td>Q1 Have you brought together volunteers, staff &amp; trustees to discuss volunteering?</td>
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<td>Q2 Does everyone in your hub share an appreciation &amp; understanding of volunteer involvement?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q3 Do you have a clear vision for volunteering and a plan to make it happen?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Planning your volunteering programme</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Q1 Is your hub realistic about the capacity available to support volunteers? Are you able to say no when you’ve reached capacity?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q2 Does your hub have the essentials in place to effectively respond to all enquiries about volunteering?</td>
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<td>Q3 Is your hub aware of and comfortable with, volunteering practice that occurs within the hub?</td>
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<td>Q4 Does your volunteer base reflect the community you serve?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Recruiting volunteers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Q1 Do you attract the volume and diversity of people you would like to?</td>
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<td>Q2 Do you have a co-ordinated approach to recruitment with other user groups?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q3 Does your hub help to ‘grow’ the people in your community?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-assessment questions</td>
<td>Fully</td>
<td>Partially</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Comments</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td><strong>Q4</strong> Do you feel your hub reaches out and provides opportunities to ‘vulnerable’ people?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting volunteers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Q1</strong> Is there sufficient support for volunteers from board, staff, volunteers and service users?</td>
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<td><strong>Q2</strong> Are volunteers managed and coordinated effectively?</td>
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<td><strong>Q3</strong> Is in-depth tailored support offered to those that need it?</td>
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<td><strong>Q4</strong> Does everyone at the hub have a good understanding of appropriate boundaries?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Developing volunteers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Q1</strong> Does your hub invest in the development and growth of individual volunteers?</td>
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<td><strong>Q2</strong> Does everyone in your hub get involved in recognising and rewarding volunteer contributions?</td>
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<td><strong>Q3</strong> Do you regularly gather the views of volunteers and take action to make appropriate changes?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Monitoring and Evaluating</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Q1</strong> Do you have sufficient information to influence volunteering in your hub?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Q2</strong> Can you easily demonstrate the value of volunteering to decision makers and service users?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Q3</strong> Does your volunteer programme evolve to reflect everyone’s needs?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Q4</strong> Do you monitor and evaluate the support you provide to user groups?</td>
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</table>
**HUB-GRAM** (see step 1.3)

**Activity:** Mapping your hub - visual

**What is it..?**
A way of creating a visual display map of who is involved in your hub and how they are connected.

**Steps 1 to 3** take you clearly through each stage. You can make it your own by adding additional layers of information or skipping steps you feel are unnecessary.

**How to create the hub-gram?**
This exercise can be used along with your user audit questionnaires allowing groups to explore connections and communication in a non-confrontational way.

It can be an exercise done by your working group or given to a carefully selected individual to then share with staff, trustees, volunteers and service users (where appropriate) in the hub.

**Note:** You can create your own symbols, colour codes and pictures but the steps include suggestions you may wish to use

If the hub –gram works for you then why not expand your focus to look at...

Processes... information sharing, joint projects, governance
Engagement... groups user groups engage, links between their user groups and engagement with groups and individuals in the wider community.

And many more!

**What can I use it for when it’s finished?**
You may wish to create 2 versions...

1) The analytical version will allow you to devise a communication plan and map volunteering need across your user groups. This will inform your action plan and vision.

2) Strip back the activity to highlight groups, their activities and volunteer involvement and this could be a creative activity for a group of resident artists. This could then be used for a display or as an accessible document for new volunteers and service users getting to know the hub.
**Step 1:**
Using pictures or symbols draw the hub in the centre & begin to insert the hubs user groups

**Nature of group/ organisation key**

**Pictures**
Pictures can be used to reflect the nature of the group i.e. art class – paint brush

**OR**

**Triangle**
Groups for specific communities or ages

**Circle or square**
All other groups

Include the name of the group with each symbol

**Step 2:**
Now start to connect the user groups with you (at the hub) and links between user groups

**Connections, dynamics and relationships key**

**One line**
Good regular communication and positive relationship

**Two lines**
Really strong relationship, regular contact and well connected

**Dotted line**
Occasional contact and communication but not a strong connection between groups

**Wiggly line**
Difficult dynamic and turbulent relationship between groups that requires work

**NOTE:** the hub-gram is not intended to criticise or draw on negative connections, it does however allow the hub to identify opportunities for relationship growth

**Step 3:**
Now use the symbols below to add volunteering info (if you don’t have the answers see the user group question mentioned in step 1.3)

**Volunteering and Need**

**Colour code**
Colour all organisations and groups engaging volunteers

**Number of volunteers**
Circle with number inside currently active in the service

**Need volunteers**
Groups that could benefit from more volunteers
User Group Audit Questionnaire (see step 1.3)

This questionnaire is to be completed by the main user groups in the hub or arrange a meeting to go through the questions. Once complete collate all the responses in a report and add any actions to the hubs action plan.

The centre is currently consulting all user groups on how they engage volunteers in their work. We would really appreciate a few minutes of your time to provide us with an insight into your current work and aspirations around volunteers. This will allow us to look at the collective needs of the centre and look at options to work together in the future.

1) Do you involve volunteers? (If ‘No’ go to Question 16)

2) How many volunteers do you currently have?

3) How many of these have additional support needs (e.g. physical or learning difficulties, English as a second language)?

4) How many of these used to be, or still are, service users?

5) How are these volunteers involved? / What do they do?

6) Do you need more volunteers at the moment to do the work you currently do?

7) Do you feel you are currently able to utilise and maximise volunteer’s time and skills?

   Please explain why.

8) Could you do more if you had more volunteers?

9) If so, what difference would more volunteers make to you?
10) What do you find are the difficulties in involving new volunteers (if any)?

11) Who currently looks after your volunteers?

12) Do you have anything written down about how you welcome and support volunteers?
   If yes, please list what you have.

13) Do you support service users to make the transition to becoming a volunteer?

14) Do you think it would be useful to work together with other groups in the hub to develop volunteering?

15) Is there anything else you would like to tell us about what your group does?

16) If you responded ‘no’ to question 1
   Please use the definition of volunteering to check if the answer to question 1 is definitely a no. If it is, tell us more about what your group does?

17) Have you considered involving volunteers?

18) If yes, in what way and what are your hopes or goals?
   If no, why is it the right decision for your group not to have volunteers?
**Write and action plan** *(see step 1.4)*

Start by writing a brief vision that explains what you want to do and why. You can share it with people to gain their support and it should help your working groups to stay focused.

List your top 3 priorities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteer Vision:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Priority Areas:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then list the main tasks for each area of focus. These are issues or ideas that have been raised during discussions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section or Area of Focus</th>
<th>Objectives (measurable)</th>
<th>Tasks/Actions (what do we need to do to achieve the objective)</th>
<th>Success Criteria (what change or outcome will you observe)</th>
<th>Time Scale &amp; named person (Who is responsible &amp; how long do they have)</th>
<th>Resources required (What is needed to make this a reality... time, skills, expertise, funding etc)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>i.e. meet with 3 user group representatives &amp; working group to devise a best practice pledge</td>
<td>Contact user groups Set Date for meeting Print copies of sample toolkit version Set Agenda</td>
<td>Best practice pledge is finalised and introduced and given out at the September user group forum</td>
<td>3 weeks --/--/-- version complete 4 weeks presented to user groups</td>
<td>Lead: HB Time commitment from 3 groups Paper, pens etc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. planning

Setting the Scene
Planning will help get your organisation into a good position to work with volunteers. Templates and guides exist to help you write a volunteer policy and agreement as well as how to set up procedures to maintain records on volunteers and understand what expenses you should cover. The steps and resources in this section also aim to help you consider accountability and how to be more inclusive.

Self Assessment
Q1. Is your hub realistic about the capacity available to support volunteers? Are you able to say no when you’ve reached capacity?

Q2. Does your hub have the essentials in place to effectively respond to all enquiries about volunteering?

Q3. Is your hub aware of and comfortable with, volunteering practice that occurs within the hub?

Q4. Does your volunteer base reflect the community you serve?

Challenges considered:

In this section:
• STEP 2.1: Develop a volunteering ethos
• STEP 2.2: Get people ready to accept volunteers
• STEP 2.3: Review of volunteers’ and the hubs’ needs and capacity
• STEP 2.4: Health and Safety, and insurance
• STEP 2.5: Create a set of best practice principles to share with user groups.
• STEP 2.6: Diversity - reflect the community you serve.
• STEP 2.7: Remove barriers to volunteering
• STEP 2.8: Be prepared to deal with enquiries

Resources:
• Map and review volunteer roles, the hubs needs and capacity
• Community hubs volunteering best practice pledge
• Seeing your organisation from a volunteer’s perspective
STEP 2.1: Develop a volunteering ethos

A hub that has a shared understanding and desire for volunteering to be integrated, is more likely to develop an effective volunteer programme. The Board/trustees must ensure that the organisation’s involvement of volunteers, as well as those of the user groups, is underpinned by policies and procedures, and a clear understanding of why and how volunteers are involved in the hub and the unique contribution which they bring.

Benefits: A volunteering ethos supports positive engagement of volunteers in achieving the hub’s goals and formally recognises the significance of their contribution. Volunteering is more likely to become integrated into everything that the hub does in a way that it becomes everyone’s responsibility. As a result, trustees/managers are more likely to allocate resources to develop best practice in volunteering and encourage user groups to adopt this.

Tips: Encourage the Board/trustees of the hub to commit to implement the volunteer policy to underpin volunteering. Someone from the Board should take a lead on volunteering best practice. Although Board members are volunteers themselves, they may not relate to other volunteers in the hub. You could either ask a member of your local Volunteer Centre to attend a meeting or a member of staff/volunteer to present the case, drawing on good examples from within the hub.

Write a policy, the key points of which should be shared with user groups so that they know what is expected of them. This can be done through room hire agreements and volunteering best practice pledge (See Step 2.5).

STEP 2.2: Get ready to accept volunteers

People’s aversion to change can create problems if ignored and there will be many reasons why individuals may struggle to welcome volunteers into the hub. For example, staff, trustees and other volunteers may feel that their position is being threatened or their way of working is being challenged. Perhaps volunteer involvement has been badly managed in the past or there is a lack of understanding why the hub needs to involve volunteers.

Benefits: Sharing your vision and exploring the challenges with people already involved in the hub will help to create a volunteering ethos. You will gain a greater understanding of the potential barriers to developing volunteering and an opportunity to address issues before problems escalate. You will also be able to take people’s ideas on board during the planning stage, resulting in a more efficient use of resources.

Tips: Start communicating with people early on and share the reasons and benefits for involving volunteers that you’ve prepared for your volunteering ethos. Set time aside to listen to people’s concerns and ideas. Think through scenarios and look for small wins to gradually build up trust and ‘buy-in’. It may take time, so be patient, but persistent, and recognise that you may lose some people along the way.

Formalising things through a volunteering policy and procedures should make sure that everyone is getting the same information. This should prevent misunderstandings.

It is important to be honest about the challenges you face ‘in our hub the management committee are unable to remain impartial because they have their own agendas and interests’ event attendee
STEP 2.3: Review of volunteers’ and the hubs’ needs and capacity

Volunteering should be mutually beneficial for the hub and individual.

However, individuals will vary in the amount of support they can offer and the amount they need. As hubs generally provide for disadvantaged communities, and often aim to ‘grow their own’ volunteer base, it is important to know your community and the barriers individuals might face in first getting involved or even staying involved.

Be realistic about barriers and capacity to support volunteers, be honest and say ‘no’ if you need to but try to refer elsewhere if you aren’t able to take someone on.

Benefits: Planning volunteer roles will help you make more efficient use of resources and help you target your recruitment. You are less likely to over-commit yourself, because you know when to say ‘no’ to new volunteers to allow those already involved to meet their full potential and receive the support they need. Your retention rates will increase and you will find it easier to demonstrate how much time your hub invests in growing your community.

This process will also help you gather some evidence of the benefits and the need for volunteers that you can to share with others in the hub.

Tips: Use the mapping exercise to visualise the balance between the benefits volunteers can bring to your organisation alongside the support resources required.

The audit of user groups (step 1.3) will help you understand what roles exist throughout the hub and the potential for joint volunteering roles that could be created to benefit more than one activity or user group e.g. marketing, IT support.

STEP 2.4: Health and Safety and insurance

It’s often the user groups’ responsibility to manage risks associated with their activities, at least in part.

However, as a hub you have a ‘duty of care’ to ensure the safety of all staff, volunteers and visitors, and therefore a responsibility to promote best practice and manage risk.

Benefits: Having an overview of volunteer practice in the hub will help to minimise risk and understand insurance cover required. Your Trustees/Management Committee are ultimately accountable if an incident should occur as a result of volunteer activity. Incidents and risks not managed will reflect badly on the hub, even though you may not be directly responsible for the activity concerned.

Tips: An audit of user groups (Step 1.3) will help you identify potential risks associated with their activity. Adapt the good practice that you come across to develop guidance and a risk assessment template to share with groups who are struggling.

Check your room hire agreement - does it include necessary guidance so that user groups know what is expected from them?
STEP 2.5: Create a set of best practice principles to share with user group.

Volunteer management within a hub can range from exceptionally good to non-existent practice. Ensure that you can learn from, adapt and adopt good practice that you find during a review of user groups and create a basic best practice pledge to share with these groups.

Benefits: Good practice is key to volunteer retention and, therefore, the viability of the groups and activities that use your hub. Many small groups are unlikely to seek support to develop volunteering so such a set of best practice principles will fill a gap, help minimise risk and ensure the health and well-being of the people and volunteers that use your building.

Tips: Consider working with your local Volunteer Centre to develop your basic hubs volunteering best practice pledge and ensure they respond to the issues identified through an audit of user groups. But remember, what works for one user group may not be appropriate for another, so adapt the pledge to suit your hub and ask user groups to do the same.

Reflect on your findings from the audit of user groups and always explain the benefits of following best practice. Be sensitive as groups are unlikely to respond well if their way of operating is challenged without good reason. More direct action might be required if you feel that a group is putting others at risk.

Refer to resources – Community hubs volunteering best practice pledge

STEP 2.6: Diversity - reflect the community you serve

Diversity should be at the heart of volunteer involvement so that you reflect the community you serve.

Benefits: Involving a variety of volunteers in the development and delivery of services will make the service more appropriate and appealing to your beneficiaries. Making your organisation more inclusive demonstrates your commitment to equality and diversity and will help to improve social cohesion in the wider neighbourhood.

Tips: Start by analysing who is in your community. Are there any new or emerging groups that you want to attract to your centre? Draw on the discussions you had in your SWOT and PEST analysis (Step 1.3).

Do you expect to see different types of people wanting to volunteer at your hub e.g. people with different backgrounds, circumstances or ages? Have cuts in service provision e.g. youth clubs, day care, resulted in certain groups of people no longer having anywhere else to go?

Are there situations that members of the community might encounter that you should know how to respond to, for example someone looking for a role following bereavement or ill health who would benefit from volunteering?
STEP 2.7: Remove barriers to volunteering

Once you know who’s in your community (Step 2.6) you can see if your volunteer base is representative. Then highlight the barriers preventing people from volunteering or from staying in a voluntary role.

Benefits: By reducing barriers your centre could attract increased numbers and a greater diversity of volunteers.

With a greater understanding of how to attract, support and retain volunteers, promotion and support can be more targeted and less time wasted recruiting replacements.

This could also demonstrate to funders that the hub is representative of the community.

Tips: Look at retention rates and ask why people leave and move on. Are they receiving sufficient support, are they kept busy?

Carry out an assessment of your organisation from a volunteer’s perspective, making sure to think about all the different types of people that you want to engage with.

Refer to activity/resource – Seeing your organisation from a volunteers’ perspective

List the communities or groups of people you would like to attract. Identify barriers, and discuss ways to reduce. Be realistic about the amount of support you can offer volunteers, if you don’t have much capacity don’t aim to attract volunteers that need substantial support.

STEP 2.8: Be prepared to deal with enquiries

When someone comes to the hub, offering to volunteer, are you happy with how you respond? Do they get turned away if staff/volunteers don’t know what opportunities are available or does the response depend on who the potential volunteer speaks to?

Benefits: A joined up approach, however basic, will show that you appreciate people’s offer of help and this will make your hub more attractive to volunteers. It might have taken a lot for a person to make an enquiry, fitting it into their busy schedules or taking the courage to ask, so an unhelpful response could give a bad impression of the hub and they may never enquire again.

Tips: Think about how you currently respond to enquiries. Do you turn people away because you don’t know what opportunities exist? What information do you need to be able to respond to enquiries effectively?

E.g. a list of opportunities with user groups, a basic enquiry form, a date of when people can visit the hub to find out more, a named person to contact, a list of other places (like the Volunteer Centre and other community projects) to refer people to if you aren’t able to take them on at that time.

Think if it’s appropriate to identify one person in the hub to respond to enquiries or to share the responsibility amongst a number of people. If it’s just one person, what happens if they are unavailable? Could you create a ‘Volunteering Pack’ to be kept on reception, which contains all the key information, so anyone can respond effectively to enquiries?

If you create a pack do have a process in place to keep it up to date.
In Summary

Careful planning before you involve volunteers will help your volunteering ideas look more attractive. This stage should provide the opportunity to consider everyone’s concerns and ideas early on making for greater inclusivity. In this section we’ve mentioned reviewing volunteer roles as well as the hubs needs and capacity.

N.B. A template is provided for creating a volunteering best practice pledge to share with user groups. Your hub’s ‘Duty of Care’ is mentioned and we’ve provided exercises to explore the benefits of diversity, a questionnaire to identify barriers to volunteering.

If you start to recruit volunteers before you have everything in place, problems or situations are likely to occur that will take more resources to resolve than if they were prevented in the first place.

Practice Example:
Unitarian Chapel, Oldham – the minister and colleagues wanted help to recruit a team of volunteers to run a new vibrant café, but where to start? The activities in the toolkit and external facilitation gave them a framework to develop their programme and a sounding board to discuss ideas and concerns. The support helped them understand the broader context of involving volunteers, the legalities and the support volunteers require.

The Chapel then received practical support from the Volunteer Centre Oldham to develop roles, create a volunteer handbook and policy. They were able to tap into the broader networks and opportunities that the Volunteer Centre could offer.

‘Be persistent, change the mind-set, bring the change – do it!’ event attendee
Map and review volunteering roles (see step 2.3)

- Working group to carry out the review.
- Identify key staff, users groups, volunteers and services users who will influence the review.
- During your audit of user groups ask whether their current volunteers have potential to support another project and what skills they in turn would like to attract.

Map out roles
Allow 2 hours for this activity

Write down the existing volunteers, one per post-it note. Place the post-it notes on the grid according to how much support the volunteer or role requires to do the task and whether the individual brings or seeks skills or abilities.

Questions to ask:
- Does the hub have a good balance between volunteers that need little support and those that require more support?
- What skills or abilities does the hub want to attract to improve how they run the hub, organisation or projects?
- Could joint roles be created to benefit more than one activity or user group?
- Are you able to provide the level of support that your volunteers require?
  - If not, can you appoint or train others to help?
- Should you limit the number of volunteers that require support?
- Do you have capacity to support more volunteers?
  - If yes, what types of people would you like to attract?
Community Hub’s Volunteering
Best Practice Pledge (see step 2.5)

User Group:
Group representative:
Date:

On behalf of (name of user group) I can confirm our commitment to this best practice pledge and appreciate that if for whatever reason we are no longer able to adhere to this pledge then we should contact the hub for help and advice.

We will do everything in our power to ensure our group...

Creates a positive volunteer ethos
- Volunteers enrich our group, they support and don’t replace or substitute the roles of staff
- We challenge any one in our group that de-values or discredits volunteer involvement
- We share and advocate for the wider vision and values for volunteering as an active group in the community hub

- Values volunteers
  - We value volunteers equally, whatever their contribution
  - We thank volunteers for their time on an ongoing basis and are always looking for ways to celebrate their achievements
  - We treat our volunteers with respect and our staff, board and service users value the contribution they make
  - We will do everything we can to make sure volunteers feel an important part of our team

- Recognises mutual benefit
  - In return for volunteers time and energy we aim to provide opportunities for individuals to develop and grow
  - We are committed to discovering and responding to volunteer motives and balancing what volunteers give and what they receive in return

- Is committed to supporting ‘vulnerable’ volunteers
  - Resources and capacity permitting, where possible we make our volunteer opportunities accessible to all
  - We recognise the role we can play in supporting people in the community with additional needs or vulnerabilities

- Establishes clear boundaries
  - We understand the dangers of not having clear boundaries between our committee, staff, volunteers and our members/ service users
  - Our group has clear ground rules to manage expectations and ensure the safety, protection and wellbeing of everyone in our group
- **Helps to ‘grow your own’ volunteer base**
  - We see the potential in our group members to be future volunteers or leaders for our group
  - We carefully consider the role development, training and support measures required to ensure this transition is smooth, safe and rewarding for all

- **Embraces diversity**
  - Each time we recruit new volunteers we will strive to attract new and diverse members of the community
  - We will adapt (where possible) to the needs and priorities of individuals to make our volunteer opportunities accessible
  - We are committed to remain non-judgmental and treat everyone with respect, to ensure the hub remains a welcoming place for all

- **Is committed to joined-up thinking**
  - We believe that 2+ heads are better than one *(in that people have a say and get involved)*
  - Our group is committed to joining forces with other user groups in the hub to keep in contact, share ideas and maximise resources to help each other with volunteer development and more

- **Complex and historical relationships**
  - We are committed to challenging long standing committee members, staff and users to welcome and consider new ideas
  - Despite what has gone before we stay true to the aims of our group, the involvement of volunteers and create a positive environment for all

- **We know who is accountable!**
  - We understand and honour our ‘duty of care’ to members/ service users and volunteers
  - We have clear roles and responsibilities that determine who is accountable for what, this is transparent and communicated across the group
  - We appreciate the hubs role in monitoring the safe practice of our group
  - Our members/ service users and volunteers know where to go and who to speak to if they have a problem or concern
# Seeing Your Organisation from a Volunteer’s Perspective

*(see step 2.7)*

Review your volunteer programme or consider whether you are ready for volunteers by carrying out a self-evaluation exercise. Do a mental walk through to find what might arise from volunteer participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For each of the numbered situations below, evaluate your organisation’s response to volunteers.</th>
<th>What would happen?</th>
<th>How might this response to volunteers be improved?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A prospective volunteer telephones the organisation to ask about volunteering?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Someone comes to the reception desk on the day of their volunteer role interview.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. A volunteer arrives for their first day.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. A volunteer wants to store a bag while working on another floor or in another office.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. A volunteer needs some workspace to spread out papers.</td>
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<td>6. A volunteer needs a red pen.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. A volunteer is working through a task and calls in with a question, but their regular supervisor is out for the day.</td>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>For each of the numbered situations below, evaluate your organisation’s response to volunteers.</th>
<th>What would happen?</th>
<th>How might this response to volunteers be improved?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>A volunteer wants to make a suggestion about a new way to help a service user.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>A volunteer does something wrong.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>A volunteer does something wonderful.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>A volunteer sprains an ankle carrying a chair into the conference room.</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>A volunteer is told something is too “confidential” for them to hear.</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>A volunteer reaches the milestone of their first year anniversary of service to the organisation.</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>A staff member acts rudely to a volunteer.</td>
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From Brighton and Hove volunteer centre
http://bh-impetus.org/volunteeringgoodpractice/content/planning-volunteer-involvement
3. recruiting section

Setting the Scene
Having spent time developing the foundations for involving volunteers, the time has come to consider recruitment. Getting this process right is key to ensuring a thriving, sustainable volunteer base within your hub.

Self Assessment
Q1. Do you attract the volume and diversity of people you would like to?

Q2. Do you have a co-ordinated approach to recruitment with other user groups in your hub?

Q3. Does your hub help to ‘grow the people in your community’?

Q4. Do you feel your hub makes a positive contribution to reaching out and providing opportunities to ‘vulnerable’ people in your community?

Recruitment in a summary...
1. Map need and capacity for volunteer involvement across the hub (Step 2.3)
2. Create role descriptions, expectations and desired attributes
3. Create a process... application forms, expressions of interest, open days, informal interviews
4. Create adverts, promotional materials and spread the word
5. Undertake chosen selection process...

Challenges considered:
2. Valued resource, 3. Mutual benefit

In this section:
- STEP 3.1: Make the choice to work together
- STEP 3.2: Begin discussions with user groups and staff regarding pooling of resources and information for joint campaigns and/or recruitment
- STEP 3.3: Raise your consciousness of the ‘grow your own’ volunteer base concept!

Resources:
- ‘Who’s in’ discussion template

‘Open and improve lines of communication with support workers and referral agencies to help manage expectations of prospective volunteers’ event attendee
Open recruitment... tailoring your approach to reach those in need

Creating Promotional Materials:
- Make your information and promotional material accessible. Consider the language you use, the benefits you highlight and the barriers you need to tackle head-on to ensure individuals take that final step to volunteer.

Contacts and Community Presence:
- Utilise your connections with partner organisations to reach isolated individuals in the community. You can also encourage user groups and staff to share information with service users and encourage them to spread the word. Who better to represent your hub and tell people what it’s really like?
- FACT: More people volunteer because they have been asked than through other methods.

Take volunteering to the community in a creative way!
- Promotional places:
  - Identify popular notice boards to create a display
  - Cafes, takeaways, hairdressers to leave leaflets
  - Events to have a stand or stall.
- Online: Volunteer Centre bulletins, www.do-it.org, your website, twitter and Facebook.

Targeted recruitment...tailoring your approach to a target group
- The key to reaching individuals with specific skills is not only identifying and clearly communicating the skills and experiences required for roles, but also more targeted methods to promote and recruit volunteers.

People and places:
- Try to match skills with settings or groups, this increases the chance that you will recruit well for specific skills.

For example:
- Local colleges - students studying a particular course
- Local employees - professionals looking to engage in employee volunteering
- Voluntary sector – volunteers, practitioners, trustees looking for a new challenge

Include information in a volunteering pack to be kept on reception - see step 2.8

‘When and how do we say ‘no’?’

event attendee

With this approach you may need to consider the appropriateness of roles, individual motives and commitment expectations. Some people may look for a regular long term opportunity, whereas others may wish to offer their time on an ad-hoc basis or their skills to a specific project or event.

Wider Benefits of recruitment: New people bring new perspectives, energy and ideas which can invigorate your hub and increase community access and engagement. A pro-active approach builds a successful recruitment drive and a new visibility and awareness of the hub within the wider community. Use recruitment as a means of building new relationships with other organisations, employees and individuals...
turning information into action!

If you haven’t completed the hub-gram or user group review then do this now (see Section 1 Thinking about Volunteering). This information provides you with a snapshot of the collective need for volunteers.

STEP 3.1: Make the choice to work together!

Use your powers of persuasion to sell the benefits of joint recruitment to your user groups who also need volunteers.

The information collected through the review and ‘hub-gram’ will allow the creation of an easy to read document or web page that highlights all volunteer opportunities available within your hub. If you attach a brief overview of the role and skills/attributes required this document could be used as part of your response to initial volunteer enquiries. Hence providing a consistent message that is available at all times, and saving on staff time. (See 2.5 Establish Best Practice Principles)

Benefits: Not only will a joint approach save time and resources and prevent duplication, it will also allow you to raise the profile of the hub more effectively with a particular focus on the diversity of services and groups on offer under one roof.

Tips: Use what you know! The user group reviews and subsequent discussions will highlight the scale of recruitment drive required, and give you some idea of the level of enthusiasm or reluctance from user groups to engage with a joint process.

STEP 3.2: Begin discussions with user groups and staff regarding pooling of resources and information for joint campaigns and/or recruitment

If your hub wants to gain real insight into previous recruitment experiences of existing volunteers, why not ask them?

This will allow you to either establish or improve your approach for future recruitment and some volunteers may also be interested in getting involved in your open evenings or promotional activity.

Benefits: Joint recruitment is an excuse for user groups and your central hub’s team to socialise, interact and recognise the collective contribution they are making to the community you serve as well as saving time, capacity and launching a more targeted and thought out approach to recruitment.

Tips: Ask for support – your local Volunteer Centre can offer you support with the promotion of your opportunities to potential volunteers and may be able to offer you support and resources to establish your recruitment systems and guidance on how to attract volunteers.

The ‘Who’s in’ discussion template found in the resources section provides you with a list of questions to ask user groups, to establish who can fulfil what role and function to create a joint approach to recruitment.

Refer to resources – ‘Who’s in’ discussion template
STEP 3.3: Raise your consciousness of the ‘grow your own’ volunteers’ concept

This term refers to a hub facilitating the development of service users or community members moving into the role of a helper, volunteer or leader.

For many hubs, particularly in smaller user groups, this already happens naturally. As fantastic as this is, being alert to the challenges, dangers and opportunities this brings is also important.

Draw upon the results of the user group audit to determine:
- The number of service users or community members accessing the hub that have moved into volunteer roles
- The potential and willingness of user groups to grow this area in the future
- The current measures in place to protect and support volunteers, service users and the hub
- A list of concerns or risks to address in relation to the transition process

Benefits: This can be a challenging area of volunteer engagement within your hub.

However this concept of supporting and nurturing the growth of individuals with additional needs or restricted opportunities can be at the very heart of the community hub’s mission. Not only can these individuals bring experience and empathy to your services, they are also key to the sustainability and growth of your hub.

There are many things you can do to minimise risk and ensure a positive experience for all. You may decide to set some good practice principles (see Step 3.3) with a specific focus on ‘growing your own’ volunteer base or purely provoke user groups into thinking around their practice in this area.

Tips: Establishing criteria around the transition process, particularly within user groups engaging vulnerable people, can address a number of challenges associated with this transition.

This could include:
- A required break away from the group (e.g. 1 month) to make the distinction from service user to volunteer. A successful break can also ensure the individual no longer requires the service themselves.
- Use of a confidentiality declaration for service users becoming volunteers. This is particularly important where individuals have developed friendships within the group and the familiar nature of the setting could mean blurring of boundaries and breaches of confidentiality to the detriment of service users.

As much as this is about good practice and safety, it is also an opportunity to encourage user groups to ‘grow’ and develop individuals as long as they have the capacity, interest and awareness of the importance of managing this process carefully.
In Summary
A joint collaborative approach to recruitment just makes sense! The benefits far outweigh the challenges. Even if user groups wish to do independent open days and selection processes for volunteers, at the very least a holistic approach to promoting volunteering, and clarity of information, within your hub can only be a positive thing.

Utilise your community connections and knowledge of where people seek and find information to promote the hub and the volunteering opportunities on offer.

Don’t be fearful of ‘growing your own’ volunteer base. Providing you and your user groups are conscious of, and committed to, monitoring the volunteer experience and ensuring a positive approach. Growing individuals in this way has the potential to secure and retain their long-term engagement in the community hub.

Practice example:
Mosses Community Association – Activities within the centre attract a diverse community. Many seeking advice and support with challenging issues and opportunities to develop skills and confidence and make new friends.

In such a welcoming, caring environment people are keen to share their new found knowledge and skills with new members. So the potential for activities in the Mosses Centre to ‘grow their own’ volunteers is huge with the benefit that these new volunteers will have an insight into members’ needs.

However, the Mosses recognises the need to manage the transition from user to volunteer. To ensure the new volunteers are ready to step back from receiving support and that they have clear guidelines on healthy boundaries (see step 4.5)
‘Who’s in’ discussion template (see step 3.2)

Begin discussions with user groups and staff regarding pooling of resources and information for joint campaigns and/or recruitment

1. What can user groups offer to the process, considering their capacity and expertise?
   E.g. Physical presence in the community, events, circulating publicity materials or contacting specific groups or settings...

2. Ideas! What other approaches can you use collectively to promote volunteering and bring new people and skills to the hub?
   E.g. Marketing tactics, bring a friend to the hub day, Volunteers Week celebrations, art exhibitions, coffee mornings...

3. Could user groups join forces and contribute to a series of open days and evenings for potential volunteers to visit the hub and find out more?
   E.g. A market place of opportunities with user groups or do user groups have existing volunteers that may like to share their experiences with potential new volunteers?

4. Would it be beneficial to standardise application forms and other paperwork, producing one pack for all volunteer opportunities or is there a need for individuality?
   E.g. Do user groups already have forms that have worked successfully in the past that could be used or adapted?

5. Are there similarities in attributes, skills or specific roles across user groups if so could individual volunteers support multiple user groups or projects?
   E.g. creating an administration role across user groups...
   NOTE: Careful consideration required to ensure the volunteers across projects have a clear line of communication and a named person to support/supervise them

6. Is there a need for user groups to support one another generally with day-to-day volunteer management? If so, what would this look like?
   (Develop this thinking further in supporting & developing volunteers)
4. supporting section

Setting the Scene
All volunteers require some form of support to help them be effective in their role and development as a person. Support can take many forms including inductions, supervision/support meetings, peer-to-peer support, informal chats and volunteer meetings, and should be appropriate to the volunteer and their role. This section provides ideas for how the hub can directly and indirectly support volunteers throughout the hub and why boundaries should be clear to ensure everyone’s safety.

Self Assessment
Q1. Is there sufficient support for volunteers from board, staff, volunteers and service users?

Q2. Are volunteers managed and coordinated effectively?

Q3. Is in-depth tailored support offered to those that need it?

Q4 Does everyone at the hub have a good understanding of appropriate boundaries?

Challenges considered:

In this section:
• STEP 4.1: Promoting the hubs ethos and value
• STEP 4.2: Support volunteer management/coordinate volunteers
• STEP 4.3: Activities to bring volunteers together
• STEP 4.4: Volunteers with support needs
• STEP 4.5: Navigating boundaries, create a policy or statement

Resources:
• Influencing decision makers/presenting a case for volunteering
• Role and responsibilities of a volunteer coordinator
• Navigating boundaries best practice guide
STEP 4.1: Promoting the Hub’s ethos and value

As well as sharing your volunteering ethos with user groups and anyone involved in the hub you may have other values that you would like volunteers to be aware of such as: equality and diversity, how to respond to derogatory comments, appropriate ways to work with or respond to people who display unusual or challenging behaviour.

Benefits: Volunteers and user groups will know what is expected of them and have the information to promote the hub’s ethos and values. Volunteers will feel valued and more motivated to do what the hub or user groups require and need to be doing. While providing training for volunteers will give them confidence in dealing with challenging behaviour and service users will feel happier and more understood, knowing what to expect from volunteers.

Tips: Develop a set of agreed ground rules or code of conduct for working in the hub, linked to the hub’s vision and aims. Work with the user groups and ask them to share these with volunteers through induction. Identify where further information or awareness raising sessions may help to challenge inappropriate attitudes or approaches on all sides (see Section 5. Developing)

Refer to resource – Influencing decision makers/presenting a case for volunteering.

STEP 4.2: Support volunteer management / coordinate volunteers

Do the hub’s user groups need support to effectively manage their volunteers? Is there a need for user groups to support one another generally with day to day volunteer management or is there enough interest across the hub to create a shared Volunteer Coordinator? A coordinator could also take a lead on developing the volunteering programme for the hub and encourage volunteers in the hub to follow best practice.

Benefits: A dedicated volunteer coordinator, even one with limited hours, will ensure that volunteering isn’t overlooked. They will be able to keep everyone on track and provide support for the hub and user groups. If there is buy-in from user groups, they are more likely to accept support to develop best practice.

Tips: Consult user groups to see whether they are interested in support around volunteering.
- Is there potential to encourage peer-to-peer support? Is there sufficient demand to support a funding application for a volunteer coordinator?
- It is important to at least begin to develop a volunteering ethos before recruiting a coordinator so that their efforts won’t be undermined by insufficient resources, resentment from staff and tensions between staff and volunteers.

You do not have to include volunteer line management in the coordinator’s role. This requirement may vary depending on the size of the hub and the full-time/part-time nature of the role. They could however, mentor others to manage their own volunteers as those working alongside the volunteer will have a greater understanding of the role and likely support needs.

Refer to resource – Roles and responsibilities of a volunteer coordinator.
**STEP 4.3: Activities to bring volunteers together**

This could include activities for socialising and to encourage peer-to-peer support. For example, a meal to mark an event like Christmas or Eid, award presentations or a ‘Volunteer Voice’ session (see Step 5). Think about having a display in the hub to promote and celebrate volunteering to all visitors.

**Benefits:** Joint activities could create a vibrant volunteering base and demonstrate that the hub values and recognises the contribution that volunteers make. It will give isolated volunteers a support network, increase demand for good practice, and attract more volunteers. If volunteers are encouraged to share their views on how volunteering can be improved it will support the hub to be more inclusive through involving beneficiaries in the development of the hub and volunteer base.

**Tips:** Start by organising something for Volunteers Week which falls on the first week of June every year. Packs and support are available to help you plan, promote and run activities for this. See on-line for ideas [http://volunteersweek.org/](http://volunteersweek.org/). Be sure to ask user groups and volunteers what kinds of activities they would be interested in. Start small and make it an annual event to gradually build up interest. If a volunteer can see how they can benefit/enjoy the activity they are more likely to share their views on volunteering.

Encourage a group to design a volunteering display for the hub and seek information from user groups and volunteers. This might include numbers of volunteers, examples of roles, quotes from volunteers, skills gained and motivations/benefits and don’t forget lots of pictures. Update it on a regular basis or allow people to add to it.

**STEP 4.4: Volunteers with support needs**

A hub may attract a higher proportion of people with complex needs who are looking to build confidence and skills through volunteering, and these needs might not always be visible.

Support should be designed in consultation with a volunteer so that it is appropriate to their needs. They may require more in-depth support so be realistic about what you can provide. Think about creating ‘supporting vulnerable people’ guidance to include in your good practice principles for user groups (see Step 2.5) including how this might contribute to your hub’s overall vision.

**Benefits:** Providing appropriate support will enable your hub to diversify and ‘grow your own’ volunteer base. These volunteers are more likely to understand and empathise with similar types of people accessing your services and could provide service users with peer support. Providing guidance to your user groups will also help them to consider the potential issues before they recruit new volunteers and should improve the support of existing volunteers. This will be another way for you to demonstrate that you provide infrastructure support and how you involve local people.

**Tips:** Identify the types of people that do or could use your hub who would benefit from additional support to enable them to volunteer (see Step 2.6 on Diversity). Be sensitive and ask them what they require, and speak to those that have experience of working with vulnerable people to help prepare the guidance to share with other user groups.

Focus on what people can do. A step-by-step approach to engaging volunteers will enable people to get started and progress as they become more confident.
STEP 4.5: Navigating boundaries, creating a policy or statement

There are many complex relationships within a hub between trustees, staff, volunteers, user groups and service users. There will also be historical relationships, levels of influence/power which have developed over time as well as many people wanting to do the right thing but struggling with blurred boundaries. ‘Unhealthy’ boundaries usually result in problems and have a negative effect on the hub. It is the hub’s responsibility to address this and offer appropriate guidance.

For example service users and local people encouraged to volunteer through a ‘grow your own’ programme may have developed relationships with people that are inappropriate when becoming a volunteer. For example giving out a personal phone number or inviting a service user to their house will cause difficulties for the future.

Benefits: Sets out expectations for everyone involved in the hub which will increase safety for all and reduce the level of risk to the hub from people’s behaviour and practice. This should recognise the distinction between service users and volunteers, making it easier for someone to be a volunteer one day, and a service user another.

Tips: Create some guiding principles and practices about boundaries which can be made available to everyone in the hub. Ask groups what problems they may have already encountered. Share this with user groups and discuss appropriate boundaries with volunteers at induction and ongoing support sessions. Display these in your hub so that everyone knows what is expected and why.

Practice example: Cornerstone, Salford – the part-time Volunteer Coordinator and Chief Officer had developed their volunteer programme, policies and procedures before recruiting volunteers. These were piloted with admin, café and then IT volunteers as and when recruited. The benefits of volunteers were regularly promoted to improve staff/volunteer relationships. Regularly reviewing the programme, the coordinator encouraged volunteers’ to make suggestions on how it could be improved. She brought all volunteers to an externally facilitated ‘volunteer voice session’ (see step 5.2) followed by a Christmas lunch, which they now plan to make an annual event.

In Summary

Raising the profile of volunteering in a hub can have such a positive impact on beneficiaries. It is essential that the hub develops a volunteering ethos to provide the foundations from which volunteering can grow and become integrated into everything a hub does. Having transparent policies and practices will help everyone involved to know what is expected of them so that everyone is respected and valued.
Influencing decision makers / presenting the case for volunteering (see step 4.1)

Management Committee/ Board of Trustees
You know your committee or board better than anyone, we offer some further tips and suggestions to inform the approach you take.

Speak their language – spend some time considering the motives, interests, agendas, concerns and perspectives of your board to understand what approach will gain and sustain their attention and interest. This will also allow you to gain a realistic impression of how much you can influence, challenge and facilitate change in your organisation.

Information is power – information, data, outcomes and personal accounts are key to cutting through the personalities, politics and historic relationships that may be influencing the boards conduct and decision making process.

Use this information to demonstrate the impact volunteers are having, the difference the hub is making and potential for the future.

Show them first hand – see the section 5 on developing your thinking around giving trustees a real life experience of how your hub operates day to day.

Examples from other hubs and community centres can be utilised to bring your information to life and allow you to use an external source to back up your information and recommendations.

Staff
Staff resistance is common within hubs and community centres growing their volunteer involvement, so firstly you are not alone.

Understand why..? It can be frustrating and exhausting when you feel like you are a lone voice advocating and championing volunteering so stop and consider other staff and management points of view. Talk to staff informally to determine their concerns.

Staff resistance can be fuelled by one or more of the following:

- Fear... that they may be replaced by a volunteer to save the hub money
- Inexperience or prejudice… in working with certain people, backgrounds or people with additional support needs
- More work… for them in supervising or showing new people how to do things. Staff may be concerned about an increased work load and responsibility
- Bad experiences… of difficult behaviour, conflict, complaints and lack of support in this
- We don’t need volunteers…staff particularly long standing members of the team may display resistance to change or consider volunteers unnecessary

Each area of resistance is tackled in turn:

- Fear... that they may be replaced by a volunteer to save the hub money
Staff may have created an image and expectation about volunteers before they have even met or worked with them. Reassure them that volunteer involvement is to enhance not replace or substitute paid roles. Openly talk through underlying concerns to rebuild trust and better understanding of why it is beneficial to involve volunteers.
• Inexperience or prejudice... in working with certain people, backgrounds or people with additional support needs.

Deliver a myth busting session and seek support or information from your Volunteer Centre or volunteering organisation to do this. Challenge staff perceptions, stereotypes and expectations. If you can use real life examples and your own or others experiences, as appropriate, to positively engage staff and help them reflect on their preconceptions.

• More work... for them in supervising or showing new people how to do things. Staff may be concerned about an increased workload and responsibility.

Be honest with staff, for some of them it will initially involve more work, investing their time and energy to develop a volunteer. In return staff will gain an extra resource to help and fresh ideas and energy for the hub and a new team member.

• Bad experiences... of difficult behaviour, conflict, complaints and lack of support in this

Undertake a thorough review of the hub, needs and policy and set an action plan to address and prioritise areas for development and improvement. Involve staff and other key people in this process to get more buy-in. Be realistic and honest about past mistakes and issues but don’t dwell on them or let them prevent you from trying new approaches.

• We don’t need volunteers...staff particularly long standing members of the team may display resistance to change or consider volunteers unnecessary.

If this is not a true reflection of what your hub needs...highlight roles and opportunities that you have considered volunteers could take on within the hub, to demonstrate and challenge staff thinking. Even better run an activity with staff looking at what skills they need and tasks they could delegate or development work they have not ever been able to do because of lack of time or particular skills.

However, if staff observations are correct...Then maybe rethink your plan to get more volunteers or involve volunteers in that particular area of work and look at the many other ways you could involve people in the hub and the work it does. It is important in this case that the relationship is mutually beneficial and that the hub is benefiting as much as the individual is.

The worst thing to do is waste people’s time and energy. Someone having a bad volunteer experience, either a staff member or a volunteer, can put people off volunteering in the future.

User Groups

It is worth contemplating reactions from user groups when introducing volunteers into a service or group. This will be very dependent upon the nature of the group, sensitivity of issues discussed and the receptiveness of service users to new people.

Have an open discussion... have informal discussions with service users to prepare them for the introduction of volunteers as support for their group. Allow them to air concerns and hopes for their involvement and respond accordingly.

Be open and honest... it is often the case that without volunteers hubs are unable to sustain services and groups for service users. It is important to relay to service users the importance of volunteers, what their time, energy and ideas will bring to the group. How this will enhance the group for them and for the hub.
**Share feedback with volunteers...** it is important that volunteers are informed about the apprehensions or the overwhelming support for their presence so they can prepare themselves.

**Shadowing and buddying up...** people liked being asked for help, it makes them feel needed and gives them a sense of value and purpose. Look to introduce work shadowing or a buddying system where new people work with or alongside an existing person involved in the user group. *This should be in addition to an induction and training that is provided.*

The training, induction and settling in period is the perfect time to gradually raise volunteer awareness, anticipate and quickly resolve any issues and support them to build positive relationships.
Roles and responsibilities for a Volunteer Coordinator (see step 4.2)

Every organisation functions differently and has different needs, so the position and role of a volunteer coordinator will need to be developed and adapted to suit your particular needs, and may well change as an organisation grows and develops.

This document is split into two sections.
- Firstly it describes the possible roles and responsibilities of a coordinator whose primary aim is to coordinate volunteering in the whole hub and enables others within the hub to directly manage their own volunteers.
- Secondly we have listed potential roles for a coordinator who also directly manages volunteers. This information can also be found in general guidance on volunteering.

Volunteer Coordinator roles across the hub?

As this is a coordination role all activities, where appropriate, should be delivered in consultation with staff, trustees, volunteers and service users.

Thinking about and reviewing volunteering:
- Organise and facilitate a review of volunteering within the hub
- Coordinate and audit volunteering which takes place in projects and user groups
- Create and manage a ‘volunteering in hubs’ action plan

Planning:
- Present a case for volunteering to gain buy-in from trustees
- Support managers and trustees to develop appropriate volunteering policies and procedures
- Start to build a supportive relationship with user groups and projects so that they understand how the volunteer coordinator can support them to develop their volunteer programme
- Develop a set of best practice principles. Promote and share them with user groups
- Develop a ‘Hubs volunteering’ pack to be able to deal with new enquiries
- Coordinate research to understand the diversity of people in the community and to demonstrate that the hub serves and reflects this diversity in volunteering
- Identifying and raise awareness of potential risks to volunteering in the hub
- Raise staff awareness of the role and function of volunteers
- Organise training for volunteer managers and those who supervise

Recruiting:
- Maintain a list of volunteering opportunities throughout the hub
- Plan how and where to recruit volunteers on behalf of everyone at the hub, promote opportunities and encourage user groups to do the same
- Liaise with staff and user groups to identify and develop new volunteering opportunities based on the needs of the hub and explore roles that can be shared between user groups or projects.
- Organise profile-raising events to attract new volunteers.
• Develop and maintain links with local community groups and other organisations and businesses in order to recruit or refer volunteers
• Explore employee supported volunteering opportunities and share with staff and user groups.

Supporting:
• Identify and arrange joint training and education opportunities for volunteers
• Outline the hubs volunteering ethos and encourage user groups to promote it
• Organise activities to bring volunteers together
• Develop ways to recognise and reward volunteer efforts e.g. nominating volunteers for awards and organising celebration events.
• Develop guidance to help user groups to support their volunteers

Developing:
• Plan for volunteer retention and understand why volunteers leave
• Manage volunteer communications such as social functions, newsletters or social media.
• Support user groups and staff to resolve conflict.
• Regularly liaise with user groups and projects to understand how they work
• Encourage the development of partnerships and assess their support and volunteering needs.
• Promote volunteering (internally and externally) through recruitment and publicity strategies and campaigns.
• Attend meetings and forums as appropriate
• Manage associated budgets and resources
• Work with multiple agencies across different sectors in order to establish good working relationships to influence decisions about volunteering.
• Develop and maintain links with external training providers for the progression of volunteers
• Keeping up to date with legislation and policy related to volunteering and making any necessary modifications to accommodate changes.

Monitoring and evaluation:
• Provide guidance on managing volunteer database and records
• Monitor and evaluate the impact of joint working
• Develop a communications plan to share your findings with stakeholders
• Prepare reports for funders and trustees to demonstrate the impact of volunteering
Additional roles and responsibilities for a volunteer coordinator if they are also directly responsible for managing volunteers

Planning
- Develop, implement, promote and evaluate policies and procedures
- Maintaining current and appropriate Public Liability and Volunteer Personal Accident insurance policies
- Work out how many volunteers are needed and for what roles
- Develop position descriptions for each role

Recruiting
- Advertise for volunteers
- Interview volunteers and ensure they are appropriately matched to a role
- Complete relevant checks (like references, DBS check)

Supporting
- Develop and manage induction and orientation for all new starters
- Provide training or demonstrations in use of office equipment or specific tools
- Help volunteers feel welcomed and supported and introduce them to relevant people
- Organise one-to-one review sessions involving support needs, planning and goal setting
- Where appropriate address support needs
- Communicate with people from diverse backgrounds and support them to set appropriate boundaries
- Organise rotas and delegate projects and tasks
- Offer advice and information to volunteers and external organisations through face-to-face, telephone and email contact.

Developing
- Coordinate, develop and deliver appropriate training for volunteers
- Motivate and credit volunteers and their work
- Generate income, write funding bids and fundraise to make projects sustainable

Monitoring
- Look after the volunteer database and records
- Conduct performance review or evaluation
- Manage any associated budgets and expenditure

General role descriptions for a volunteer coordinator can be found online.
Navigating Boundaries (see step 4.5)

Best practice Guide

Consider creating a boundaries policy or statement for your hub which can be shared with user groups, staff and volunteers

What might this look like?

A Boundaries policy- would start with a statement detailing your understanding and commitment to upholding boundaries in your hub and establish what the hub aims to achieve through the policy.

It would give very clear expectations of staff, volunteers and members of the hub, in terms of behaviour and practice.

Why create a Boundaries Policy?

A policy would provide you with a clear framework to refer to when dealing with or exploring any boundaries issue in your centre. It can also be used to give staff, volunteer’s and service users clarity, guidance and confidence that they are maintaining professional boundaries and ensuring everyone remains safe. The policy would give you a shared responsibility and could be shared and adopted by user groups as well as your hub staff and volunteer team.

A Boundaries statement- if your hub is looking for a less formal way of clarifying boundaries and demonstrating a commitment to this then a statement could be an option for you. Whilst the content may mirror a policy a statement and could be displayed to demonstrate more publically your pledge to maintaining and upholding professional boundaries, you will need to clearly state what your hub considers to be healthy boundaries and the need for them to be maintained by all.

Why is this important to our hub?

Clear boundaries help to develop trusting relationships between staff volunteers and service users and make for a safer environment for all.

Boundaries can help prevent stress at work, separating private life and work life.

A hub with clear boundaries, will know how to act and react to the challenges faced running community activities with a range of people.

We must always be aware that with different roles come different responsibilities and shifts in power. People in paid positions or volunteers running groups have more power than those accessing or using a service. Therefore it is good practice to have mechanisms in place to protect the more vulnerable and prevent abuses of power.

Creating an environment that encourages open and honest debate around this subject is a key factor in good practice. People will always develop friendships, and step outside boundaries at times. It is the way we deal with it that really matters. In this way we can develop how to manage the many changing relationships whilst having safe accessible groups and places.
Healthy and unhealthy Boundaries

The examples below provide you with some examples of what are considered healthy and unhealthy boundaries; this can be incorporated and used to influence your policy or boundaries statement. As well as forming the basis of a discussion or training workshop for staff and/ or volunteers to develop a clearer understanding of the current boundaries your hub is working to and whether any changes need to be implemented.

Healthy Boundaries

- Recognise your own personal boundaries
- Understanding what is acceptable and unacceptable for you
- Avoid getting into situations that could be misunderstood
- Think before you say ‘Yes’
- Remember what the main focus of the relationship is
- Having the ability to say no
- Having clear definitions of roles and responsibilities
- Ability to challenge a person’s actions, if you feel they have blurred boundaries
- Understanding the distinction between befriending and being a friend
- Keeping confidentiality, understanding what to share and when – in terms of safeguarding issues, or issues of risk to personal safety

Unhealthy Boundaries

- Giving out your home telephone number or address
- Taking people to your own home
- Getting emotionally involved
- Having an intimate relationship
- Accepting any form of harassment, bulling or violence from the other person
- Buying expensive gifts for people or accepting gifts
- Giving money to the other person
- Lending money or material goods
- Repeatedly telling people your personal story or other too personal details
- Going against your values to please others
- Expecting others to meet your needs
- Talking about people’s confidential information, sharing their story
5. developing section

Setting the Scene
A commitment to the ongoing development of your volunteers plays a huge role in growing and keeping volunteers, whilst more generally raising morale, enthusiasm and valuing their contributions.

Often development for volunteers is interpreted as the need for more training. Training is hugely important but ‘developing’ can include a whole range of initiatives to provide volunteers with the opportunity to broaden their skills and experiences. This could be:
- An increase in an individual’s responsibility
- Peer support
- Requesting volunteer views and ideas
- Transition to another role
- Encouragement to pursue and progress future goals

Celebrating volunteer contributions is also important whilst respecting the diversity in individual needs and preferences when receiving recognition.

Self Assessment
Q1. Does your hub invest in the development and growth of individual volunteers?

Q2. Does everyone in your hub get involved in recognising and rewarding volunteer contributions?

Q3. Do you regularly gather the views of volunteers and take action to make appropriate changes?

Challenges considered:
1. Volunteering ethos, 2. Valued resource
3. Mutual benefit, 5. Boundaries
7. Joined-up thinking, 8. Accountability
9. Complex relationships

In this section:
• STEP 5.1: Understanding your volunteers’ motives and goals
• STEP 5.2: Create opportunities for meaningful volunteer involvement
• STEP 5.3: Develop volunteer awareness and skills through training and interactive workshops
• STEP 5.4: Movement across the hub
• STEP 5.5: Celebrating volunteer contributions

Resources:
• Volunteer voice session
• Volunteer involvement in the hubs development programme
STEP 5.1: Understand your volunteer’s motives and goals – explore and review the process for establishing this with volunteers

To enable staff and the board to offer development opportunities that are appropriate, and meet the needs and interests of volunteers, it is important for all staff and board members to demonstrate a commitment to building positive relationships with volunteers and an appreciation for their motives, future goals and aspirations.

This process can start at the very beginning, by recruiting volunteers into roles that match their future aspirations and needs (see section 3. Recruiting). However it is important that developing volunteers is an ongoing commitment that is embedded into volunteer management and support systems.

‘*Use development opportunities to ensure you retain interest*’ event attendee.

**Benefits:** Identifying and responding to individual and group development needs will generate a new energy and positivity amongst staff and volunteers, and contribute to your volunteering ethos and successful integration of volunteers.

It also has the potential to uncover new motives and goals you and the volunteers were unaware of that can lead to new knowledge of volunteers’ skills and experiences to benefit your hub. This, in turn, might lead to the growth of new services, or reinvigoration of existing ones, or to volunteer skill sharing.

**Tips:** Don’t assume that all staff, user groups and board members have an awareness and commitment to ‘developing’ volunteers and the benefits of this.

Consider incorporating ‘developing’ into your best practice principles to share with user groups (see 2.5) and ensure a consistent offer.

Note: As a hub you have a ‘duty of care’ to volunteers. It is important to monitor volunteer involvement, particularly frequency, as part of uncovering volunteer motives. This can indicate a dependency and reliance which could be unhealthy for individuals, as they replace other functions i.e. work or social life with volunteering at the hub.

STEP 5.2: Create opportunities for meaningful volunteer involvement

This can be as simple as creating a suggestions box and feedback wall, 6 monthly feedback and ideas sessions, or developing an informal peer feedback programme.

**Benefits:** A variety of fantastic ideas to improve the volunteer experience and the hub generally are sure to emerge. This will also enable a safe space and outlet for volunteers to show the early warning signs of dissatisfaction and express what is causing anxiety and frustration as well as highlighting what’s working and the positive benefits they are experiencing.

**Tips:** Don’t just listen - respond and act! Ensure that this is not tokenistic. Volunteers don’t just want the opportunity to share their views and experiences, they expect you to listen. Admit when something’s gone wrong and discuss what can be done in response. You may need to communicate this expectation to user groups and ensure they are ready and willing to act. Give consideration to how you might monitor user group’s commitment to this.

Refer to resource – Volunteer involvement in the hub development programme and the volunteer voice session.
STEP 5.3: Develop volunteer awareness and skills through training and interactive workshops

You may already have a fantastic training programme up and running. If so, use the step above 5.2 to evaluate your current offer. However, if you are developing or reviewing a programme then here are some discussion points to get you started.

You may want to do this with your volunteer development steering group and then consult more widely.

- As a collective (all user groups) is there essential training that your volunteers need? E.g. First Aid, food hygiene, safeguarding
- Is this core training something that could be delivered jointly to continue the collaborative approach from the recruitment phase? Could this save on resources and encourage volunteers to share learning?
- Have you, or do you, need to make a distinction between essential, compulsory, desirable and optional training? What is role/service specific and what could be a general offer to all?
- Have you discovered expertise and knowledge in your volunteer base that could enhance or support your offer?
- Do you have the infrastructure, organisation links and capacity to respond to emerging need, requests or situations that may evidence a training need? Is this realistic, necessary for your hub?
- Should your training programme incorporate awareness raising workshops to reflect the inclusive nature of the hub and ensure volunteers value diversity, equality and inclusion within their hub role and beyond?

Benefits: Training and workshops can be the vehicle, not only for skill development, but to support volunteers to develop the attitudes and attributes required to engage positively in your hub, challenge misconceptions and discover new interests and areas of development for themselves.

Tips: Working with community hubs has given a real insight into some volunteers’ thinking around the value of training. Whilst you may experience some resistance and negative response to training offered, this attitude often stems from previous negative experiences of volunteers sent on training with a lack of support, responsibility or opportunity to implement learning on their return to the hub.

They may also be resistant to training if they have been involved in the hub for a long time. Therefore, this may be something you have to handle carefully and work around.

‘We have found an issue or challenge when trying to retain volunteers can be lack of growth in their role or involvement in the hub’ event attendee.
STEP 5.4: Movement across the hub

Consider the potential for fluidity and movement of volunteers across the hub in new roles and contact with groups and service users. Is there a process to let this happen smoothly with checks?

As a hub you might want to ensure records are kept or centralise secure records on individuals, including details of training, notes of any issues from DBS checks and support needs. If a volunteer does then move from one role to another the responsible person can ensure appropriate checks and support needs are undertaken.

Benefits: As a hub you are in a unique position to offer volunteers variety and progression all under one roof. By utilising yourselves as a network of host providers, movement of volunteers across the hub can aid individual development, retain interest and allow a new user group to benefit from a volunteer’s time and energy.

Note: Watch out for signs that a volunteer feels stagnated in their role. Provide opportunities for volunteers to voice their concerns and needs.

Tips: Be observant – Following on from developing your staffs’ ability to question and explore volunteer motives and future goals, it is equally important to monitor volunteer engagement. I.e. a change in personal circumstances affecting their motives for volunteering or their availability or ability to turn up to sessions on time. This may lead you to consider possible movement across the hub or alternative interventions.

STEP 5.5: Celebrating volunteer contributions

Devise a range of ways to recognise and celebrate the difference volunteers make to your hub. Firstly don’t underestimate the power of saying thank you or spending time with volunteers one to one to share and reflect on their individual contributions to the hub. Volunteers like to receive recognition in different ways, certificates, and articles in newsletters or the local paper, nominations for local or national awards, celebration evenings with presentations and refreshments or a meal out.

Benefits: Recognising the contributions of your volunteer base creates a sense of pride, sense of achievement and ensures volunteers feel valued whilst having a positive impact on individuals’ wellbeing. This is crucial in retaining volunteers and creating a vibrant and responsive hub that meets the needs of your community. Initiated jointly with user groups can allow you to celebrate the collective achievements of volunteers and create a shared identify across the hub.

Tips: You may not have a budget to celebrate volunteer contributions but don’t let this stop you. Consider a fundraising event to raise the money or ask a local business for a donation, with all avenues exhausted there is nothing stopping you celebrating on a shoe string with a low key event. Bring your user groups together and use your community contacts to identify ‘in kind’ opportunities for entertainment, food and printing.
Step 5.6 Trustee engagement and development

It is easy to forget that trustees/board members are volunteers too and despite their position of authority and decision making responsibilities may require training, support or opportunities to develop a more grassroots understanding of how the hub works.

Identify the person in your hub with the ability to ask these questions and take appropriate action (if this isn’t your role).

Offer trustees the opportunity to shadow a staff member, attend a volunteer meeting, access training on offer to other volunteers, observe systems, meet a service user or encourage trustees to create a slot in their meetings for management, staff or volunteers to attend and share experiences.

It is likely trustees have never received any formal training on their role. Contact your CVS or local council to find out whether free training is available for trustees.

**Benefits:** This is an opportunity to challenge trustees’ historical practices that may no longer be serving the interests of the hub and to develop new appreciation and understanding for staff and volunteers.

This will allow staff to develop closer relationships with individual trustees who can provide fresh insight and a voice for change.

A training offer will also allow trustees to develop relevant skills and knowledge to fulfil their roles more fully.

**Tips:** Present this as an opportunity to raise their profile in the hub and to experience the services you offer. It is important that this does not come across as undermining their authority but more as joined up involvement at different levels essential to build a strong volunteer base that is welcomed and supported by all.

‘The committee in a hub are often forgotten when it comes to training, the board or committee may need training on their role, communication, responsibilities, impartiality and volunteer engagement’ event attendee.
Summary
Developing your volunteer base will also revisit the principles of mutual benefit, allowing volunteers to grow, discover their strengths, challenge their weaknesses and engage in new opportunities.
If your development programme fulfils all these things then it may result in volunteers progressing on to pastures new, whether that is a volunteer role, training or even paid work.

Losing a valued member of the team is never easy but this will demonstrate the crucial role your hub plays in supporting individuals in your community to make a choice and improve their health, wellbeing and future prospects.

Aside from this, the development opportunities that you provide and the commitment you show as a hub is a fantastic selling point to new volunteers who are looking to invest their time wisely.

Practice Example: Oldham Unitarian Chapel
The Minister experienced a ‘chicken and egg’ scenario as he attempted to build a community cafe and a volunteer base simultaneously. He attracted a small team of willing volunteers and developed roles to fulfil the functions of the cafe. However it became apparent that the profile, marketing and community use of the cafe would take some time to establish. The Minister was conscious that if the volunteers were not kept busy gaining a sense of fulfilment then he may lose them. During this period of transition and development he recognised the need to be creative, adapting roles to retain volunteers. By diversifying the roles and responsibilities of volunteers, providing training and development opportunities and forging links with local college students he was able to add a new dimension to the volunteer experience and maintain his volunteer base while continuing to develop the cafe.
Volunteer involvement in the hubs development programme (see step 5.2)

Information Sheet

*Here are a few ways in which you could encourage volunteer voice and involvement, every setting is different and not one size fits all but hopefully this will help you to consider what might work in your hub.*

**Feedback Session or forum**

We have included a volunteer voice session plan, which has been successfully trialled and tested with a hub, which can be adapted to meet your needs.

**Benefits:** A structured way of gathering volunteer feedback which can be built into reporting systems at board and staff level it will ensure volunteer voice is taken seriously and contributes to the ongoing development of volunteering and the hubs wider future vision.

**Tip:** This session or forum can be linked to a theme, informal training or talks of interest to attendees to gain wider and regular attendance. Regular one-to-ones should also be held to support the culture of support and feedback and address any issues as they come up.

If there are some initial grievances that need to be aired or resistance to work through it may be beneficial to hold a few sessions run by external staff, with no staff or board members present. This may help create a space for volunteers to express their views and ideas honestly but this should always be structured and feedback captured and fed back to ensure the session is productive and serves a purpose.

Avoid creating or reinforcing an ‘us’ and ‘them’ culture with this if you decide to hold regular meetings where one our more groups are excluded from attending, contributing or are thoughtlessly not included in briefings or updates on decisions and outcomes that either affect them or the services they care about. Always keep in mind the ‘stake’ in stakeholder, even if something does not directly affect them, providing opportunities for feedback and keeping people briefed and involved makes people feel heard and valued.

You may find there is a lot of trust and cohesion and shared purpose with different stakeholders, so separate forums or stakeholder meetings would be unnecessary and counter to the new culture you are trying to create and grow.

**Suggestions Box and Feedback wall**

The simplest ones are sometimes the best!

**Benefits:** Despite the creation of more formalised routes to capture volunteer voice, some volunteers will find this a somewhat intimidating environment and will require lower key, private means of expressing a view. Suggestion boxes may be ‘old hat’ but in this respect they do what you want them to.

**Tip:** Ensure you create a means of responding to feedback, challenges and suggestions expressed by volunteers. This can be a public display highlighting the action taken as a result, an activity integrated into the volunteer voice session or a one-to-one private discussion.
Volunteer Involvement in a hub development programme

Volunteer involvement in this case describes the active role volunteer(s) can play within volunteer development. It will however cross the whole volunteer process including recruitment, selection, induction and ongoing support. Use the guidance below to determine whether this is something the hub would want to pursue.

Benefits: A more integral approach to involving volunteers in development and other volunteer processes across the hub can be hugely beneficial. It provides new volunteers with a true sense of the hub and their role to evoke a passion, appreciation and shared ownership of their community building. Whilst offering existing volunteers progression opportunities of this nature, developing a role-model or advocacy status can play a significant part in building the confidence, self-esteem and future aspirations of individuals and those around them.

Tip: Discuss this with your working group. Is this an option for your hub, considering the resources, capacity versus benefits of volunteer roles within development and support functions? Approach an organisation to help you explore this and consider the systems you would need to put in place. Start small invite a long standing confident and trusted volunteer to a volunteer induction to share their experiences and watch the reception this receives. Before taking further action approach your board and gain their backing for this new approach.

Here are some tips and hints to consider when considering volunteer involvement

This area of practice should be given careful consideration and thought, before undertaking such a journey. If this is a new concept to the hub, be advised to seek support and guidance from an external organisation or another hub with expertise in this field before taking any action.

Peer support can operate at varying levels from lower level engagement i.e. building in a coffee and a chat with an existing volunteer into new volunteer inductions, through to higher levels of responsibility such as volunteer led and run group support sessions or one to one mentoring.

Things to consider...

- Levels of influence and meaningful involvement – if a hub is to engage volunteers at this level it is crucial that support is sort from the board and senior management team who will determine the boundaries and levels of involvement volunteers can have and why
- Avoid tokenistic or manipulative involvement – some individuals knowingly or not can create opportunities for volunteers to be ‘seen’ but not heard or restrict the involvement, so much so it becomes more for decoration
- Skewed sense of volunteer power- consider the motives and appropriateness of each individual to the specific role, to ensure benefit is mutual and each volunteers has positive intensions that will not threaten the programme, the hubs reputation or lead to misunderstanding
- Replacement opposed to enhancement – it is crucial staff, management, trustees, volunteers and service users see that volunteer involvement and leadership is not a means to replace staff roles or functions
- Integration and intensions- be mindful that certain staff may consider volunteer involvement in as an opportunity to defer responsibility and offload unwanted tasks.
• Benefits and indicators of success – consider how the creation of these opportunities for existing volunteers will contribute to the hub’s wider aims, raise aspirations and attract new volunteers.

What the hub needs to provide...

• Capacity and resources – although volunteer involvement in the long run may maximise capacity, any initiative of this nature is demanding to build and sustain.

• Policies and procedures – it is important you consider the health, safety and protection of your volunteers, service users and the hub. It is likely amendments to the hub’s volunteer policy will be required, along with creating new role descriptions, risk assessments, DBS checks and briefings for staff and volunteers.

• Training and support – volunteers will require varying levels of training determined by the expectation of the roles i.e. from a do’s and don’ts session, a chat with new volunteers, to training on confidentiality, safeguarding, anti-discriminatory practice etc.
Volunteer Voice Session plan

Aim: to support volunteers to share their views, opinions and ideas of the hub past, present and future. The opinions, quotes and experiences shared by volunteers can contribute to the development of this Community Hubs Volunteering Toolkit.

Venue:
Duration: 1 hour
External facilitators: recommended

Hub to:
- Invite all volunteers
- Provide volunteers with an overview of the session
- Provide feedback on the proposed session plan and provide information on any additional needs or requirements the volunteers may have to ensure the session is accessible and engaging
- Offer support on the day if required

Facilitator to:
- Create a fun and informal environment for volunteers to share experiences and views
- Provide all resources for activities on the day
- Compile and share information gathered from the session with the hub

Session Plan

11am – Introductions & Brief Icebreaker

11.10am – 3 words to describe the hub or artistic impression (mini mural of the hub) Facilitators to explore volunteers positioning, role and contributions during the creation of this

11.25am – What is volunteering and what motivates me..?
What is volunteering..? Group to create a definition of volunteering that means something to them
Motivation: Diamond ranking activity – volunteers will discuss their motivations for volunteering and write them on post it notes before ranking them (pre prepared cards will also be available for those that need ideas/ support)
11.35am – My experience at the hub?
Love, Hate, Wish, Act – exploring the strengths and weaknesses and areas for development in the hub.

**LOVE**  What do the volunteers love about the hub?
**DISLIKE**  Is there anything they don’t like?
**WISH**  What is their dream or wish for the hub in the future?
**ACT**  Is there a change or an action they think the hub could take to make an improvement

Facilitators will also have sentence starters to help with this discussion and allow flexibility for decision in pairs, individual reflection or as a wider group activity.

11.50am – Building a volunteer base..?
Brainstorming ideas for attracting new volunteers, developing roles and volunteer involvement at the hub and any other suggestions they may have.

12pm - Finish
6. monitoring and evaluation section

Setting the Scene

Volunteer programmes should constantly evolve to meet the needs of an ever changing community. Monitoring and evaluation can allow you to do this. By coordinating monitoring and evaluation centrally a hub can also support user groups to improve their own programmes in order to enhance the experience of their volunteers and improve service delivery.

Your hub should also measure the joint impact of coming together to develop volunteering. What are the benefits and for who? Make sure you start by setting a clear vision and aims for your hub’s volunteering programme (refer back to section one). This will help you to monitor and evaluate later on. An audit of user groups will help to gather baseline information on how they involve volunteers and what support they would benefit from to develop their programme. From here you can revisit this with user groups to monitor their progress and celebrate their successes.

The bottom line is that not only will monitoring and evaluation enhance your volunteer engagement across the hub; it may also help you expand, grow and develop your volunteer base. Whilst forming a bank of evidence to show the impact volunteers are having in your hub, in time this could be used to apply for funding.

Self Assessment

Q1. Do you have sufficient information to influence volunteering in your hub?
Q2. Can you easily demonstrate the value of volunteering to decision makers and service users?
Q3. Does your volunteer programme evolve to reflect everyone’s diverse needs?
Q4. Do you monitor and evaluate the support you provide to user groups?

Challenges considered:
1. Volunteering ethos,
2. Valued resource
3. Mutual benefit,
7. Joined-up thinking

In this section:
- **STEP 6.1**: Capture the impacts of volunteering
- **STEP 6.2**: Benefits of coming together to develop volunteering
- **STEP 6.3**: Evaluate your findings
- **STEP 6.4**: Share your findings on impact

‘Build a bank of evidence to present to and challenge trustees’ event attendee.
**STEP 6.1: Capture the impacts of volunteering**

The Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit (Institute for Volunteering Research 2004) is a useful practical framework for measuring volunteering. It’s designed to consider the impact of volunteering on volunteers themselves, the organisation, service users and the wider community. It uses 5 forms of capital as a way of describing how they are affected.

- **Physical capital** – tangible benefits (attendance at social events, courses), accrued hours, identifiable outputs (no of meals provided, trees planted etc), enhanced services for the community
- **Human capital** – personal development, vocational skills, impact of volunteering on staff development, increasingly skilled community citizens
- **Economic capital** – value of volunteering minus cost of volunteering, value for money, user cost savings due to free services
- **Social capital** – increase in community trust and public participation, increased status/reputation, and networks
- **Cultural capital** – appreciation and understanding of other cultures, cultural diversity (engagement and access)

**Benefits:** Measuring impact helps you to show the value of your organisation to your beneficiaries and the wider community. It could help you access funding and support and tell your story to stakeholders. It shows that you are interested in improving services and helps you gain commitment from staff, volunteers and user groups as they can see the progress they are contributing to. The impact toolkit sets out a very clear structure and can be adapted to suit different groups’ needs.

**Tips:** This impact toolkit is just one way to measure impact. You should identify your own way to effectively and efficiently measure impact and ensure that it is embedded into your hub’s volunteering programme.

Ask user groups how they currently monitor and evaluate volunteering and how effective it is. Would they be interested in incorporating this different approach with your support? Develop a template to test on your own volunteer programmes and then share it with user groups.

**STEP 6.2: Benefits of coming together to develop volunteering**

Time saved, improvement in volunteer management, more positive volunteering experience at the hub, greater support for volunteers, more and better services and a stronger more vibrant hub are just some of the benefits we found in our pilot study. You will find many more, so test it out for yourselves.

**Benefits:** Understanding and being able to explain the benefits of developing volunteering as a hub is more likely to stimulate involvement of your user groups and gain commitment from staff and trustees.

**Tips:** List the activities or joint projects you intend to develop and the expected benefits for each. The working group should then make an assessment of where you are now to provide baseline information against which you can measure the impact of your project. A user group review can feed into this assessment. For example it could provide information on:

- the roles, numbers, types of people who volunteer
- retention rates and reasons for leaving
- the level of risk that your hub is exposed to
- how user groups are struggling and which user groups would benefit from support
- areas for joint work
- evidence for the need of a volunteering co-ordination post for the hub
STEP 6.3: Evaluate your findings

Analyse and interpret your findings to understand whether the hub’s volunteering programme and your collective work with user groups, has achieved what you set out to do. Were there any unexpected outcomes? Consider the reasons for the outcomes and identify the gaps so that you can plan changes and make improvements.

Benefits: You will be able to see what’s working well and how your support has helped user groups. Case studies can be developed to encourage other user groups to get involved and the knowledge and information gained can inform decisions.

Tips: Involving volunteers and staff in the review of the findings will gain new views on how it could be improved and they are then more likely to help make the changes. Consider whether the information you’ve collected is useful? Revise your monitoring plan and develop an action plan for improving your hub’s volunteer programme.

STEP 6.4 Share your findings on impact

Think creatively about ways to feedback the impact of your project and try to be transparent.

- What are the key messages?
- Who would be interested?
- What information would they benefit from?
- What would be the best way for them to receive the information?
- What do you hope to achieve by sharing it?

Benefits: This will help you raise the profile of volunteering and boost your chances of gaining Trustee and funder support by providing figures, information on reduced risk and good news stories. You should also gain user group commitment to working together by showing information on the impact on service provision and retention rates, including an increased interest in volunteering by sharing case studies to show the benefits of volunteering. Refer to the Volunteering Impact Assessment Tool mentioned in Step 6.1 for inspiration.

Tips: Don’t forget to include funders/supporter and any other stakeholder who might be interested in the impact of your hub. Ask the different groups of people what information they would be interested in and create a matrix of stakeholders against different information so you can manage how to communicate this. Make sure you keep information anonymous when necessary.

Taking a little time to think about what would be useful and about the key messages you wish to communicate will help you plan how to demonstrate your impact and make best use of your resources.
Practice Example: Mosses Community Association -

Thirty seven organisations use the Mosses Centre on a regular basis and the Mosses Community Association also runs various activities. Most of the activities involve volunteers. They are responsible for their own volunteer management, but it ranges from exceptional to limited and there is little evidence of peer support.

During this study the Chief Officer (with support from Bury Third Sector Development Agency) carried out an audit of 10 user groups and found that nine involved a total of 60 volunteers. Seven of these groups said that they could do more if they had more volunteers but six said they didn’t have enough time to recruit, induct, supervise, train and develop new volunteers. A model of the sharing of resources could be a way forward here, for example shared good practice or shared recruitment processes and this also could support a case for recruiting a volunteer coordinator to work across all user groups.

In Summary
A hub’s collective volunteering project will involve a number of volunteers, staff, user groups and service users so effective and efficient monitoring and evaluation is essential to communicate the benefits of coming together. As well and encouraging user groups to sign-up to the project, it will show your commitment to volunteering and gather evidence to show the value of your hub to individuals, groups and other stakeholders.
Alison Crush, Lynne Kent and Ellie Nixon
Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation
St Thomas Centre
Ardwick Green North
Manchester
M12 6FZ
Tel: 0161 277 1000
Email: gmcvo@gmcvo.org.uk
Web: www.gmcvo.org.uk

Helen Birkinshaw and Helen Fairweather
27 Ardwick Green North
Manchester, M12 6FZ
Tel: 0161 274 3299
Email: info@gmyn.co.uk
Web: www.gmyn.co.uk

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