Key principles in involving volunteers

Guidelines for organisations

- Volunteers should be recruited to enhance a service not to replace paid staff.
- Before recruiting, be clear why a volunteer is wanted or needed
- Organisations should provide clear written task outlines for their volunteers which are skills based – meaningful tasks with opportunities for personal development
- Provide the volunteer with an induction and preparation/training programme, and where appropriate, additional support for volunteers with disabilities
- Be clear about what volunteers are seeking from the placement
- Make sure the volunteer has appropriate line management and knows whom to contact about problems or difficulties
- Establish a simple and easily accessible process for volunteers to claim out of pocket expenses and ensure funding incorporates volunteer expenses
- Ensure that health and safety standards for volunteers are in place, including risk assessment of the work volunteers will be doing
- Ensure that volunteers are covered by appropriate insurance
- Ensure that a range of policies are in place and applied equally to volunteers e.g. Diversity and/or Equal Opportunities, Policies on harassment including race, sexuality, disability, age and faith, Complaints and Grievance policies for volunteers, Disciplinary policies, Confidentiality policies
- Organisations should meet the costs of necessary training for volunteers
- Encourage volunteers to participate in the organisation's wider decision-making processes
- Where appropriate, provide opportunities for volunteers to acquire or develop new or existing skills, and support volunteers who want to gain accreditation towards recognised qualifications
- Monitor and acknowledge the contribution volunteers make to the organisation to funders, other volunteers and the wider public
- Ensure that the work and contribution of the volunteers adds value and quality to the organisation's aims and objectives
- Ensure that the organisation's working practices do not create obstacles for volunteers, or for potential volunteers from a wide and diverse range of backgrounds
- Ensuring that staff are involved and informed so that volunteers are integrated within the staff team
- Organisations should ensure that their working practices offer appropriate protection to volunteers, as well as paid staff e.g. Health & Safety.

Reproduced with permission from South Dublin County Volunteer Centre