

## Conference Workshop

### Is the volunteering experience as good as it could be?

Mixed group of volunteers, supervisors, admin staff working on the recruitment process

Asked:

### What is one thing about you like about your role?

Helping clients, making a difference 6  
Working as part of a team 3  
Learning new things, skills etc 3  
Meeting people of all ages, races etc 2  
Being involved in development of volunteers 2  
Commitment of volunteers  
Not being taken for granted  
Treated as an individual  
Variety of work  
Encouraging initial enquirers to volunteer

#### *Main messages*

*People generally volunteer to help people, they like to learn and like to be appreciated.*

*Paid staff like working with volunteers and seeing their progress.*

### What is one thing you don't like about your role?

Frustration with IT 4  
Need more time from supervisor 2  
Need more time to support vols 2  
Too much demand on service  
Lack of time  
Can be out of the loop when information circulated 2  
New recruitment process  
Chasing sites after volunteer allocation  
Lack of opportunity to progress 2  
Lack of training and support for admin vols  
I don't get paid  
Level of expectation  
Dislikes associated with advice process:  
    Not enough of clientele  
    When I'm not able to solve problem  
    Not being up to speed with what I'm talking about – lack of training?  
    Not knowing the complete process eg after DWP decision  
    Negative outcomes  
    Aggression from clients we are trying to help

*Main messages – Prioritise IT , too much demand on supervisors, keep people informed, help people to progress and specialise*

We discussed the 'Volunteer Journey' in 4 groups broadly divided into the following topics

### **Recruitment**

- Some aspects of new centralised recruitment process were good e.g central handling of application forms, central database etc
- Introductory session didn't always work well – the full range of opportunities was not always explained, depending on who was doing the presentation, some bits of powerpoint presentation were boring, e.g stats etc. Suggested a drop in session instead where opportunities at all centres were displayed and explained people could approach informally for a chat.
- There was a stumbling block in the process when it came to the allocation of volunteers after these sessions as sites often unable to take on their allocated volunteers and this cause delay in the start of volunteering and meant we lost some people

### **Induction and Selection**

- Very important – need a proper process, someone said 'Induction is a major problem with this organisation
- Suggest common handbook across the service
- Discussed buddying system, where experienced volunteer would 'mentor' newbie – already used in some sites to good effect
- Selection – needs standardising

### **Training**

- AWS
  - Too much info and too little time
  - Too fast for some, too slow for others
  - Not so reliant on self motivation
  - Not enough training on Petra to do it 'live'
- CABlink training materials
  - Dull, boring uninspiring, too theoretical
  - Needs support and mentoring at the sites ( could be from other volunteers)
  - Supervisors may neglect checking or signing off LJs
  - Mix of AWs and Learning Journals is confusing
  - Can we amend the LJs to suit our needs?
- Other
  - Need more training updates (eg PIP rollout)
  - Are there national Cit A updates which should be better disseminated to volunteers?

## **Moving On**

- Vols dropped in at the deep end ( not always bad)
- Not enough time to absorb all the information – have to learn on the job
- More catch up sessions away from busy drop in needed
- More one to one supervisions needed – more structured process
- One person had a very positive experience of supervision
- ‘Lost purpose- felt like a void’
- Reflective protocol needed
- Each volunteer needs supervision and the chance for ongoing development if they need it

## **Support**

*Some points repeat those above but worth saying twice*

- Training – easing into practicality
- Informal support/mentoring/formal opportunities
- Monthly one to ones lead to more effective working
- No opportunity to talk with other volunteers
- No support at all for admin vols
- Reception – vital role (training needed)
- Valuing admin
- Experienced volunteers could be mentors for new volunteers
- Big difference between supervising staff/vols and advice session supervision
- Separate conference for vols?