

## Appendix 2 - Volunteer development and management

---

Julia Dennis, Volunteering Development Manager at Citizens Advice led this session that considered the positives and negatives of using volunteers as well as identifying some top tips for using volunteers.

The positives of using volunteers were identified as including the following:

- Free translation services
- They enable the organisation to carry out more work
- The work provides volunteers with 'career progression' experience and personal development
- Volunteers usually have a genuine interest in the work
- It is cost effective to use volunteers
- They are generally sourced from the local workforce (this is also cost effective in terms of paying expenses)
- Volunteers can often bring along a wealth of life and professional experience
- They can possess a good 'local knowledge'
- Volunteering can lead to opportunities for paid work
- Volunteering can provide an opportunity for the volunteers to gain professional references
- Volunteers can provide the charity with a greater knowledge of the local community.

The session also identified some potentially negative points that should be considered when using volunteers. These include -

- Volunteers can sometimes be unreliable
- There can be a high staff turnover
- They can be 'high maintenance'
- It can be difficult to differentiate how to deal with volunteers and paid staff (for instance, what should you do if a volunteer cannot fulfil the role they have been given?)
- They are sometimes inexperienced

- They can sometimes be resource intensive
- The purpose of their work can sometimes be vague
- Sometimes the volunteer's expectations of the work does not fit the reality (it may be boring for them)
- Volunteers can sometimes have dubious motives (they can sometimes treat the work as a social outing).

Having considered the positive and negatives aspects of working with volunteers the session also raised some other issues in relation to working with volunteers that included -

- Managing conflict between staff and volunteers and among volunteers
- Dealing with volunteer 'redundancy'
- Trustees as volunteers and the difficulties that creates.

The session highlighted the following top tips for good volunteer management in an advice setting -

- Always keep in mind the benefits that using volunteers bring
- Set expectations from the start
- Have a volunteer agreement
- Create a policy in case things go wrong
- Engender a customer focused approach
- Treat your volunteers as individuals
- One to one supervision
- Don't underestimate the costs
- Communication
- Appreciate your volunteers: events, certificates, badges etc.