

# Volunteers' Week

1-7 June 2003

a celebration of volunteering



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



The newsletter for those who manage, lead and co-ordinate volunteers in the British Red Cross

# Makingithappen

Issue 1 Motivating, recognising and retaining volunteers



**Welcome** to the first issue of Making it happen. We are very excited about this new newsletter and hope you will find it interesting, useful and fun to read.

Volunteers make an amazing contribution to the British Red Cross. Last year alone, they raised millions of pounds and provided assistance to over 500,000 people in need throughout the UK.

As volunteering is fundamentally about the freedom to choose, it should be a pleasure. This means that those involved in managing volunteers need to know how to best carry out this important role.

This newsletter does not tell you how to manage. Instead, it's intended to give you new ideas and

knowledge and equip you with the skills to ensure that the volunteers you manage have the right support, encouragement and supervision. This in turn will mean that the time they give is enjoyable and makes a positive contribution.

Recently, there have been big changes in the roles that people perform in the Red Cross. This has included reviewing how it works with volunteers. It is vital that the Red Cross gets even better at interacting with volunteers and your support and enthusiasm is needed to help make the new structure work.



## Is this newsletter relevant to me?

The answer is yes if you do any of these:

- Organise, lead or co-ordinate volunteers' activities
- Communicate with volunteers
- Recruit volunteers or promote volunteering opportunities
- Help to motivate and retain volunteers
- Induct or train and develop volunteers
- Support and supervise volunteers

Some managers of volunteers have the word 'manager' in their title, while others are called 'co-ordinators' or 'leaders'. Whether you are a manager or a leader, a volunteer or member of staff, this newsletter is for you.

## What am I going to get from reading it?

By taking half an hour to read this newsletter you will:

- ✓ receive useful tips and ideas on how to support and manage volunteers – jargon-free!
- ✓ get valuable insights into how volunteers like to be managed and supported
- ✓ answer questions about your own management style
- ✓ get suggestions for further reading, websites to explore and training opportunities
- ✓ start thinking about how to make sure that volunteers use their skills in the best way
- ✓ find out how to make volunteering a positive and rewarding experience, and feel inspired to build even more positive relationships with volunteers.

## Did you know?

Statistics from the 1997 National Survey of Volunteering (Institute of Voluntary Research) showed that in regards to:

### Motivation

- 71% of volunteers agreed that 'things could be better organised'
- 34% sometimes got bored or lost interest
- 30% felt that their efforts weren't always appreciated
- 30% felt they couldn't always cope with what they were asked to do
- The most important benefits of volunteering were the enjoyment of the experience, the satisfaction of seeing results, meeting people and making friends, and a sense of personal achievement
- Young people were more likely to volunteer to learn new skills or gain a qualification

### Recognition

- 88% said they felt they got enough recognition from the organisation
- More than a third said that a simple thank you, either verbal or written, was the best way for an organisation to recognise them
- 12% said that recognition was unnecessary

### Retention

- Volunteers who had stopped giving their time gave a number of reasons:
- 34% said poor management was a contributory factor
  - 23% said they had got bored or lost interest
  - 15% said they didn't get asked to do the sort of things they'd like to do
  - 49% said it was getting too much for them or they no longer had time to contribute
  - 24% said their efforts weren't appreciated

## Develop your management style

A set of eight competencies (skills and knowledge) has been designed for anyone who manages, supports, leads or co-ordinates volunteers. One competency focuses on motivation, recognition and retention.

### Motivate, recognise and retain

- Recognise and accommodate individual motivations for volunteering; understand that these may change over time
- Acknowledge and give appropriate recognition for the contribution volunteers make
- Apply volunteer recognition and reward equitably and effectively
- Encourage and support volunteers to continue their volunteering

Try and identify your own skills in each of these areas. If you have any development needs, this newsletter

may help but do discuss them with your line manager.

The competencies have been designed to be flexible. Not all managers will need to be competent in all areas although there are certain core competencies that are relevant to everyone.

The full set of competencies are listed below:

### Core competencies

- Support, supervise and develop
- Motivate, recognise and retain
- Lead, communicate and involve

### Optional competencies (dependent on role)

- Plan
- Promote and attract
- Recruit and select
- Induct, prepare and orientate
- Evaluate and adjust

## What is motivation, recognition and retention all about?

Every volunteer is different. What makes volunteers tick varies greatly and can change over time. The best volunteer managers are able to recognise and respond to volunteers' motivations and so capture their interest and inspire them to continue to volunteer.

Volunteers become involved for a wide variety of reasons. These include:

- Altruistic – wanting to help others in need or a belief in the work of the Red Cross
- Social – wanting to be part of something, meet new people and socialise
- Understanding – aiming to learn more, explore strengths and develop new skills
- Career – wanting to gain experience and new skills in order to improve career opportunities
- Esteem – wanting to feel needed and useful and gain personal confidence
- Protective – needing to cope with personal issues or loneliness

In order to help maintain motivation, it is vital to ensure volunteers are appropriately recognised.

All volunteers need to be thanked regularly and acknowledged for the contributions they make in a way that suits them. This doesn't necessarily mean big gestures.

By taking into account individual motivations and by thanking volunteers, you can help to sustain their commitment to the Red Cross.

## Volunteers Voices

Volunteers from across the UK told us what makes them tick and how they like to be managed...



Eileen Bush (right) with fellow Red Cross volunteers

Ruth Rendall started volunteering when someone running a Red Cross service at the local hospital asked if she would help in the new Red Cross shop. Ruth lived locally and was happy to help: "I said I'd do a day a week. Now I'm doing four!"

When asked why she continues to work for the Red Cross, Ruth replied: "I like the people I work with – the managers and the other volunteers. It's a challenge to see what we can do; see how near the financial targets we can get."

Ruth likes the way she's managed. She said: "We're asked to do things – not told, and when we leave the shop they always say thank you. We always feel appreciated."

**Ruth Rendall, shop volunteer, Devon**

When asked why she got involved with the Red Cross, Agnes Craig said: "I wanted to get involved in the community and could see the importance of the service. I really like the way I am managed. When I need support or need to run something by my manager, he's always there."

Agnes said she doesn't have organised supervision but admitted that this would be something she'd appreciate. She said: "It might be quite nice to have a slot allocated in which to chat.

Structured time would be very good." **Agnes Craig, medical loan volunteer, Glasgow**

When asked how she would like to be managed, Carol Scott said: "By someone I respect. Mutual respect is important. I'd also appreciate the chance to meet one-to-one – ideally in the evenings as I work full-time and am busy at weekends."

Carol joined the Red Cross in 1964 as a nurse. Part of the reason she continues to help the Red Cross is the team. As far as being managed, Carol said: "I don't feel that I'm being managed." She thinks part of the reason for this might be because she doesn't belong to a centre. She added: "If I have a problem, I ask the public duties officer."

**Carol Scott, first aid volunteer, Warwickshire**

Eileen Bush is a first aid volunteer. When asked why she initially volunteered, she said: "I wanted to learn first aid. I also wanted to be with people who shared the same aims and objectives as me, such as the fundamental principles.

"I have got as much out of the Red Cross as the Red Cross has out of me. I find it rewarding to help others and have made so many friends."

### What does this tell us?

- Communication is key
- Volunteers like to have regular meetings with their co-ordinator or manager – allocate time for this
- Ask volunteers to do things, rather than tell them!
- Ensure volunteers have some responsibility and that their role is varied and interesting
- Always show appreciation and say thank you
- Make sure every volunteer has a designated manager or point of contact for support and guidance

When asked what she'd change about the way she is managed, Eileen replied: "I'd like to be invited to more meetings, and for new ideas about training to be taken on board."

**Eileen Bush, first aid volunteer, Manchester**

Enid Ashton talked to us about why she joined the Red Cross. She said: "I knew nothing about the Red Cross until the co-ordinator approached me. I was instantly drawn and felt that I could give a bit of myself to the home from hospital service."

Enid continued: "The sense of satisfaction I get is the main motivating factor. I like the idea that when I have assisted a client, I am leaving them better off. It also provides me with the opportunity to learn new skills and gain experience."

When asked what she likes about the way she is managed, Enid said: "I like the fact that we are allowed some autonomy in the work. Although I follow standards and procedures, we are not restricted."

**Enid Ashton, home from hospital volunteer, Lancaster**



# Views from managers of volunteers

Colleagues from across the UK told us how they motivate and retain volunteers...



Doreen Nicol with British Red Cross shop volunteers

When I started in this role, I realised how much communication could be improved. I now try and give the volunteers feedback on progress and ensure I answer any queries they might have. I also phone them to ask for help, rather than sending them a list of duties."

"If you are keen to learn, have enthusiasm and enjoy your role then others will catch it – just like a bug. Most volunteers just want to get on with the job they volunteered for and gain job satisfaction.

"Volunteers are special people and managing them has to be a privilege."  
**Jenny Crane Gurney, emergency response and first aid service manager, Shrewsbury**

"In order to retain volunteers, you need to understand why they are volunteering. Then you can approach each volunteer as an individual and respond accordingly. For example, if a volunteer wants to develop particular skills in a job, we would encourage them to do something that uses these skills and provide relevant training if necessary."

"We also run lots of social events where volunteers are invited. Volunteer meetings take place every month and we often invite an external speaker. We like to get people to motivate

each other. We try to create an atmosphere where volunteers can share their experiences, which keeps them motivated."

**Almir Koldiz, refugee and asylum seeker services project co-ordinator, London**

"It is important to say thank you every day to the volunteers for their time and efforts. I also make sure volunteers are involved in what's happening in the shop – I let them know how we're doing each week, and everyone gets quite a buzz when the money comes in."

"We all work together as a team. The volunteers range from teenagers to people in their seventies and they all work together really well. As the shop manager, I am part of that team. Without their dedication, I couldn't possibly run the shop."

**Doreen Nicol, shop manager, Scotland**

"It is important to listen to volunteer's issues and give everyone the opportunity to voice their opinion. Volunteers need to be able to come together and discuss things – we always do something interesting at our meetings and this helps us to have a great team atmosphere."

"I always try to tell people that I appreciate what they do and make sure I say thank you for a job well done.

## Top tips from Jim Morrison, senior fundraiser, Devon

- Be approachable and give them time
- Develop conversations that aren't always about work
- Be a barrier to organisational red tape
- Act as a role model
- Ensure volunteers are and feel involved – engage them
- When things go right, make sure they are told
- Create a team spirit

I also try and use the internal Red Cross awards system."

**Philip Rowe, first aid, transport & escort and medical loan services volunteer organiser, East Mendips**



Philip Rowe

# Understanding volunteer motivation

To help us understand volunteers' motivation better, let's look at an interesting piece of research from McClelland and Atkinson, expert researchers into human behaviour. They suggest there are three main forces behind motivation – a desire to achieve, a desire to build social networks and a desire to influence. They concluded that people's motivations are either 'achievement orientated', 'socially orientated' or 'influence orientated'.

Although they acknowledge that most people are a mix of the three, one tends to dominate. One person's style is not any better than another's. The important point is that the different styles require different types of roles, recognition and supervision.

Below is a summary of the different characteristics of each:

## Achievement orientated people

- are committed to achieving goals
- welcome challenges
- are restless and innovative
- like to learn and use new skills
- strive to improve performance
- like working alone
- can get bored quickly
- crave specific feedback
- enjoy being involved
- respond to objectives
- like to take responsibility.

## Socially orientated people

- like to be with others
- value relationships
- are helpful and supportive
- like working with people
- are sensitive to others' feelings
- are crushed by criticism
- support others to achieve goals
- enjoy long chats
- welcome advice
- like to be part of a group
- avoid any conflict.

## Influence orientated people

- like to influence people
- make change happen
- have fighting spirit
- create confidence in goals
- like clear authority levels
- may not always follow rules
- need a lot of freedom
- like involvement in decisions
- like involvement in planning
- need respect
- help to shape opinion.

## A few pet hates of volunteers (de-motivators)

1. People interfering or someone always watching
2. Waste of resources
3. Lack of communication and information
4. Administrative failures (e.g. slow payment of expenses)
5. Too much bureaucracy
6. Menial or untaxing work
7. Lack of power in decision-making
8. Lack of equipment or workwear
9. Lack of clear policies
10. Managers who don't have time for them

# How can you put this into practice to help motivate and retain volunteers?

- ✓ Ask volunteers what they think and want – what sort of things do they enjoy doing? Once you have established this, try and match activities to individuals' needs
- ✓ Build a strong team spirit – volunteers prefer group-based activities
- ✓ Pay attention to what volunteers actually do, who they do it with, who they do it for and how they feel about it – volunteers crave meaning in their roles and want to have a good time

- ✓ Give volunteers new challenges – volunteers often thrive when given specific responsibilities
- ✓ Appreciate volunteers – say thank you
- ✓ Communicate – ensure volunteers know what's happening and involve them
- ✓ Have regular conversations and meetings – ensure volunteers have the time to relax and discuss issues that matter to them – and listen!

- ✓ Don't forget the basics – know your volunteers by name, keep in regular contact and give regular feedback where appropriate. Always deliver what you promised and shield your volunteers from the bureaucratic parts of management.

**You have the power to create the environment in which volunteers can flourish...the effort will be worth it because your volunteers are worth it!**

# Recognition

Recognition is an appreciation of volunteers' time, effort, or benefit to others.



## Principles

- Use a variety of methods
- Tailor recognition to suit the individual
- Be honest and sincere when giving praise
- Suit praise to the achievement
- Give praise equitably and fairly
- What you say should reflect what the Red Cross sees as important e.g. high standards, a quality service, commitment
- Give recognition frequently
- Pay attention to what you want more of

Most people volunteer for the Red Cross because they want to. For most volunteers, the usual reward is pleasure and a sense of achievement. However, it is important that you take time to thank your volunteers for the contribution they make. The additional importance of any recognition scheme is that it gives the organisation a chance to highlight volunteer achievements and promote role models.

On top of that, try and get feedback from service users or customers. If your volunteers have not received a thank you or praise from a client, try asking for it – perhaps in the form of a questionnaire – and make sure that any positive feedback is passed on to the volunteer.

You might be delighted to know that the Red Cross is introducing a nationwide “thank-you” system. The initiative, called user-engagement, aims to find out from its service users how effectively it is meeting their needs. This in turn will

hopefully produce a lot of positive feedback for you to share with your volunteers.

Different types of recognition will be required for different people – some will like a plaque or a medal, some are happy with a cup of tea and others would like a thank-you note from the manager. Some will like to be praised publicly, others privately.

## Ways you can recognise volunteers every day:

- Smile and stop to talk
- Say thank you or write a thank-you letter
- Ask them to join you for tea and cake!
- Ask their opinions
- Brag about them to others (in their presence!)
- Take time to find out about them
- Involve them
- Deal with expenses promptly
- Accommodate personal needs and issues
- Give trust and respect

## Other ways of recognising volunteers:

- Have someone senior write a thank-you letter
- Give a plaque, trophy or a bunch of flowers
- Nominate them for a Branch award or certificate
- Ask them to be involved in a special project or service meetings
- Support personal development
- Give them extra responsibility – e.g. induct other volunteers
- Hold a social event
- Highlight their good work during National Volunteers' Week celebrations
- Ask if they would like to stand for election for forums
- Write articles about them for newsletters/internal magazines/local papers

If you want to find out about service awards, please contact your local volunteering adviser or contact Flora MacLeod from the volunteering department (call 020 7201 5164 or email [fmacleod@redcross.org.uk](mailto:fmacleod@redcross.org.uk))

# How well do you manage volunteers?

Find out with this light-hearted quiz.

**1. You have received a thank-you letter from a service user saying a particular volunteer has been great.**

**Do you:**

- Immediately pin it up on the notice board for all to see
- Nominate them for a badge of honour
- Buy the volunteer a cup of coffee, take the time to say 'well done' and show them the letter?

**2. A volunteer wants to do something more interesting.**

**Do you:**

- Instantly suggest that they volunteer for a different service
- Tell them you'll come up with a new project especially for them
- Investigate the reasons and talk to the volunteer about whether they'd like to take on more responsibility?

**3. You think that communication with volunteers needs improving.**

**Do you:**

- Change the frequency of team meetings and organise a series of social events
- Start copying all local and national information for them and do a weekly mailout
- Talk to the volunteers at the next meeting about how they would like it to improve?

**4. You have concerns about a volunteer's performance.**

**Do you:**

- Arrange a disciplinary hearing and invite the volunteer to attend to discuss the problem
- Organise refresher training for the volunteer to remind them of the standards they are meant to be following
- Talk to the volunteer and try and establish why the performance issues are occurring?

**5. A volunteer has worked for the Red Cross for 12 years but is moving**

**away from the area. Do you:**

- Thank them for their contribution
- Immediately phone the volunteer's new Branch and find out about their volunteering opportunities
- Thank them and ask the volunteer whether they would like to continue to be involved with the Red Cross?

**6. One of your volunteers tells you that she has family problems at the moment and seems really upset.**

**Do you:**

- Send her home instantly and tell her to take a few weeks off until everything is a bit better
- Tell her fellow volunteers to keep an eye on her during the day and ask them to do their best to cheer her up
- Offer her the opportunity to take some time out and tell her that you're there for her if she ever needs to talk?

**7. When you run into one of your volunteers on Monday morning, do you:**

- Start telling them about the appeal update you have just read
- Ask them whether they have any ideas for the service review
- Say hello and ask them whether they had a nice weekend?

**8. You want to change the form that volunteers need to complete at the end of their 'shift'. Do you:**

- Introduce it one day and hope nobody really notices – there aren't too many bits that are different
- Tell everyone the changes are great and this new form will be so much better than the old one – they'll have no problems filling it in
- Show everyone the new form and explain the reasons why it is needed. Ask the volunteers what they think of it and if they have anything to add?

**9. You want to give a service volunteer, who is doing really well, some feedback. Do you:**

- Tell the volunteer how great they have been at the next team meeting
- Sit down with the volunteer and tell them they are a complete joy to have on the team. You couldn't possibly cope without them and you wish you could give them a paid job
- Tell them how well they have done and what that has meant to the people they have helped?

**10. Some volunteers don't want to attend Red Cross World. They just want to come along and do their volunteering activity. Do you:**

- Tell the volunteers they have to attend as it is compulsory and without it they cannot volunteer
- Tell the volunteers that it doesn't really matter if they don't want to attend and try and give them a bit of information you have about the Red Cross to help fill the gaps
- Talk to the volunteers about why they don't want to attend and spend time explaining why the Red Cross feels it is important for them?

Count up the number of As, Bs and Cs you have chosen and you'll have your score.

## Mostly As

Maybe you should think about whether your course of action is appropriate in each instance. Don't forget, people have different needs!

## Mostly Bs

Your heart is in the right place but sometimes you can get a bit carried away. Remember to be realistic!

## Mostly Cs

Congratulations! You're obviously in the right job. You're a beacon of good practice. Keep it up!

## Self Study suggestions (1 hour)

1. Talk to at least three volunteers. Have a chat and find out what they like most about volunteering and what could be different. Review their responses and take action from what you have learnt.

2. Look back at the section entitled understanding volunteer motivation (see page 5). Looking at the three different types, write down what sort of roles each type would prefer to do in your area. Then note down what sort of recognition you think the three types may prefer. Find a 'buddy' to do this with and discuss your thoughts. Did you learn anything new that you can apply in your role?

## Watch this space...

A number of learning opportunities are currently being devised by the management development team.

- A set of eight competencies - skills and knowledge required for your role as a leader, co-ordinator or manager of volunteers – has been developed (see page 2). The competencies are accompanied by a set of behaviours, which are about the way you do things. If you would like a copy, please speak to your line manager or volunteering adviser (VA).

- We have developed four workshops to be run locally. These focus on:
  1. Motivating volunteers
  2. Recognising and retaining volunteers
  3. Leading volunteers
  4. Communicating and involving volunteers

We are currently piloting the workshops. If you would like to attend, then speak to your VA to find out when they will be coming to your area. A good practice guide is also being developed.

## Where else can you get support?



If you require further support or want to pursue any of the ideas presented in this newsletter, speak to your volunteering adviser (VA).

The role of the volunteering adviser is to:

- advise, enable, support and coach managers with recruiting, managing and supporting volunteers
- provide support with individual volunteer issues such as health concerns and special needs
- assist with recruitment campaigns and coach managers on APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experience and Learning)
- act as an internal resource to enable managers to develop their skills
- help managers to meet training and development needs
- develop best practice with regards to recruitment, training,

grievances and disciplinary problems

- be a focal point for volunteering issues and developments in the area
- advise, monitor and report on the implementation of the national volunteering strategy and policy
- develop area-wide initiatives around relevant aspects of volunteering, particularly recruitment and development of new volunteering opportunities
- contribute to area plans and budgets relating to volunteering.

If you don't know who your VA is, find out today. Ask your manager or Flora McLeod from the volunteering department (call 020 7201 5164 or email [fmacleod@redcross.org.uk](mailto:fmacleod@redcross.org.uk))

### Book to read

#### The Safer Volunteering Guidebook

Published by Wales Council for Voluntary Action.

Cost £3.

Call 02920 431 728.

This is a brilliant guide. It's easy to read, has useful tips and suggestions about volunteer management, and is down to earth in its approach.

### Website

#### [www.casenet.org](http://www.casenet.org)

A great website with many ideas, tips and suggestions from McCurley and Lynch, two experts who have worked with the Red Cross on a number of occasions. Topics include retaining volunteers, volunteer motivation and recognition, and why 'good' volunteers do 'bad' things.



You will have noticed that Making it happen includes a number of contributions from volunteers and managers of volunteers throughout the UK. I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who helped with this issue.

As the aim of this newsletter and the good practice guide is to share ideas and knowledge about managing volunteers, we need your help! Please tell us how you:

- motivate and retain volunteers
- promote volunteering opportunities
- support your volunteers
- prepare for new volunteers
- communicate with volunteers and involve them.

You can contact me on 020 7201 5291 or email [mbradley@redcross.org.uk](mailto:mbradley@redcross.org.uk). I would love to hear from you!

This newsletter will be issued quarterly. The next issue is available in August. If you would like to be added to or removed from the circulation list, please contact your volunteering adviser.

I would like to thank the following people for their contributions to this newsletter:

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