Center for Social Development

Institute for Volunteering Research

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Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit

Third Edition

A practical guide for assessing the difference that volunteering makes

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About the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)

NCVO is the largest general membership body for charities and voluntary organisations in England, with 11,000 members from the largest charities to the smallest community organisations.

We have over 90 years' experience working with and representing charities and voluntary organisations.

Our vision is of a society where we can all make a difference to the causes that we believe in.

Our mission is to help voluntary organisations and volunteers make the biggest difference they can. The support we provide enables voluntary and community organisations to build their capacity and operate from a position of strength, resulting in improved quality of services to their beneficiaries and communities.

For more information, visit: **www.ncvo.org.uk**.

About the Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR)

IVR is a specialist research and consultancy agency focused on volunteering. It is part of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), undertaking practical and robust research to improve policy and practice.

IVR's programme of work has included high-level consultancies for the UK government and the United Nations, as well as organisational consultancies for a wide range of voluntary, public and private sector organisations.

A key focus of IVR's work is on the impact of volunteering and working with organisations to help them demonstrate the difference volunteering makes.

For more information, visit: **www.ivr.org.uk**.

Contents

Acknowledgements

This is the third edition of the *Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit*. The first edition, published in 2004, was written by a team at the Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR) that included Kathy Gaskin, Angela Ellis Paine, Justin Davis Smith and Steven Howlett. The development of the toolkit would not have been possible without the funding and generous support of the Center for Social Development, Washington University in St. Louis, USA.

The second and third editions of the toolkit have been developed in response to comments and feedback from organisations that have used it, for which we are very grateful. The toolkit draws on case studies from organisations that have undertaken volunteering impact assessments, and a special thank you goes to them for sharing their experiences. The team that prepared the second and third edition has been led by Joanna Stuart with support from Daniel Stevens, Georgina Brewis and Judith Unell from IVR and Georgina Anstey from NCVO. IVR is very grateful for the comments and input from NCVO, Volunteering England, Volunteer Scotland, Wales Council for Voluntary Action, Volunteer Now (Northern Ireland) and Imperial College London.

Introducing the toolkit

- *What is this toolkit for?*
- *Why should I use the toolkit?*
- *How does the toolkit work?*

What is this toolkit for?

This toolkit will help you to plan, assess and demonstrate the difference that volunteering makes. It can be used by anyone who involves volunteers in their organisation or coordinates their activities, whether that is in the voluntary, community, government or private sector.

The guidance and tools will enable you to:

- assess the difference that volunteering makes to:
  - your volunteers
  - your organisation
  - your service users or beneficiaries
  - the wider community
- explore the impact of volunteering in a wide range of areas, from your volunteers' skills development to the social benefits for service users
- assess the positive, negative, expected and unexpected impacts of volunteering
- compare results over time.

The toolkit is tried and tested, and the tools can be easily adapted for use in your own organisation.

This third edition of the toolkit combines this written guide with free access to a downloadable resource pack for toolkit owners, which provides additional tools and resources.

This written guide includes:

- step-by-step instructions on how to carry out an assessment
- case studies that show how other organisations have used the toolkit
- a full case study that provides an example of how each step fits together.

The resource pack includes:

- customisable tools including questionnaires, guides for interviews, focus groups and other methods of collecting information and detailed guidance on conducting a volunteer investment and value audit
- case studies that describe how real organisations have used the toolkit
- a resources section with up-to-date links to relevant further information that will help you in your assessment.

To download the resource pack for free visit www.ncvo.org.uk/VIATresourcepack and add it to your cart. Click 'View cart' and enter 'VIAT00150' in the gift code field, then progress through the checkout. A link to the resource pack will be emailed to you.

What people have said about the toolkit

'The range of groups that can be involved is very comprehensive and questionnaires are designed to give maximum information.'

'We had never done anything to measure our services on the voluntary side. Having something that was already tested and put together for the purpose was a prime motivator for me.'

'For me personally, the idea of being able to look across different areas of impact from a range of different positions was a very helpful one ... it offered a way of starting to describe systematically something that is often represented only anecdotally.'

Why should I use the toolkit?

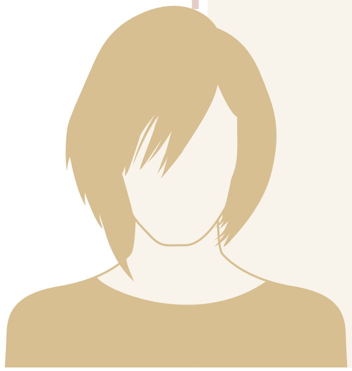
This toolkit can help you demonstrate the difference that volunteering is making. It can enable you to:

Internally

- identify what works well and how you can improve your volunteering programme
- inspire and motivate volunteers and staff by showing them the difference volunteering makes
- use feedback from those who benefit from your activities to improve the services you provide
- better understand how volunteering makes a difference to your organisation
- provide evidence that can be used to get more support and funding for volunteering within your organisation

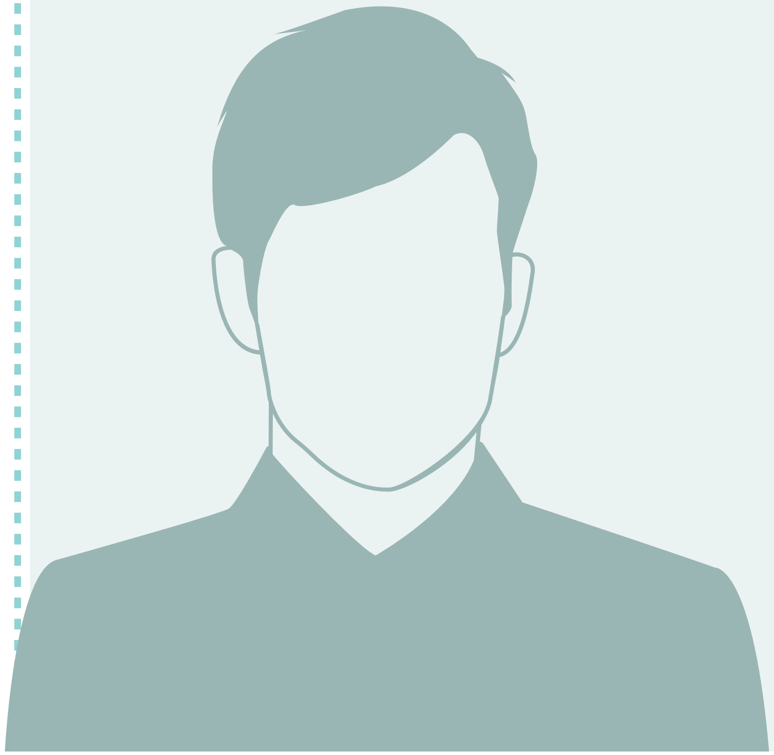
Externally

- raise the profile of your organisation
- demonstrate to other organisations and the community what volunteers are achieving
- provide evidence to funders on the difference volunteers make
- provide evidence to attract new funding into your organisation
- showcase the social and personal benefits of volunteering to attract new volunteers
- share information with other organisations in your field about what works so that they can improve their work as well
- provide information for local agencies and policy makers on the role and importance of volunteering, to help to influence policy and legislation.



Planning the assessment

Toolkit in practice 1



Stockport CVS Volunteer Centre used the *Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit* to demonstrate the difference that volunteering makes to the Borough of Stockport.

An impact assessment was carried out across eight contrasting organisations that involved volunteers. The work was led by a staff member at the Volunteer Centre, who identified clear goals for the assessment, which were to:

- reveal the scope of volunteering across the Borough of Stockport
- demonstrate the quality and variety of the contribution that volunteers make to local life
- discover how well local organisations were supporting their volunteers.

A diverse group of local organisations was selected by approaching two large voluntary organisations, two statutory bodies and two community groups. Once these were on-board, the opportunity was opened to other organisations.

A written agreement was drawn up stating the aims of the assessment, confirming that the work would be carried out by the Volunteer Centre with minimal demands on the participants and promising each organisation a confidential individual report.

A written plan was also put together that clearly identified different stages of the assessment. The scope of the assessment was comprehensive in that it included all the stakeholders identified in the toolkit: volunteers, the beneficiaries, the host organisations and the community.

How does the toolkit work?

The toolkit takes the simple approach of:

- thinking about what 'making a difference' means
- identifying to whom volunteering makes a difference
- identifying how volunteering makes a difference
- providing a set of tools to assess the difference that volunteering makes.

Thinking about what 'making a difference' means

The most important thing about volunteering is that it makes a difference. Often, this is broadly referred to as the *impact* of your volunteering programme.

Focusing on and demonstrating this impact is about more than measuring and evaluating, although this is important. It is also about planning and keeping in mind the difference you want to make, finding out whether you are making that difference, communicating your success and learning from areas that haven't gone so well.

This toolkit will take you through these tasks related to your impact, with a particular focus on how you measure the difference volunteers are making.

Many terms are used to describe the work that volunteers do and the difference they make. *The Code of Good Impact Practice*[1] highlights that the most important distinction is between the work you do and the difference it makes: it is easy to focus on your day-to-day work, when it is the impact you are having, and how you can have more, that is more important.

In this toolkit, 'your work' includes 'activities' and 'outputs', and 'the difference you make' includes 'outcomes' and 'impact'. The example on the right gives definitions of all of these terms and illustrates what they mean in the context of a volunteering programme.

Reference:
1 NCVO (2013) *The Code of Good Impact Practice*. London: NCVO.

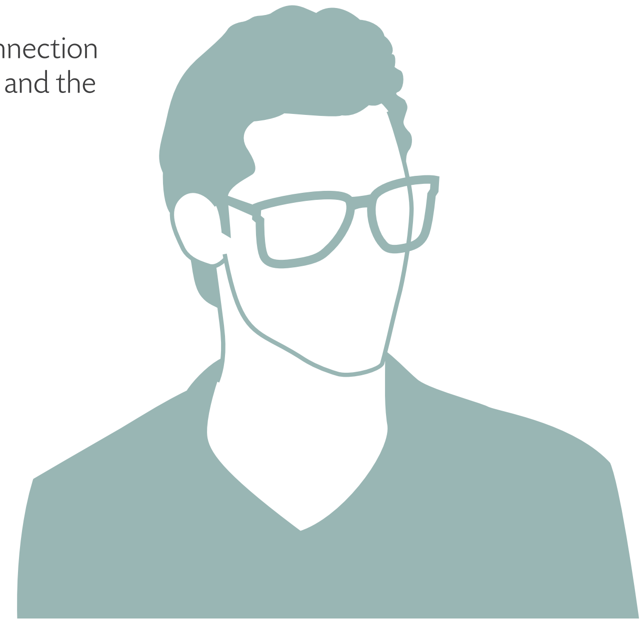
Example:
Home-visiting volunteers
(providing practical and emotional support to families)

INPUTS/ RESOURCES	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACTS
The resources needed to operate your programme or project	**The things you do with your resources**	**The products or services that the programme or project delivers**	**The intermediary changes, benefits and other effects that result from the programme or project**	**The broad or long-term effects of the programme or project**
• Volunteer time • Staff time and salary • Advertising and recruitment materials • Induction and training materials • Volunteer expenses	• Volunteer induction and training • Home visits	• Number of volunteer training sessions • Number of families visited	• Increase in social contact for parents • Increased access to local services for families • Increased confidence and self-esteem of volunteers	• Reduced isolation of families • Improved life chances of children • Greater awareness of volunteering

Identifying to whom volunteering makes a difference

The toolkit identifies four key groups to whom volunteering could make a difference.

- **Volunteers** – the toolkit helps gather data from volunteers on the difference volunteering makes to them personally, including the development of confidence and transferable skills.
- **Your organisation** – the views of staff and trustees can provide useful information on the difference volunteering makes to your organisation, including the connection you have with the community and the economic value of volunteers.
- **The users/beneficiaries** – those who benefit directly from volunteering will depend on your organisation. This might include direct service users and other beneficiaries such as families or, in the case of environmental or conservation volunteering, the environment.
- **The wider community** – the toolkit can help to gather the views of local residents and key individuals in the local community, such as councillors or those working with local community groups.



Identifying how volunteering makes a difference

Volunteering can make a difference to these groups in different ways. There is no single way of categorising them but this toolkit is organised around one approach: making distinctions between four different types of 'capital'. 'Capital' is used here to mean a 'stock' of something that is useful and can be created or built up over time.

- **Human capital** – people's knowledge, skills and health. This could include understanding of an issue, an ability to do new things, increased confidence and reduced stress levels.
- **Economic capital** – benefits or costs with a financial value, for example, income that volunteers may get in the future because of their experience or cost savings to the community.
- **Social capital** – more cooperative relationships between people, for example new friendships developed between volunteers.
- **Cultural capital** – a sense of one's own identity and understanding of others' identity, for example, feelings of belonging to a group, engaging in leisure activities and an increased understanding of other people's points of view.

Toolkit users will find the matrix on page 13 helpful for identifying and prioritising the impacts they want to focus on. All the methods within this toolkit have been designed to reflect these four different types of capital.

	Human capital *People's knowledge, skills and health*	Economic capital *Benefits or costs with a financial value*	Social capital *More cooperative relationships between people*	Cultural capital *A sense of one's own identity and understanding of others' identity*
Volunteers	• Increased personal development, such as growth in confidence and self-esteem • Increased transferable skills, such as IT, public speaking and teamwork • Improved health and wellbeing	• Increased access to training for which they would otherwise have to pay • Increased employment prospects and future earning power • Increased costs (non-repayment of expenses)	• New friendships, contacts and networks • Greater involvement in local activities • Enhanced sense of trust in others and greater frequency of working with others to solve problems	• Better understanding of one's own identity • Increased expression of one's own values through cultural and leisure activities • Greater appreciation of others' cultures and interests
Organisations	• Increased personal development and skills of staff • Enhanced work of paid staff/ hindered work of paid staff • Increased level of skills in the organisation	• Increase in financial value/ increased costs to the organisation of involving volunteers • Greater income for the organisation • Job creation/decrease in paid jobs	• More volunteers and staff attracted to the organisation • Greater connection with the community • Enhanced reputation of organisation	• Services are more reflective of cultural diversity within community • Greater diversity of organisation
Beneficiaries	• Increased personal development (confidence, self-esteem) • Increased skills • Improved physical and mental health • Greater sense of wellbeing among beneficiaries	• Increased access to services that they would otherwise have to buy • Increased employability • Improved financial situation for beneficiaries through services and signposting provided	• New friendships, contacts and networks • Enhanced trust of others and organisations • Greater involvement in local activities, groups or clubs	• Greater sense of belonging to a group and taking part in culture and expressing values • Increased understanding of others' cultures and values • Increased opportunities to practise or express faith
Community	• People's personal development • Improved skills and more productive workforce • Greater health and wellbeing of citizens	• Enhanced value for money in public services • Increased employment • Reduced anti-social behaviour	• Increased social networks • Enhanced trust and participation • More organisations working together	• Richer cultural life • Greater expression of individual identities and tolerance of others

Tools to assess the difference that volunteering makes

The downloadable resource pack (see page 7 for more information) contains a series of downloadable and adaptable tools to help you assess the difference that volunteering makes to the different groups: volunteers, your organisation, users/beneficiaries and the wider community.

These include:

- core questionnaires for a basic assessment
- supplementary questionnaires for a more detailed assessment
- topic guides for interviews and focus groups
- volunteer diary template
- volunteer investment and value audit tool.

These tools can be tailored to make them as useful as possible for you. Some of the indicators and questions may not be relevant to your organisation – these can be left out.

The supplementary questionnaires include a wide range of potential questions; you will need to exclude the ones that are less useful. You may want to add different questions to reflect your organisation's work and needs.

The tools include questions on the outcomes and impact of volunteering; these are structured around the four types of capital. However, to develop a full picture of how the work of your volunteer programme makes that difference, you also need to report on the outputs (the products or services that the programme or project delivers). As well as counting what is delivered, an important part of this is capturing people's experiences of your programme or service. For volunteers, this might be measuring levels of satisfaction with their training and support. For your beneficiaries, you may want to assess how satisfied they are with the services provided by volunteers. People who have a positive experience of a service are more likely to access it again, increasing uptake of outputs and, therefore, increasing outcomes and impact.

The tools therefore include further questions focused on people's experiences of volunteering and satisfaction with the services provided by volunteers.

At the end of each questionnaire, there are also 'about you' questions that ask respondents for some personal details including their age and ethnic group. The core questionnaires include core 'about you' questions, while the supplementary questionnaires include additional personal questions, for example about religion. All of these questionnaires are designed for you to pick and choose the questions you want to use. If you plan to use your impact assessment alongside the other records you keep for registering or monitoring volunteers, you should ensure the categories you use are the same.

Using the questionnaires

The core questionnaires ask a lead question for each type of capital, with three corresponding elements (a, b and c). The following diagrams set this out. The following example shows the questions asked on human capital for the core volunteer questionnaire.

The supplementary questionnaire asks further questions around each of the key indicators (personal development, skills and general health).

Using the traffic light system

The structure of the core questionnaires allows a scoring system using 'traffic lights', which can signal areas requiring improvement or further research.

The lead questions relating to each of the four types of capital all have their answers scaled A–F to allow straightforward scoring. If the answers to a question are:

- mostly A and B, award it a green light (very good/a strong effect)
- mostly C and F, award it an amber light (quite good/a moderate effect)
- mostly D and E, award it a red light (poor/little or no effect).

For further guidance on using the traffic light scoring system see page 41.

Example: Core volunteer questionnaire (human capital questions)

Listed below are some of the ways that people gain personally from being a volunteer. Have any of the following increased or decreased for you? Please tick the box that applies to you.

	A Increased greatly	B Increased	C Stayed the same	D Decreased	E Decreased greatly	F Not relevant
a **My personal development** (eg confidence, self-esteem, self-management)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b **My skills** (eg from teamwork through to computer skills)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c **My general health and wellbeing**	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Volunteers	Indicator	Indicator	Indicator
Human capital	Confidence **a)**	Skills **b)**	Health and wellbeing **c)**
Economic capital	Training value **a)**	Employability **b)**	Costs **c)**
Social capital	Networks **a)**	Trust **b)**	Participation **c)**
Cultural capital	Group/ethnic identity **a)**	Religious faith **b)**	Cultural life **c)**

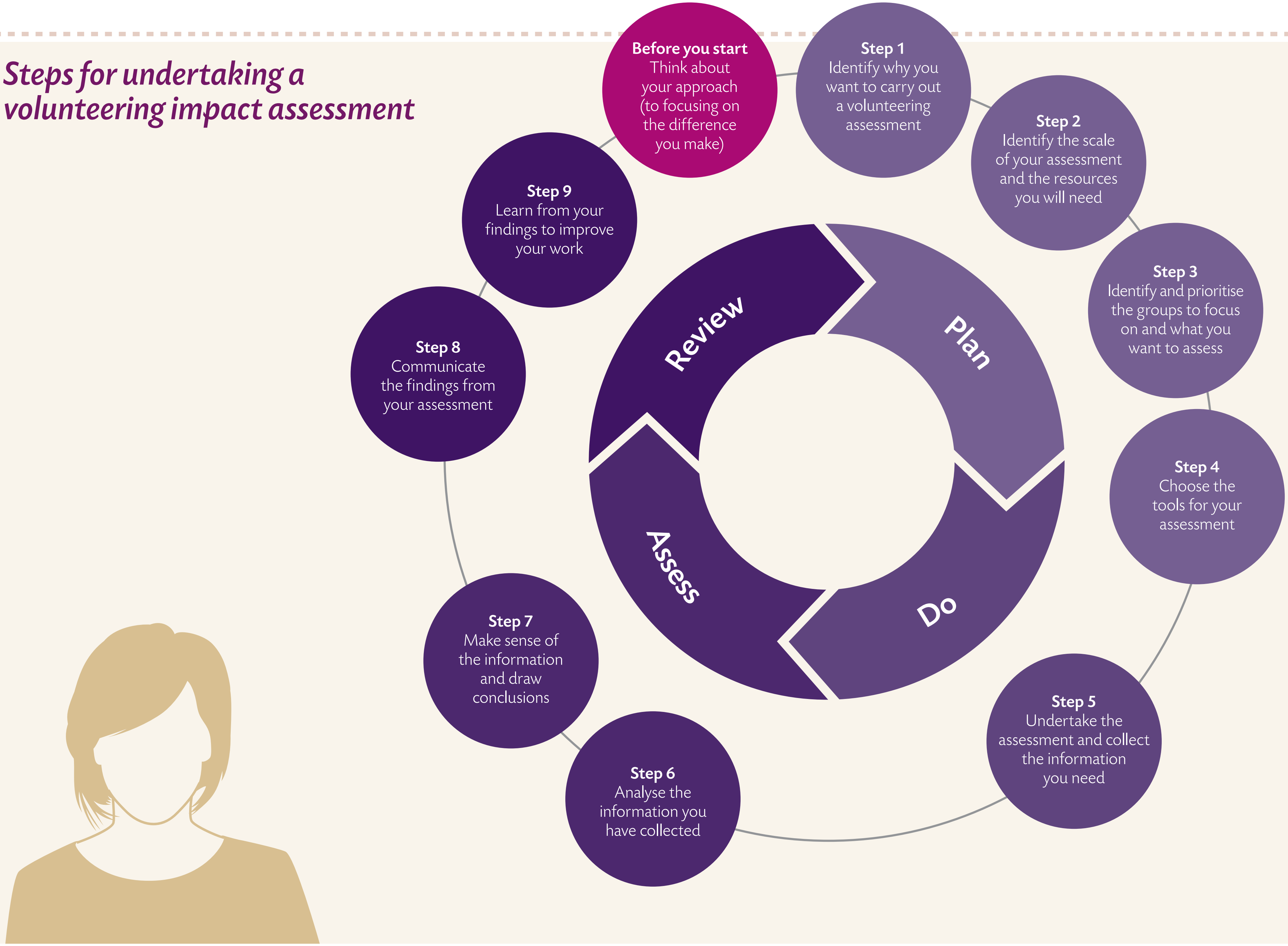
Organisation	Indicator	Indicator	Indicator
Human capital	Staff development **a)**	Diversity **b)**	Organisational development **c)**
Economic capital	Volunteer value **a)**	Income raised **b)**	Job creation **c)**
Social capital	Staff retention **a)**	Volunteer retention **b)**	Reputation **c)**
Cultural capital	Diversity **a)**	Appropriate services **b)**	Organisational culture **c)**

Beneficiaries/users	Indicator	Indicator	Indicator
Human capital	Personal development **a)**	Skills **b)**	Health and wellbeing **c)**
Economic capital	Services value **a)**	Employability **b)**	Financial stability **c)**
Social capital	Networks **a)**	Trust **b)**	Participation **c)**
Cultural capital	Group/ethnic identity **a)**	Understanding others **b)**	Cultural life **c)**

Community	Indicator	Indicator	Indicator
Human capital	Personal development of community **a)**	Skills **b)**	Health and wellbeing **c)**
Economic capital	Services value **a)**	Employment/wealth **b)**	Financial savings **c)**
Social capital	Networks **a)**	Trust **b)**	Participation **c)**
Cultural capital	Group/ethnic identity **a)**	Religious faith **b)**	Cultural life **c)**

Steps for undertaking a volunteering impact assessment

Steps for undertaking a volunteering impact assessment



Before you start

It is worth spending some time considering broadly how people in your organisation feel about focusing on the difference you make. Is it something that is embedded in the practice of the organisation? Is it quite new? Are staff and volunteers enthusiastic about assessing impact and outcomes or are they a little reluctant?

Focusing on impact and outcomes and putting resources towards it can involve some culture change. It might be a new way of thinking for some staff and volunteers who are more used to focusing on the products and services that are delivered. Some might not know much about impact or outcomes or why it is important to focus on them, so they may need some information from you to get involved in the process. Alternatively, they might be very supportive but have unrealistic expectations about the kind of evidence you will produce.

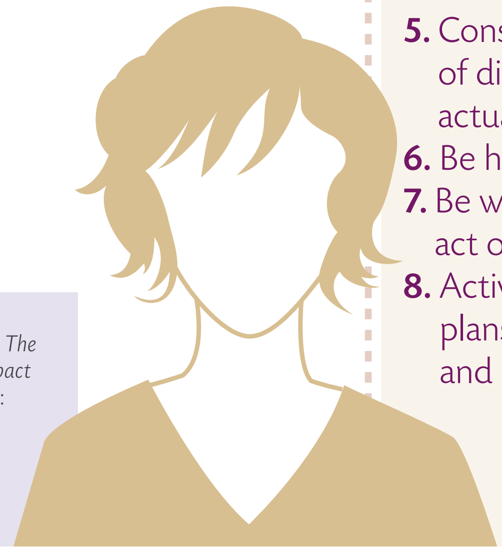
It is also useful to spend some time thinking about what values are important to you and your organisation in focusing on your impact and how they will affect how you do things.

The Code of Good Impact Practice[2] provides a set of principles that you can use when focusing on the difference you make. These principles can be applied to all of the steps in the diagram on page 17. The Code also highlights the need for organisations to prioritise impact and keep it at the heart of plans, strategies and activities.

For further guidance on how your organisation can improve the way it thinks about, plans for and assesses its impact, see the resource pack.

The Code of Good Impact Practice: *Eight principles*

1. Take responsibility for impact and encourage others to do so.
2. Focus on purpose.
3. Involve others in your impact practice.
4. Apply proportionate and appropriate methods and resources.
5. Consider the full range of difference you actually make.
6. Be honest and open.
7. Be willing to change and act on what you find.
8. Actively share your impact plans, methods, findings and learning.



Reference:
2 NCVO (2013) *The Code of Good Impact Practice*. London: NCVO.

Step 1

Identify why you want to carry out a volunteering impact assessment

When planning your impact assessment it is important to consider and keep in mind the following questions.

What is the purpose of your organisation/programme?

Identifying the purpose of your organisation or programme and the impact you want to have will help you better understand what to measure for your impact assessment. Having a clear picture of the difference you aim to make and the work you will do to achieve it is a good thing in itself. It can help your staff and volunteers to see what they can achieve and understand where their work fits in. This makes it easier for them to know what work to prioritise, as well as to feel motivated by the change they can create. Developing a Theory of Change or Planning Triangle (see resource pack) can help you identify the outcomes you want to achieve and how your work can help deliver these. This can be used as a framework for your volunteering impact assessment.

You may find it useful to refer to organisational or programme strategies or plans and involve staff and volunteers in helping to identify the desired outcomes for the programme.

Why do you want to assess the difference that volunteering makes?

You might be undertaking a volunteering assessment for a variety of reasons – perhaps to find out what's working well and what can be improved and to provide evidence to funders. You need to be clear from the start about why you are carrying it out, as this will affect the kind of approach you take and how you use the results.

Who is the assessment for?

You should also think about who the audience is for your assessment. For example, it could be for your funders, the manager of the volunteering programme or even the volunteers themselves. Your audience will affect the scale of the project, the tools you choose and how you present your findings. Pay attention to the terms used by your primary audience, particularly if this is an existing or potential funder.

Planning the assessment

Toolkit in practice 2

Guide Dogs for the Blind used the toolkit to help it assess the difference volunteering makes to its volunteers, staff and clients.

Planning the assessment and identifying how it could contribute to the work of the organisation was identified as a key priority, so Guide Dogs asked for help from two skilled volunteer statisticians from the Scottish government who worked closely with the executive board to help identify the focus of the assessment and how it could inform their planning, strategy and decision making. Ensuring that the executive board supported and were fully involved in the impact assessment process was seen as key.

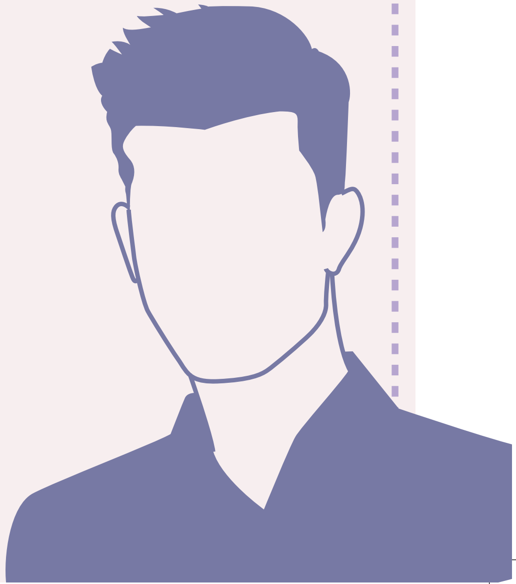
These discussions led to the identification of three research goals:

1. To better understand how volunteering makes a difference to Guide Dogs.

2. To identify what works well and how we can better manage and involve our volunteers, making best use of our people resource.

- Measure the degree to which expectations of staff and volunteers are currently met, including volunteer motivations.
- Establish the key drivers and barriers for wider engagement of volunteers in delivering the needs of the organisation

3. Provide the ability to showcase volunteering in Guide Dogs externally.



Step 2

Identify the scale of your assessment and the resources you will need

Assessments vary in scale, and so will the resources required. Once you are clear about why you want to carry out the assessment, you can consider the scale of it.

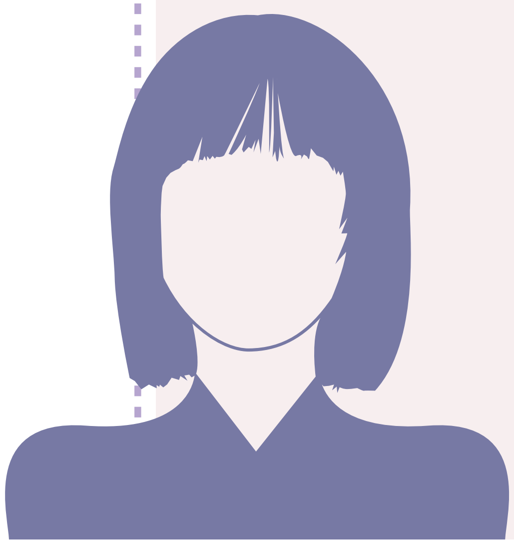
What information do you need?

You should only plan to collect information that is necessary and relevant. Being clear about the intended outcomes for your programme will be helpful here. Your impact assessment should be proportionate; don't spend more time carrying out the assessment than actually delivering your volunteering programme. Reasonable evidence of impact is enough; it is nearly impossible to get absolute proof. It is also sufficient to say that you contributed to an outcome and to acknowledge other factors that you think have played a part. You should try to make use of existing data and information where available and useful.

Managing resources

Toolkit in practice 3

The social care and health department of the City of Edinburgh Council has used the *Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit* twice to examine volunteering within adult services.



The assessments have been driven by the department's volunteer coordinator and development officer, Rachel, and managed on a small budget over a short time period.

The key resource in both assessments was the staff time involved; Rachel invested approximately eight days for both assessments. Other costs – mainly printing and postage – were minimal. A window of just six days was available to carry out and write up the first part of the assessment, but the opportunity provided the impetus to 'test out' the toolkit. Despite these pressures, the study produced a large amount of useful information.

What resources do you have?

- **Time** – how much time can you realistically dedicate to your volunteering assessment? Do you have any particular deadlines to work towards? Do you need to inform planning or decisions being made about the programme or service?
- **Staff** – which staff members could you involve and what skills can they offer? Could you involve volunteers or students recruited through a local university or further education college (bearing in mind that they may need support, which might cost money)?
- **Money** – what costs might be incurred? For example, printing questionnaires, room hire for focus groups, refreshments and travel expenses for participants.
- **Facilities and equipment** – what specific resources might you need? For example, a digital recorder to record interviews or focus groups.

Who should be involved?

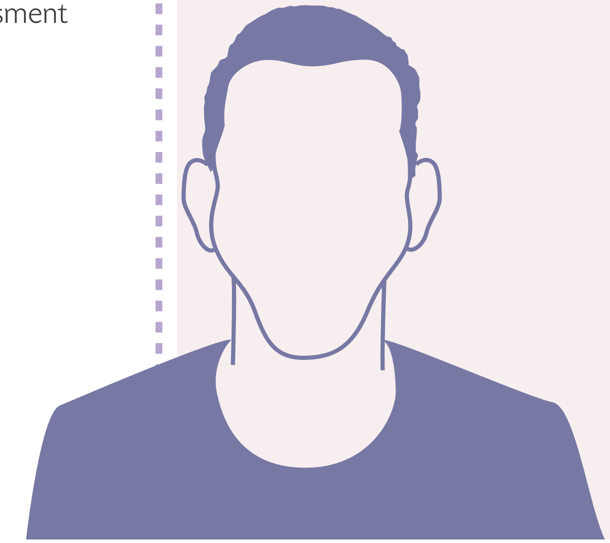
You should keep senior management and/or trustees involved and informed about your assessment. It is important that they support the assessment work you are doing and that they will use the findings to make changes and improvements if necessary. While it is useful to have one person leading your assessment work, you may find it helpful to have a small working group made up of a mix of staff members, volunteers, beneficiaries and stakeholders, to provide feedback on how you are planning to carry out the assessment. Some organisations have worked with skilled volunteers to help them with different elements of their impact assessment (see resource pack).

Setting up a project advisory group

Toolkit in practice 4

Imperial Volunteer Centre (IVC), part of Imperial College's main outreach office, carried out an impact assessment using the toolkit.

To guide the assessment, an internal steering committee was set up. This small group was chaired by IVC's manager and included members such as the head of the careers services, the general manager of the students' union and a senior lecturer. The project was also supported by an academic advisory board consisting of two senior academics who provided insight into data collection, analysis and reporting.



Step 3

Identify and prioritise the groups to focus on and what you want to assess

Having got an idea of the scale of your assessment, you need to be clear about exactly what you want to focus on. Go back to the desired outcomes for your organisation/programme that you identified earlier to help you focus on the key areas of interest.

Which groups do you want to focus on?

Think about the groups and stakeholders that your volunteering programme makes a difference to. The tools provided as part of this guide focus on volunteers, your organisation, your beneficiaries/service users and the wider community. Other 'stakeholders' might also be relevant for your assessment, such as the 'environment' in the case of conservation organisations. You may want to identify which group is a particular priority or decide to focus on one or two stakeholders for your first assessment.

Which differences do you want to assess?

The next step is to identify which differences you want to assess. These may be directly linked to your programme or project aims, but may also include some additional differences that volunteering has made. For example, if you are running a volunteering programme at a museum and one of the differences you want to see is an improved experience for visitors, this might be one of the differences you want to focus on in the assessment.

When describing the impact you want to have, you should focus on using words of 'change', for example: improve, increase, reduce, more, less, higher or lower.

The matrix on page 13 is a helpful way of organising the differences you could look at. These are just examples; not every one will be relevant for every volunteering programme or project and there may be others that are not mentioned. Some differences could be expressed in terms of more than one type of capital. A blank matrix is available as part of the resource pack, which can help you organise your thoughts and prioritise what you want to focus on. The matrix is a good starting point for a discussion session with colleagues in your organisation.

Once you have completed your matrix, you need to decide which differences you want to concentrate on. It could be everything, but perhaps it will concentrate on particular groups or particular types of capital; this depends on why you are doing the assessment and who the audience is (see Step 1 on page 19). Consider completing the assessment in stages – you could do one part now and other parts later, depending on your organisational needs.

Step 4

Choose the tools for your assessment

You should now have a clear idea about what you want to focus on and what you want to find out.

You now need to think about the following issues.
- Is there any existing information I can use?
- Do I need to collect new information? If so, from whom?
- What method will be most appropriate for getting new information?

Is there any existing information I can use?

There is likely to be information already available that you can use in your assessment. You might have internal systems in place that collect some of the information, but you need to make sure it is relevant for your assessment. Data might also be available externally, having been collated by other bodies or organisations.

Internal data

Information held by your organisation can be useful in a number of ways. Even if this is not systematically recorded, there are usually staff members who have the necessary information or can make good estimates. Some examples are listed here.

- Volunteer records or a volunteer database can be used to monitor the characteristics of the volunteers, the training given, the amount of hours contributed and major volunteer roles.
- Internal reporting might give an idea of the quantity and nature of services provided.
- Staffing records and systems may provide data on diversity of the workforce or provide some clues about the effects of volunteers on staff development and retention.
- Volunteer surveys can provide useful information on experiences and levels of satisfaction with volunteering. The results from these surveys might show areas that need to be followed up or further measured.

External data

Data collected by other agencies can be used to identify outcomes, particularly at the community level.

For example, if your organisation operates within a defined geographical area, there may be national or local data that shows changes in indicators related to the aims and work of the organisation, such as crime levels, economic activity, housing turnover, health status and health service usage.

Be aware that the data may have been collected for a different purpose, so make sure it is suitable for your assessment. For example, if you are considering whether your volunteering programme has encouraged young people to become more involved in community activities, you may find some statistics that cover young people. However, you would need to check whether their definition of young people is the same as yours; perhaps your programme targets 16–18 year olds whereas the statistics cover the 16–25 age group, making them unsuitable for comparison.

Do I need to collect new information? If so, from whom?

Think about who has the information you need. If you want to explore the difference that volunteers make to improving the quality of life of the beneficiaries of a service, you will probably need to ask them what they think. Or, if you want to assess the impact on the community, you may need to think about which organisations could supply this.

However, it might not be possible to ask all volunteers or beneficiaries their views, so you may need to ask a 'sample.' This means selecting a proportion of all volunteers or beneficiaries who are in some way representative of all of them.

Sampling might be random, for example, selecting every fifth or tenth name on a database/mailing list or electoral register (eg for residents). Alternatively, quota sampling might be useful, where a certain number of people are selected from different groups.

For example, if 60% of your volunteers are female and you only want to collect information from 100 volunteers, then you would select 60 women and 40 men. Likewise, if 50% of your beneficiaries are under 25 years old, make sure that half of your sample is under 25 years. You will need to consider which distinctions are most relevant for your assessment – it could be family circumstances, service type or anything you think is important to get a balanced representation in your sample.

Organisations can also be sampled. If volunteering in your organisation affects more organisations than you can cover, you can select a representative sample.

Samples may be 'boosted' to ensure enough people of a certain group or characteristic are included in the assessment. This will enable you to understand this group better through your analysis.

For example, if a community has a small population of a particular ethnic group and random sampling would select only a few respondents from that group, you can increase the number in that category to ensure a larger number of responses but then take that into account when reporting your findings. There are links to further reading about sampling in the resource pack.

What method will be most appropriate for getting new information?

There are two main approaches to assessment – quantitative and qualitative research.

Many assessments use a combination of the two.

- Quantitative research deals with numerical information that can be statistically analysed. This includes survey findings, numerical datasets, records of how many volunteers contribute and for how long, their age, gender, origins etc, or the number of outputs produced – any aspect that can be counted. Quantitative data usually answers the questions: How many? When? Where? How often?
- Qualitative research deals with information that cannot be quantified, such as text and spoken words. This could take the form of a transcript of an interview or focus group, a volunteer diary or a newspaper report. Qualitative data covers views, attitudes and experiences and is analysed by drawing out key themes. It usually seeks to answer the questions: Why? What? How?

Think about the following issues when choosing your assessment tools.

- **What exactly do you want to know?** If you need in-depth information from volunteers about how they have personally developed through volunteering, it will be useful to use a qualitative research method, such as a focus group.
- **Who is the assessment for?** If you need statistics to show funders, you will need to include a quantitative method in your assessment, such as a questionnaire survey of volunteers.
- **What methods are appropriate for specific groups of people?** Think carefully about who you are looking to involve in the research and how best to collect information from them. They may have problems reading or learning difficulties that would make the use of a survey inappropriate, or they may find it more enjoyable to participate through methods such as diaries or focus groups.
- **Who will conduct the assessment?** Consider the implications of your choice of assessor. For example, will there be any bias if the volunteer coordinator is asking volunteers whether they think they have been well managed or not? Where possible, try and find more neutral people to collect such information.
- **What are the ethical issues?** The use of some methods will have ethical considerations, particularly if they involve potentially vulnerable individuals such as children or people with mental health conditions. The key things to bear in mind are whether all respondents have given full consent, agreeing to take part with full knowledge of what the assessment is about and how it will be used. You will need to consider whether it is necessary to ensure anonymity when reporting on the assessment – ie not revealing the identity of someone whose words you use in reports or presentations. *Anonymity* is particularly important when respondents are being encouraged to criticise something or talk about personal issues. Another approach is to promise, and maintain, *confidentiality*, meaning that the data will only be available to a very limited set of named individuals. Finally, there is a need to ensure you comply with the Data Protection Act or your equivalent procedure that provides clear guidelines on how to store information. You may not need to collect any personal details in the assessment, but if you do, you must ensure that the information is kept securely.
- **How easy or difficult will it be to collect and analyse information?** Make sure you allocate enough time to these aspects. Analysing information could take longer than expected if you have lots of data inputting to do.

There are a wide range of methods you can use for your volunteering assessments. As well as using traditional methods, such as focus groups or questionnaire-based surveys, you could explore more innovative methods such as participatory activities, for example, inviting respondents to 'map' an experience or social relationships using pictures as well as words. Undertaking longer 'biographical interviews' can also be useful as they allow people to talk more about their lives and capture differences that volunteering has made that you might not anticipate. Further information about such methods can be found in the resource pack.

Whatever method you use, the next step is to apply it to your assessment, developing a 'tool' that you will use to collect the information you require. The resource pack includes customisable tools for the most popular ways of collecting information, which are:

- questionnaire surveys
- one-to-one interviews
- focus (discussion) groups
- diaries.

Questionnaire surveys

Questionnaires collect information from a large number of people and are normally carried out online, by post, by telephone, by email, through social media or through face-to-face interview. Most of the questions will be 'closed', which means they have predetermined responses to choose from and can be statistically analysed (eg 56% said no and 44% said yes). The answers to these questions provide quantitative data.

Open-ended questions do not have set responses, but invite more detailed description (eg 'How has volunteering improved your health?'). These answers are classified and summarised to describe the main patterns in respondents' views or experiences. Quotes from open-ended responses are often used to illustrate patterns and themes. The answers to these questions provide qualitative data.

Should I use a questionnaire survey?

Pros	Cons
• Can collect a relatively large amount of specific information in a short time. • Closed questions allow statistical analysis. • Online survey instruments provide a cheap and easy way of designing surveys and analysing data. • Allows anonymity so respondents might be more honest.	• Allows limited exploration of attitudes and views. • Can experience low response rates. • Some types of survey might not be appropriate to use with some individuals, for example those with low levels of literacy. • Less useful with small numbers of individuals. • Attitudes and beliefs might not be reported accurately by individuals.

One-to-one interviews

One-to-one interviews can be held face to face or over the telephone. They are more time consuming than surveys but are better suited to gathering more detailed qualitative information from individuals.

Interviews can be structured in different ways. You might have a set list of questions that you use with every person you interview, or you might just have a list of topics and change how you ask about them in each interview.

One-to-one interviews can be used on their own or to supplement a survey, usually to get more detail on particular issues. They can also inform the design of a survey, since the responses given in the interview can indicate some of the issues you may need to explore. They also enable you to collect personal experiences, stories and anecdotes, which can help bring your findings to life.

Should I use a one-to-one interview?

Pros	Cons
• Useful for exploring people's attitudes, views and beliefs in more detail. • You can easily follow up interesting things mentioned in the interview, probing for more detail or further explanation of what they mean. • A good way of identifying unexpected outcomes of volunteering projects and programmes.	• Can be time consuming to set up, undertake and analyse. • Collects information from fewer people. • Not suitable for some individuals who might prefer the anonymity of a survey or the interactions in a group discussion.

Focus groups

Focus groups or group discussions are popular in qualitative research, because they can help collect different people's attitudes and views at the same time. Eight to ten people is a good number for a focus group, although involving more or fewer can also work.

The discussions at a focus group are guided by specific topics decided in advance and introduced by a facilitator who asks the questions.

Focus groups can be used on their own or to help inform the design of a survey. They can also supplement a survey to obtain more detail on aspects you are particularly interested in, or be used to present your survey findings and see if participants agree with them or have ideas about reasons, problems, solutions, ways forward, priorities for action and so on.

Should I use a focus group?

Pros	Cons
• A good way to collect in-depth information from different people. • The group dynamics may produce interesting findings and ideas, which can be further explored. • A useful way to involve those who are less likely or able to respond to surveys or get involved in interviews. • Enjoyable for participants and a good way for people to meet each other.	• Discussions may go 'off point', so a good facilitator will be needed to make sure conversations are relevant and that everyone is able to contribute. • A limited number of topics can be discussed within the time available.

Diaries

Diaries are useful for collecting in-depth views and reflections from individuals. For example, volunteers could be asked to reflect on their volunteering experiences over a period of time by recording their thoughts in a diary, reflective journal or blog. Diaries might be written or recorded as audio or a video.

Diaries might be unstructured, but it is a good idea to have a short list of topics or questions for participants to follow. These will help the respondents to know what they need to do and can help you when it comes to organising the information you collect from them.

Should I use a diary?

Pros	Cons
• Allows detailed information to be collected from individuals about their experiences and views. • Allows a degree of flexibility and depth in reporting, which might not be possible with a survey. • Could be used to identify key issues for interviews or focus groups. • Video diaries could be a creative way to present the findings from your assessment.	• Reliant on individuals to complete the diary and to respond to questions in an honest way. • Some respondents may find it awkward to record their thoughts knowing that someone will read or listen to them later. • Potentially time consuming to analyse the data.

Case studies

Case studies are a more detailed way to focus on a particular subject, individual or group. They can be very in depth and time intensive, but can also be as simple as one story or part of one interview that illustrates and breathes life into your general findings and conclusions. Case studies might incorporate a range of different methods including in-depth interviews, diaries, observations and photographs.

Examples of how case studies could be used include the following.

- **Volunteers** – concentrating on a small group of volunteers who have gained qualifications or an in-depth exploration with two or three volunteers about the difference volunteering has made to them.
- **Beneficiaries** – an exploration of a small group of those who have increased their social contacts or improved their health as a result of a volunteering project.
- **Activities** – a focus on a specific volunteering activity, such as mentoring, where different groups are involved including volunteers, beneficiaries and partners.

Should I use a case study?

Pros	Cons
• Allows more detailed exploration of topics and issues. • Uses a combination of techniques to bring depth to your assessment. • An interesting way to present your findings. • Can be useful as a standalone output from your assessment.	• Findings cannot be generalised, as case studies focus on one subject or group. • Can be time intensive.

Choosing the methods

Other techniques and methods

A number of other methods can also be used to collect data for a volunteering assessment, including the following.

- Assessments of individuals' development, progress or 'distance travelled' during the course of a project or programme, for example, recording how the attitudes or behaviours of volunteers have changed.
- Observations can help explore the way individuals behave in their 'natural' setting. For example, volunteers could be observed, to understand how they interact with the beneficiaries they are working with and the ways they help them.
- Photographs can be collected over the duration of a project and a storyboard created to illustrate the progress and the difference it has made.
- Videos are a good way of recording the difference volunteers make, particularly when it involves individuals being asked to reflect on how volunteering has affected them.
- Participatory mapping to explore social relationships, for example, between volunteers and beneficiaries, using mind maps and mapping social networks.
- Newspaper articles and letters that illustrate the difference volunteering has made can be collected and collated.

Toolkit in practice 5

Guide Dogs for the Blind wanted to ensure that all 12,500 of its volunteers had the opportunity to feed into the volunteering impact assessment.

It developed three different formats for the survey: an online survey using SurveyMonkey (a website that can be used to develop surveys and analyse the results), a paper survey sent through the post and a telephone survey. Many of Guide Dogs' volunteers are visually impaired so offering the survey over the phone was an important part of the assessment.

The findings were similar across the different methods, however the response rates did vary. The online survey achieved a 20% response rate compared with 8% for the postal survey.

Using the learning from this assessment, Guide Dogs has said it would like to develop two options next time – a shorter survey to increase response rates on key questions and a longer version for those wanting to give more detail – and will encourage local teams to promote the survey amongst their volunteers.

Tools provided in the resource pack

The downloadable resource pack that accompanies this toolkit includes a series of tools for the most common assessment methods, which can be adapted for use in your own organisation.

Tools	How can they be used?
Core questionnaires	
Samples of core questionnaires are provided for: • volunteers • staff • beneficiaries • community representatives • community residents.	• For a basic assessment. • To get primarily quantitative data. • Includes three multiple-choice questions for each type of capital. • Includes open questions for further exploration of issues. • Can be used with the traffic light scoring system.
Supplementary questionnaires	
Samples of supplementary questionnaires are provided for: • volunteers • staff • beneficiaries • community representatives • community residents.	• For a more in-depth assessment. • To gather primarily quantitative data. • Includes a large number of questions for each type of capital for the toolkit user to choose from. • Includes open questions for further exploration of issues.
Interview and focus group topic guide	
Samples of topic guides are provided for: • volunteers • staff • community representatives.	• For interviews or group discussions to get more detail on interesting issues. • To gather qualitative information.
Volunteering Investment and Value (VIVA) tool for volunteer managers	
	• To undertake a volunteer investment value audit (the value of volunteers' time against investment). • To gather quantitative information.
Diary template for volunteers	
	• To gather information from volunteers about their volunteering experiences. Includes a section for volunteers to reflect on what they have personally gained and learnt.

Fine tuning the tools

It is good practice to test out, or 'pilot', whatever tool you are planning to use on a few people and see how well it works, making changes if needed, for example if some questions are not clear or the questionnaire takes too long.

The questionnaires in this toolkit have already been tested but you are likely to make changes as you customise them and it is well worth testing them yourself. In the resource pack there are questionnaires that have been adapted for specific organisations.

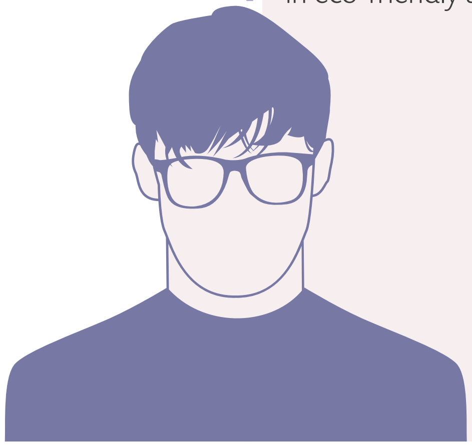
Adapting questionnaires 1

Toolkit in practice 6a

Butterfly Conservation Scotland undertook an impact assessment to gain a broader understanding of volunteers' experiences and the benefits received by individuals and user groups.

The organisation had five months to complete its assessment and the project leader decided to use just the core questionnaire with volunteers, staff members and user groups who had worked with the volunteers.

The core questionnaires required little amendment, apart from the section dealing with the cultural impact of volunteering, which was felt to have limited relevance to environmental organisations. The assessment team changed these to make them more relevant by adding questions about the way volunteering had affected awareness of environmental issues and participation in eco-friendly activities.

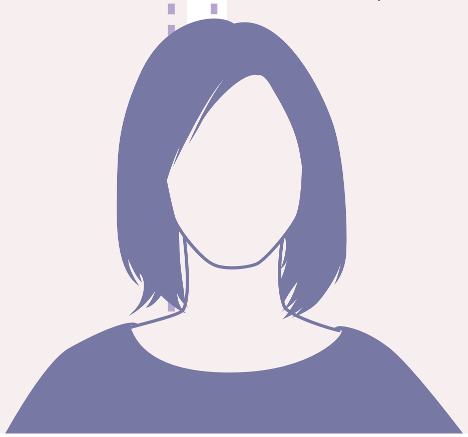


Adapting questionnaires 2

Toolkit in practice 6b

Latin American Women's Rights Service used core questionnaires with staff and volunteers. Administering the questionnaire to the staff group was quite straightforward and no changes were made to the version in the toolkit.

The volunteers' questionnaire was a little more complicated as it had to be translated into Spanish. The volunteer coordinator did this after first checking the content and wording with some of the volunteers. Some minor changes were made to the question on cultural identity to take into account the fact that the volunteers were from a very specific cultural background. For example, a question about the impact of volunteering on religious practice and faith was taken out and a question about appreciation of people from other cultures replaced it.



Volunteer Investment and Value Audit

Toolkit in practice 7

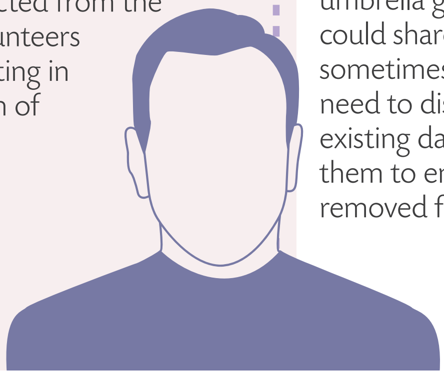
Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) led an assessment of the Robins Ward Volunteer Scheme in the North Wales Health Trust (Central) hospitals.

The main aim of the evaluation was to provide an overview of the scheme, including an impact assessment in Glan Clwyd Hospital and community hospitals in the Central area of Denbighshire and Conwy.

One element of the assessment focused on economic capital and attempted to put an economic value on the contribution of volunteers to the local community.

Using the Volunteer Investment and Value Audit tool, volunteers were found to contribute an average of four hours per volunteer per week, totalling 35,984 hours per year. This figure was then multiplied by the adult minimum wage to produce a total value of £208,707.

The Robins scheme is supported by staff time and a modest budget. This provides induction, training, uniforms and reimbursement of expenses. The total estimated cost to the trust is £62,510. These costs were then subtracted from the total value of volunteers (£208,707), resulting in a net contribution of £146,197.



Step 5

Undertake the assessment and collect the information you need

When undertaking your volunteering impact assessment, there are a number of issues to think about, depending on the methods you have chosen.

Questionnaire surveys

Who are you going to send it to?

In Step 3 you will have considered what kind of sample you want to send the questionnaire to. Now you need to consider how you will collect the necessary contact details for distribution. This could be through a database or mailing list of volunteers or beneficiaries that you already have. If you don't have one, maybe other local organisations or umbrella groups or government bodies could share theirs with you, although sometimes there are restrictions that you need to discuss with them. If combining existing databases, it is worth 'cleaning' them to ensure that duplicates are removed from the final list.

What format will be best?

Think about whether a postal, online, email, telephone or face-to-face survey is most suitable for those you want to involve in the assessment. Online questionnaires have become popular, with many websites providing services that make it very easy and cheap; there are suggestions for these in the resource pack. However, you will need to consider whether those you want to send the survey to have access to computers and email and are more or less likely to respond in this way.

Administering surveys

How will you get the survey right?

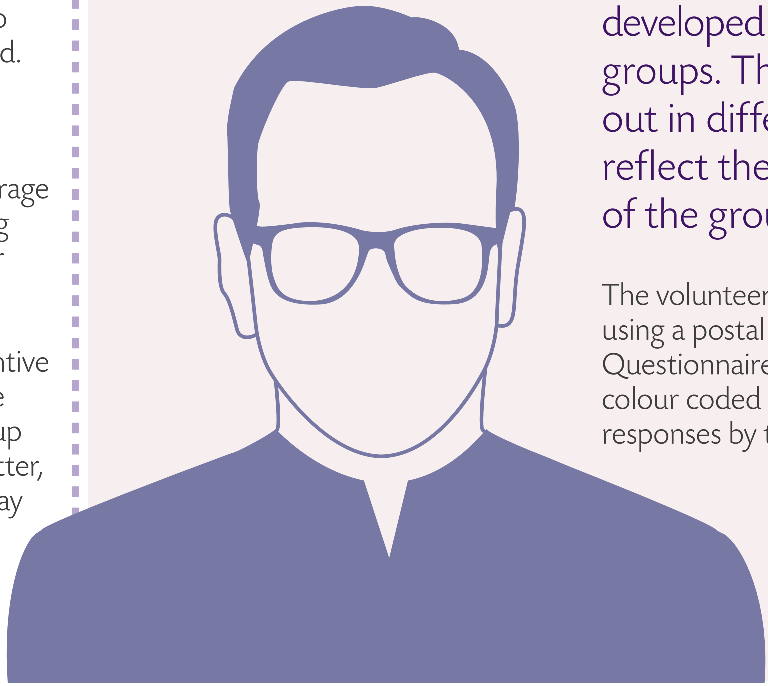
The wording of the survey is important. Make sure the language is simple and the questions are easy to understand. Ensure the survey is not too long and is designed in a way that makes it easy to complete. It is a good idea to include your contact details in case respondents want to ask any questions. Don't forget to explain what the questionnaire is for and how you will use the findings. Include a deadline for the return of questionnaires. Test out the survey with a few members of your intended audience before you use it to see if the questions need to be clarified.

How will you get people to respond?

If your survey is easy to understand and looks easy to fill in, this will encourage a higher response rate. If you are doing a postal questionnaire, enclose a cover letter to explain the purpose of the assessment, as well as a stamped addressed envelope. Offering an incentive to complete the survey, such as a prize draw, can be effective. Always follow up your questionnaire with a reminder letter, email or phone call, which is a good way of getting a higher response rate.

Toolkit in practice 8

The assessment of the impact of the Robins Ward Volunteer Scheme in the North Wales Health Trust (Central) hospitals, led by Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) used questionnaires developed for four stakeholder groups. They were carried out in different ways to reflect the different needs of the groups.



The volunteer survey was conducted using a postal paper survey. Questionnaires were anonymous but colour coded to enable grouping of responses by type of volunteer.

In total, 202 questionnaires were sent out and 89 questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 44%.

Paper questionnaires in English with a Freepost envelope were sent to targeted ward staff and clinicians by internal mail. A free prize draw to win a shopping voucher was advertised with the covering letter to staff as an incentive to complete the questionnaire, which proved to be effective: 98 questionnaires were returned, giving a 38% response rate.

Local residents' views were gathered in several ways. First, two copies of a short bilingual (Welsh/English) paper questionnaire were distributed to volunteers to circulate to their contacts and people they knew in the community. A longer version was then distributed to target groups including teachers, nursing home staff, councillors, ambulance staff and others.

One-to-one interviews

Whom should you interview?

This will depend on why you are undertaking your assessment and your focus for the assessment. You need to consider who will be able to respond to your questions and whether there are individuals who might not be involved in other elements of your assessment but would be useful to speak to.

How should the session be structured?

It is important to have a topic guide – prepared questions to ask at the interviews. It is up to you how structured you want this to be. If you have a set list of topics, you may prefer to change the wording and ordering of these as you go through and ask follow-up questions where you need some more detail. The surveys and focus group topic guides in the resource pack can be easily adapted for one-to-one interviews.

How will you record it?

You could record the session with a digital recorder or take notes. Taking notes is difficult if you are on your own, as it can distract you from listening carefully to the person you are interviewing, so bringing someone to take notes will be helpful. Notes enable you to have a summary of the interview that can be analysed quickly. A recording will enable you to focus completely on the interview and will give a more detailed record. However, it will take longer to analyse later, because you will have to listen to it again or take the time to transcribe the whole interview. You need to consider at what level of detail you want to analyse the interview before deciding which way to record it. Either way, make sure you check with the respondent that they are happy that you are recording and/or taking notes.

How will you get the questions right?

Think clearly about what you want to get from the interview and develop some questions that will be easy for the respondent to understand. Avoid questions that are longer than needed. You may want to try your questions out on a few individuals first. Think about how you will introduce and end the interview – explain at the beginning what the interview and overall assessment is for and whether you plan for their comments to be anonymous or confidential. At the end of the interview, ask if they have any further comments and thank them for being involved.

Interviewing beneficiaries

Toolkit in practice 9

At the Earl Mountbatten Hospice, Isle of Wight, a self-completion questionnaire for service beneficiaries was ruled out because of the health problems and fragility of most patients.

However, understanding the perspective of patients was crucial to the broader impact assessment because of the close involvement of volunteers in their wellbeing and welfare. Therefore, in consultation with senior nursing and management staff, the volunteer manager leading the assessment adapted the beneficiaries' questionnaire from this toolkit. She devised an alternative set of questions, focusing mainly on patients' contact with volunteers in different areas of the hospice's work and their assessment of the quality of help they had received. The revised questionnaire was administered as a series of face-to-face interviews with patients, which were conducted by specially trained volunteers.

Focus groups

Who should be invited to the focus group?

In Step 3 you identified the broad group you want to focus on. Now you need to consider the exact make up of the focus group. You may wish to invite individuals who have a similar role or background (such as beneficiaries who receive a particular service) or those whose roles or backgrounds are different (such as volunteers who are involved in different roles across the organisation). The former may help to generate ideas for a specific area, while the latter may help to bring a richer and broader discussion.

How should the focus group be organised?

Allow between one and two hours, depending on how much you want to cover and people's availability/likelihood of staying. Focus groups can be held as part of a social event (for example, a volunteers' get-together) or arranged specially.

You should provide refreshments and an accessible venue. It is good practice to reimburse travel and other expenses such as childcare. It is helpful to record the session using a digital recorder, but check that everyone is happy for you to do this.

How should the focus group be structured?

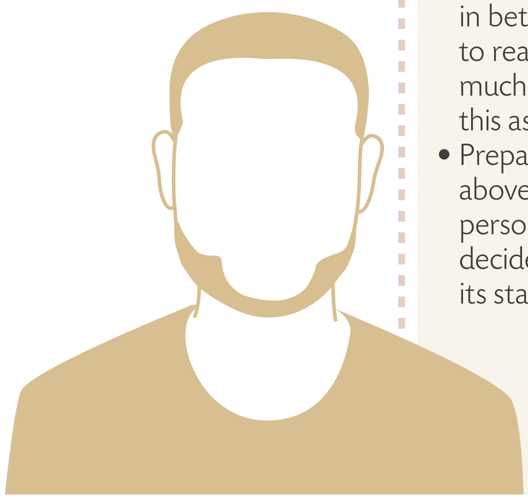
Develop a list of questions to help you to structure the session and identify the areas you want to cover. The number of topics you will be able to focus on will be limited, so think clearly about what you want to get out of the focus group. It is important to be flexible, as the group is likely to raise issues that you did not anticipate but that could be useful for your assessment.

How should the focus group be run?

Think about who should facilitate the focus group. If you are asking volunteers about the way they are supported, it might be better to involve someone other than the volunteer coordinator. Don't let one or two people dominate; the facilitator needs to be prepared to gently bring the group back to the point if the conversation goes off at an unhelpful tangent. It is often a good idea to start the focus group off with an 'opening circle' in which all the participants introduce themselves and give a quick two- or three-word answer to an introductory question – this gets everyone involved in the discussion from the start. There are a number of ways to introduce activities into a focus group to vary the pace and make it more interesting and hands-on for participants (see box).

How will you record it?

As with an interview, you could either record the session or take notes. Taking notes is more challenging but gives you a ready-made summary, but if you want a more detailed and reliable record of the focus group it is better to use a digital recorder. Make sure you get permission from the participants first and test out the equipment and recording level to ensure that all voices will be clearly audible.

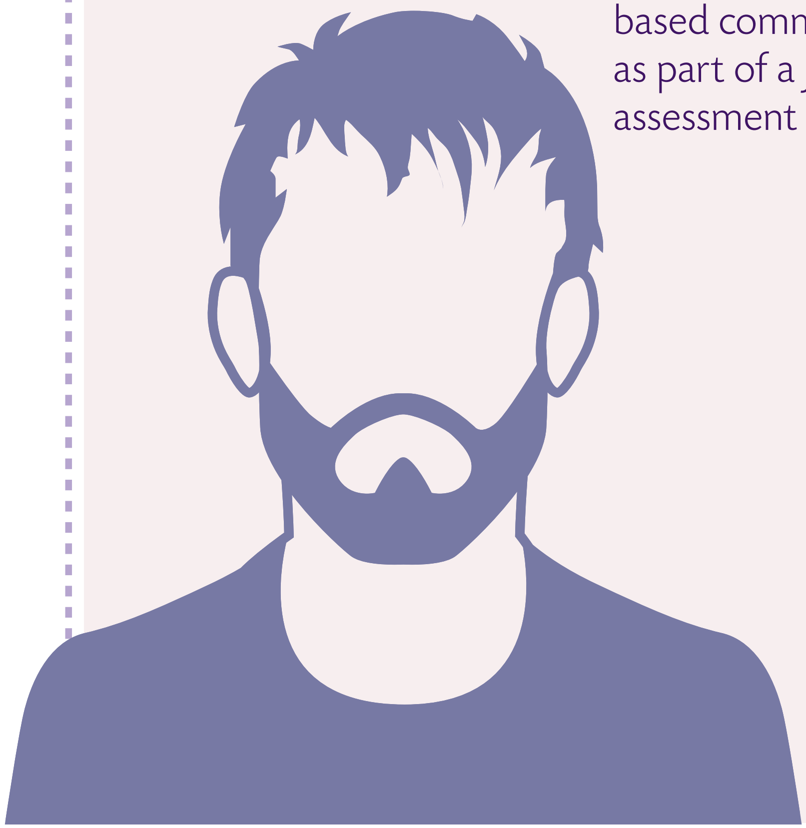


Ideas for focus group activities

- Write key questions or points on flipcharts posted around the room. Ask people to write comments on the flipchart, or fix sticky dots, coloured Post-it notes or smiley faces to indicate their choices and priorities. Collate and assess these quickly and use them as the basis for discussion.
- Print statements or comments that offer a range of responses to key questions on to sets of coloured card. Distribute these to pairs or sub-groups of three to five people and ask them to spend a few minutes sorting the cards into three piles: most important, least important and in between. Ask each pair or group to read out their choices, see how much agreement there is and use this as the basis for discussion.
- Prepare sets of coloured cards as above and distribute them. Each person should look at a card and decides whether they agree with its statement. If they agree, they should pass it on to another participant; if they disagree, they should put the card in the centre (on a table or in a box, for example). Do this three times. If a card survives three rounds, it stays in. Then display the cards around the room and use these as the basis for discussion.
- Distribute blank cards to every participant/pair/group. Ask them to discuss their ideas on a topic and write their answer(s) on the card. Swap these, ask people to read them out and then display them around the room for discussion and elaboration.
- You can also use arts in groups that may respond particularly well to this approach (such as children, an arts project or people with learning difficulties). Participants may be encouraged to enact a dramatic scene, draw a picture, write a poem or sing a song.

Using qualitative methods

Toolkit in practice 10



A range of qualitative research methods were used successfully and effectively by a number of small, faith-based community groups as part of a joint impact assessment project.

These methods allowed those carrying out the assessment in each community group to gather valuable, in-depth data at the same time as minimising the resources needed. For example, several of the groups asked volunteers to keep reflective diaries, which they updated after each volunteering session. After six months, the volunteers met with the assessment team to produce a summary of their experience illustrated by quotes from the diaries.

One project wanted to explore how volunteering made a difference to young volunteers at an inter-faith youth club. The volunteer manager asked volunteers to rate their experiences using smiley faces and to complete different scales, which were pinned on the wall.

Children attending the group were also asked to write their thoughts about the involvement of volunteers at the club on Post-it notes and either pin them on the wall or post them into a 'thought box'.

Stakeholders were engaged in a variety of ways. One project undertook short 'vox pop' video interviews with stakeholders from local voluntary organisations who were attending a conference highlighting the work of young volunteers. The delegates were asked questions about their experiences of the project and its successes and challenges, and to reflect upon the future. The most interesting quotes were then combined into a short video, posted on the organisation's website and used as dissemination material.

Step 6

Analyse the information you have collected

Once you have undertaken your assessment, the next step is to analyse all the information you have gathered. As described in Step 4, you can divide the information into two types: some will be expressed in numbers (quantitative) and some purely in words (qualitative). Each will require a slightly different approach to analysis, and there is no fixed order.

If you have both, it may be helpful to analyse the quantitative data first and then the qualitative data. Questionnaire surveys can produce both quantitative and qualitative data, depending on the type of question, and the other methods will produce qualitative data.

Questionnaire surveys

The closed questions in the questionnaire survey will provide you with quantitative data. If you just have a few responses, you can analyse the results by hand. Taking all the completed questionnaires, add up the total for each of the different options in each question. You can then produce a table, list or graph of how many people, or what percentage of all the people questioned, gave which answer.

However, using a computer software package will probably save you time and will enable you to present your findings automatically using graphs and charts, and carry out further data analysis. There are dedicated packages, but often a spreadsheet package such as Excel is more than sufficient.

If the survey was completed online (eg using a service such as SurveyMonkey), the results will already be added up for you, and upgrading to a paid-for package can help you to analyse and present the data, as well as automatically exporting it to a spreadsheet for further analysis. Links to some of the most popular online survey sites are included in the resource pack.

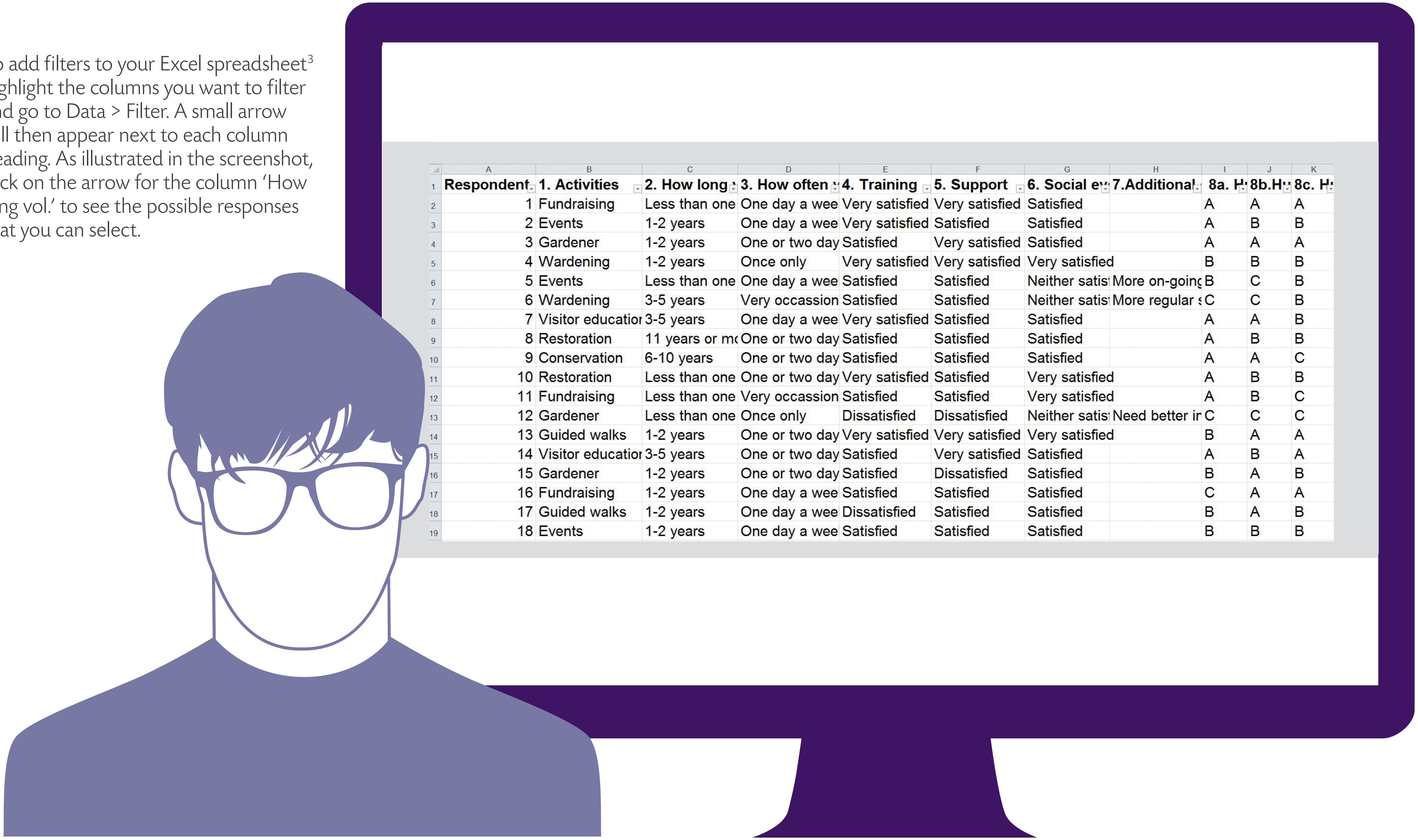
If you choose not to use such a tool, you will need to enter the results into a spreadsheet manually. Each row should correspond to one respondent to your survey and each column should contain data for a particular question. You need to decide how each column is labelled. If respondents haven't answered a question, leave this cell blank.

The screenshot (right) illustrates how this might look for a simple survey.

Filtering is an easy way to look at how many people answered each question and examine relationships or patterns in how the participants respond to different questions. For example, is the length of time someone volunteers related to how much they benefit from it?

Reference:
3 This guidance uses Excel 2010.

To add filters to your Excel spreadsheet[3] highlight the columns you want to filter and go to Data > Filter. A small arrow will then appear next to each column heading. As illustrated in the screenshot, click on the arrow for the column 'How long vol.' to see the possible responses that you can select.



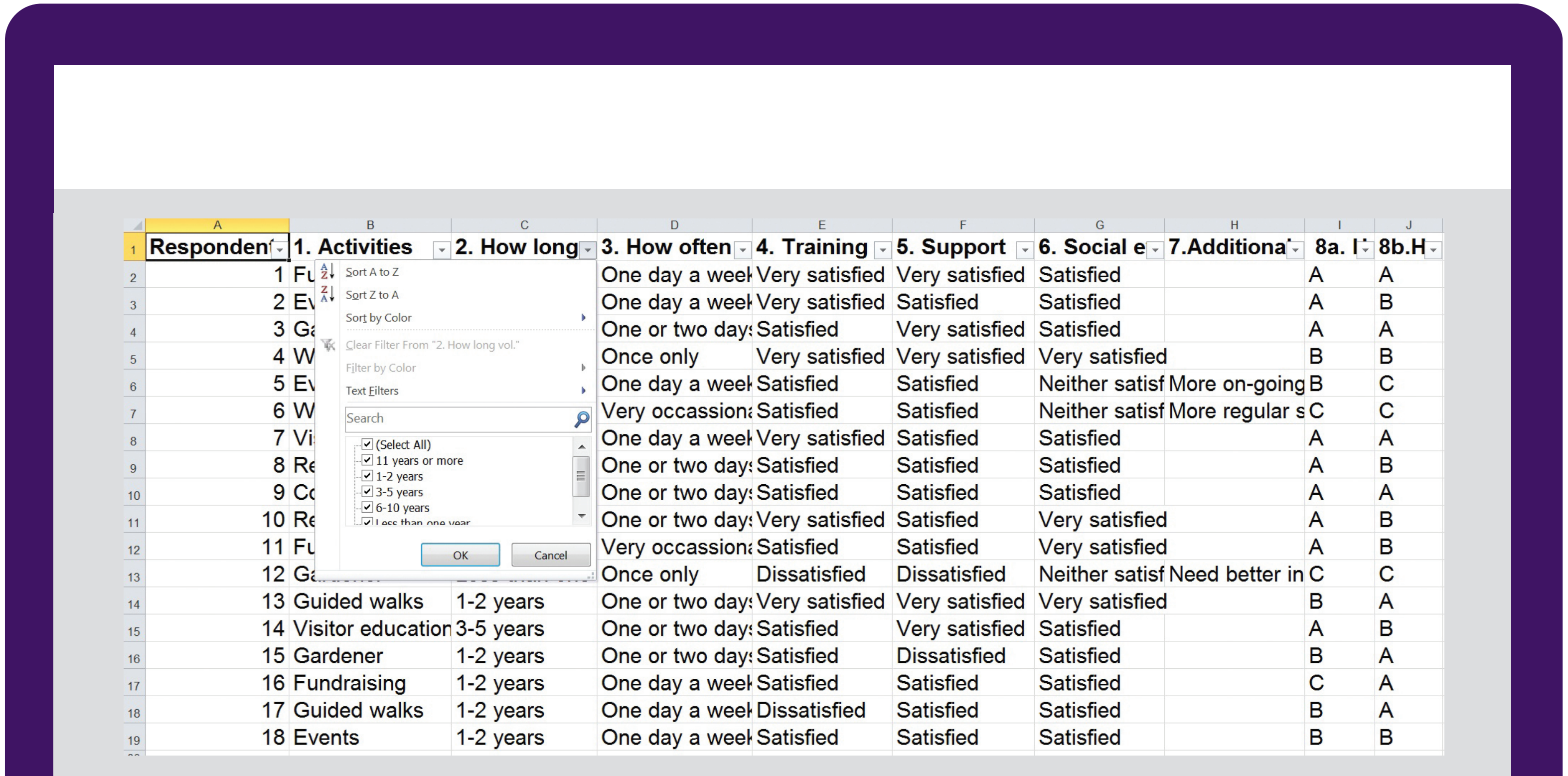
Respondent	1. Activities	2. How long	3. How often	4. Training	5. Support	6. Social e	7.Additional	8a. H	8b.H	8c. H
1	Fundraising	Less than one	One day a wee	Very satisfied	Very satisfied	Satisfied		A	A	A
2	Events	1-2 years	One day a wee	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied		A	B	B
3	Gardener	1-2 years	One or two day	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Satisfied		A	A	A
4	Wardening	1-2 years	Once only	Very satisfied	Very satisfied	Very satisfied		B	B	B
5	Events	Less than one	One day a wee	Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satis	More on-going	B	C	B
6	Wardening	3-5 years	Very occassion	Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satis	More regular s	C	C	B
7	Visitor educatior	3-5 years	One day a wee	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied		A	A	B
8	Restoration	11 years or mo	One or two day	Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied		A	B	B
9	Conservation	6-10 years	One or two day	Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied		A	A	C
10	Restoration	Less than one	One or two day	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied		A	B	B
11	Fundraising	Less than one	Very occassion	Satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied		A	B	C
12	Gardener	Less than one	Once only	Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satis	Need better ir	C	C	C
13	Guided walks	1-2 years	One or two day	Very satisfied	Very satisfied	Very satisfied		B	A	A
14	Visitor educatior	3-5 years	One or two day	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Satisfied		A	B	A
15	Gardener	1-2 years	One or two day	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied		B	A	B
16	Fundraising	1-2 years	One day a wee	Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied		C	A	A
17	Guided walks	1-2 years	One day a wee	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied		B	A	B
18	Events	1-2 years	One day a wee	Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied		B	B	B

Once you select one type of response, for example 1–2 years, you will only see data from the respondents who chose this answer, as illustrated below.

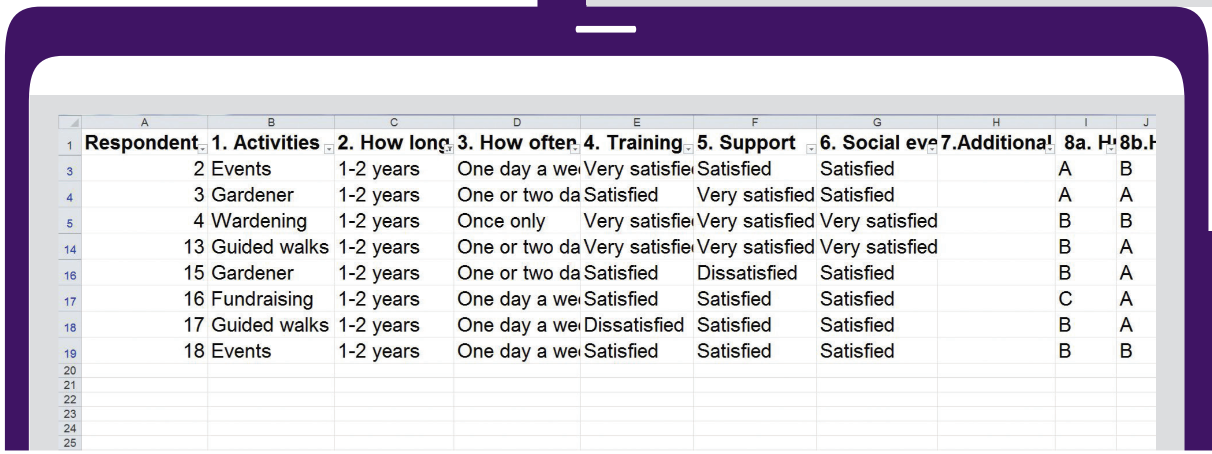
At the bottom, left-hand corner Excel will tell you the number of records found with that particular response or you can add up the number of responses manually.

Be careful how you deal with the non-responses to questions (the blanks). You probably won't want to include them in your analysis. This will change the number of total responses to each question ('records found' in Excel) and how you work out your percentages.

For further guidance on analysing quantitative data see the resource pack.



Respondent	1. Activities	2. How long	3. How often	4. Training	5. Support	6. Social e	7.Additional	8a. I	8b.H
1	Fu		One day a week	Very satisfied	Very satisfied	Satisfied		A	A
2	Ev		One day a week	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied		A	B
3	Ga		One or two days	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Satisfied		A	A
4	W		Once only	Very satisfied	Very satisfied	Very satisfied		B	B
5	Ev		One day a week	Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisf	More on-going	B	C
6	W		Very occassiona	Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisf	More regular s	C	C
7	Vi		One day a week	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied		A	A
8	Re		One or two days	Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied		A	B
9	Co		One or two days	Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied		A	A
10	Re		One or two days	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied		A	B
11	Fu		Very occassiona	Satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied		A	B
12	Ga		Once only	Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisf	Need better in	C	C
13	Guided walks	1-2 years	One or two days	Very satisfied	Very satisfied	Very satisfied		B	A
14	Visitor education	3-5 years	One or two days	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Satisfied		A	B
15	Gardener	1-2 years	One or two days	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied		B	A
16	Fundraising	1-2 years	One day a week	Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied		C	A
17	Guided walks	1-2 years	One day a week	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied		B	A
18	Events	1-2 years	One day a week	Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied		B	B



Respondent	1. Activities	2. How long	3. How often	4. Training	5. Support	6. Social eve	7.Additional	8a. H	8b.H
2	Events	1-2 years	One day a we	Very satisfie	Satisfied	Satisfied		A	B
3	Gardener	1-2 years	One or two da	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Satisfied		A	A
4	Wardening	1-2 years	Once only	Very satisfie	Very satisfied	Very satisfied		B	B
13	Guided walks	1-2 years	One or two da	Very satisfie	Very satisfied	Very satisfied		B	A
15	Gardener	1-2 years	One or two da	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied		B	A
16	Fundraising	1-2 years	One day a we	Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied		C	A
17	Guided walks	1-2 years	One day a we	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied		B	A
18	Events	1-2 years	One day a we	Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied		B	B

Open-ended questions from the questionnaire survey

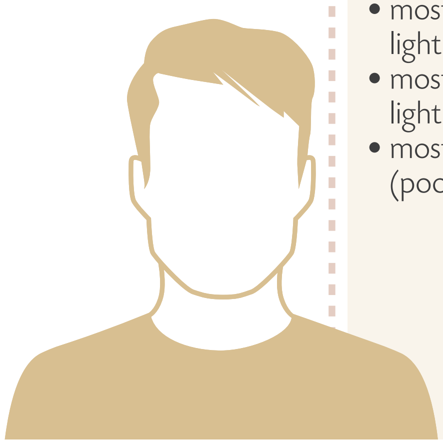
The questionnaires include some 'open-ended' questions, where the respondent is asked to write in what they think, and you may add some more if you want.

To analyse these answers, start by noting down what people write and, as you go, begin to group these into categories. This is called a 'coding frame' – you are choosing answers that are similar and say roughly the same thing and putting these into categories. After analysing some of the questionnaires, you will have an initial coding frame – perhaps four or five categories that the answers generally fall into. You can then begin to allocate new answers into these categories. You need to remain alert to the possibility of a new type of answer/category coming up, so keep amending your coding frame as you go, if necessary.

By the end, you will have a set of categories for the possible answers to that question and can draw conclusions from the distribution of answers in each category. Keeping this 'coding frame' will make the analysis of a repeat survey in the future quicker and easier.

If the coding frame from an open-ended question clearly indicates a series of main types of answer, it is possible to make it a closed question, giving those options with tick boxes in a repeat survey. This would make the questionnaire simpler to complete and analyse.

When carrying this out, always look out for and note down particularly interesting answers to open-ended questions, which you may want to quote in a report or even in future publicity for a project.



The traffic light scoring system

If you are using the core questionnaires, you can use the traffic light scoring system to analyse and present your data.

Some people prefer to look at the findings from impact assessments in a visual way and the traffic light system is a simple way to identify areas that are working well and signal areas requiring improvement or further research.

The lead questions relating to each of the four types of capital all have their answers scaled A–F. If the answers to a question are:

- mostly A and B, award it a green light (very good/a strong effect)
- mostly C and F, award it an amber light (quite good/a moderate effect)
- mostly D and E, award it a red light (poor/little or no effect).

Red suggests that substantially more needs to be done to achieve this effect, amber that more work would increase this effect and green that you should keep on doing what you are doing.

A red (or amber) light can be taken as a cue for further investigation, which is carried out using the corresponding section in the supplementary questionnaire. Whatever traffic light colour you get, you may want to explore further how and why this effect is, or is not, achieved. This may enable you to reproduce a strong effect in other work, or change the way something is done to increase the level of impact from red or amber.

An example of a completed traffic light scoring system can be found in the resource pack.

Analysing a focus group

One-to-one interviews

Depending on how they were recorded, analysis of one-to-one interviews will either involve looking through the notes or listening to the recording and/or reading through a transcript if you have the time or resources to produce one.

Your task is to identify the key themes and points of consensus or disagreement, as well as noting useful quotes. As you look through your record of the interviews, you may find it helpful to make notes for each interview under a set of headings based on the questions you asked. If you are reading through transcripts, you could also highlight sections with a different coloured pen for each theme or category. This will allow for easy comparison between the interviews and help you see whether respondents are saying similar or different things in response to your questions.

Focus groups

Analysing these is similar to analysing an interview. However, where flipcharts or cards have been used, they should be included in the analysis as an additional record of the focus group. A focus group is particularly helpful for seeing how different people respond to a particular question and what lies behind consensus or disagreement in a group, so pay particular attention to this.

Case studies

Case studies can include different types of information and their main benefit is in helping you to understand the broader context. With these, and other methods, consider how the responses relate to other information you have collected, for example does an interview with the programme coordinator confirm or call into question the findings from your survey of beneficiaries? Does a focus group with volunteers help you understand the pattern you found when examining the organisation's records of volunteer recruitment and retention?

Toolkit in practice 11

Wrenbrook House, a family-owned stately home open to the public, conducted a volunteering assessment that involved two focus groups with volunteers.

The focus groups were digitally recorded and the recordings were sent off to a transcription service to be fully written up.

To analyse the data, the assessment team read through the transcript once to get a general idea of the contents, noting down the key themes that they felt emerged. They identified four key themes: 'enjoyment' (of involvement in volunteering); 'responsibility' (volunteers feeling the work was important but required commitment); 'integration' (how new volunteers integrated into what were already tight-knit volunteer groups); 'confidence' (developing the confidence, ability and experience to do the role).

The team then read through the transcripts a second time and used four different highlighter pens to categorise the statements that fitted under these four headings. On this second read through, they identified a further theme that did not seem to fit under the other categories, which they called 'being part of the family'. When rereading, they also decided that the 'confidence' heading was too broad and could be broken down into three themes: 'skills development'; 'personal growth'; 'generation gap'.

They then made notes under these seven headings, writing a summary paragraph for each theme, which included examples and quotes drawn from both focus group transcripts. This analysis captured the different experiences of volunteering described by participants in the focus groups and resulted in some interesting findings that were not picked up in the questionnaires.

In the final report, the team compared the themes emerging from the focus groups with results from the surveys of volunteers and staff members where relevant.

Step 7

Make sense of the information and draw conclusions

Once you have collected and analysed your data, you will need to pull it together and make sense of it. At this stage, it is always good to look back at the aims of your assessment. If there are multiple aims, use them to organise your thoughts under one heading for each aim.

You may want to consider whether you need additional support from inside or outside your organisation to help draw robust conclusions.

Compare the different types of information to make sense of how and why volunteering is making a difference. Look out for how your use of different tools might produce findings that reinforce each other (eg your interviews with beneficiaries echo the responses of the surveys you conducted with them) or cause you to question one of them (eg in a focus group with volunteers they all say they are happy, but an interview with their coordinator suggests they always complain). If they are contradictory, you need to examine why. You may wish to explore whether different groups are experiencing different types of outcomes, for example new volunteers compared with longer established volunteers or different groups of beneficiaries.

It is likely that your assessment will produce findings that are unexpected or negative. These are important and will help you to understand the difference your programme is making and what areas could be improved. You may need to draw challenging conclusions – be aware of those who might be sensitive to your findings, for example volunteers who have run a service in a particular way for a long time.

When analysing your data and drawing conclusions, never be afraid to comment on possible weaknesses or bias in the information you have collected. No assessment is perfect, and one that pretends to be is not likely to be very credible.

You may want to use visual tools to help you make sense of the results and present your findings. The traffic light system can be used to show clearly and simply the areas that are going well and the areas that need improvement (see page 41). Graphs can also be useful for showing visually the findings from your assessment.

Step 8

Communicate the findings from your assessment

Once you have completed your assessment, it is important to use and communicate your findings.

Make sure you share the findings with those who participated in and contributed to the assessment, particularly if you are keen to involve them in a similar exercise again.

Who might be interested in your findings?

Inside your organisation	Outside your organisation
• Volunteer co-ordinator/manager • Other staff • Trustees • Volunteers	• Potential volunteers • Current and future funders • Your beneficiaries/service users • Project/organisation partners • Other volunteer-involving organisations • Local policy makers • Local Volunteer Centre/Council for Voluntary Service • Local media

What are the best ways to communicate your findings?

There are a variety of ways to communicate the findings from your assessment, including:

- a report for the volunteer coordinator, senior management or trustees
- summary bulletin/leaflet for staff and volunteers, external organisations and agencies
- summary on webpages, blogs and social media (such as Facebook and Twitter)
- videos
- press releases
- annual report
- presentations, for example at a social event for volunteers or local community event.

It is important to consider who the audience are. What findings will be most interesting and useful to them? A more formal report may be appropriate for project funders, while a double-sided summary sheet may be all that volunteers, beneficiaries or community groups would want to read.

If in doubt, try to keep your information concise and signpost to further detail for those interested.

If writing a full report, structure it around key headings with overall conclusions that highlight important issues, areas for improvement and action needed. An executive summary would also be helpful for those who would not read the whole report. A possible structure might be as follows.

1. Introduction: explain the purpose and aim of your assessment.
2. Approach/methodology: briefly explain the approach and tools that you used and where you got your information from, including the size and nature of your sample.
3. Results: clearly summarise all of the main results, organised in the way you think is most helpful for the audience.
4. Conclusions and recommendations: identify the main themes that emerge from your results and the implications for your organisation and others where relevant.

Communicating the findings

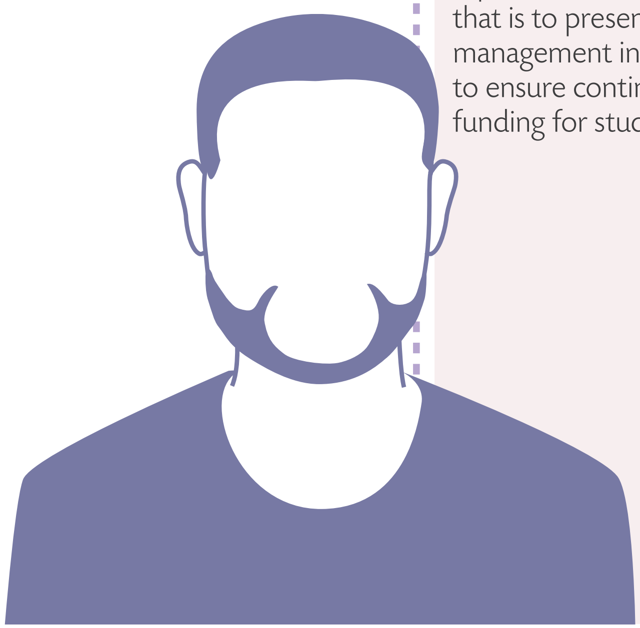
Think creatively about how you could present the findings from your assessment, for example by using:

- graphs and diagrams
- photographs
- quotes from individuals
- stories
- boxed case studies
- summary of traffic lights.

Include numbers, stories and quotes if you can to help bring your findings to life.

If your results are something to shout about, contact the local media or issue a press release to see if you can get some coverage. Alternatively, invite them to a presentation and supply them with written highlights of your findings.

Don't be afraid to share results about things that went less well, particularly if you have ideas for how to improve them. This can increase your credibility and help others in your field to learn from what you have found.



Toolkit in practice 12

After completing its impact assessment, Imperial College London produced a four-page report, a poster highlighting key findings and a presentation.

The main purpose of the short report was to 'tell the story' internally, that is to present findings to senior management in the college in order to ensure continued support and funding for student volunteering.

The manager of Imperial Volunteer Centre (IVC) delivered several presentations of results to senior management within different faculties. She also gave a short 'poster' presentation during Imperial College London's education day and a workshop about the assessment was delivered during the annual student volunteering conference.

In addition to these presentations, the report was made available on the IVC website and a short article about the study was written for Imperial College London's in-house staff magazine.

Presenting the survey results in these different ways helped convince senior management that investment in the IVC was 'good value for money'. The centre now has more robust evidence of the benefits of volunteering to students, which has helped secure further funding for staffing the volunteer centre.

Step 9

Learn from your findings to improve your work

How will you learn from the findings?

You can actively use the findings from your impact assessment to learn what is working well and identify areas that need to be improved. This is arguably the most important reason for conducting an impact assessment – to know how to make more of a difference in future.

As part of this, you will need to be open and honest about the impact the volunteering programme has and hasn't made.

The Code of Good Impact Practice[4] highlights how you must 'be willing to change and act on what you find' so you can:

- ensure the information you collect about impact will be used to inform planning, action and decisions
- improve services and impact for beneficiaries with the resources that are available
- reinforce staff and volunteer commitment to impact practice, as they can see that action is taken and things change as a result.

How could you improve your impact practice and assessment?

You should use your experiences to review how useful your assessment was and what you might do differently next time. Assessments do not have to be one-off exercises. If carried out on a regular basis, they can enable you to see how volunteering is developing in your organisation and assess the results of changes you have made.

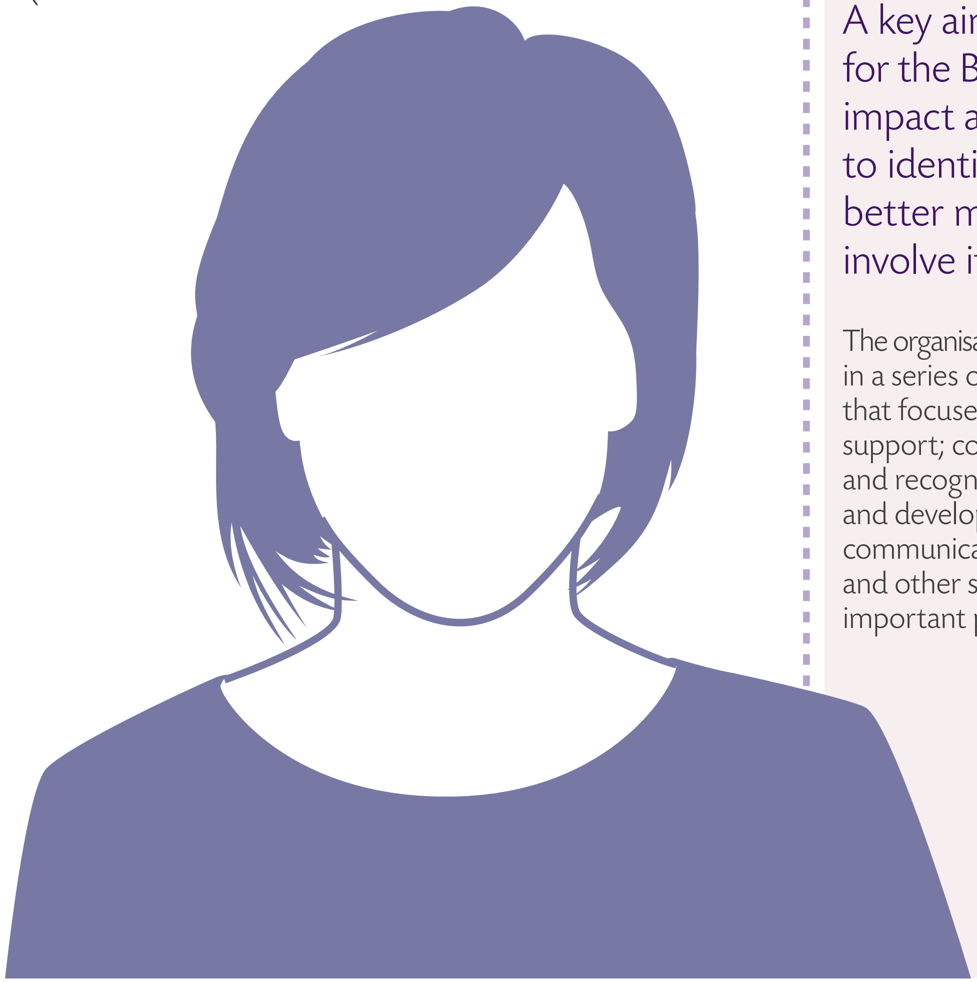
You should review the information you have collected from your assessment to see if you and others in your organisation are using it to inform planning, decisions and actions.

- Would you use the same tools or different ones?
- Would you talk to different groups or stakeholders?
- Would you add, remove or adapt the questions you asked?
- Would you plan differently, allocating more or less time or resources to different stages?
- Would you communicate the findings in a different format?

Reference:
4 NCVO (2013) *The Code of Good Impact Practice*. London: NCVO.

Learning from the findings

You might also find it helpful to use Measuring Up, a self-assessment tool that gives you a useful picture of where your impact practice is going well and areas for improvement (see the resource pack).



Toolkit in practice 13

A key aim of Guide Dogs for the Blind's volunteering impact assessment was to identify how it could better manage and involve its volunteers.

The organisation's assessment resulted in a series of recommendations that focused on: management support; communication; award and recognition; diversity; and learning and development. These were communicated to the executive board and other staff, and have formed an important part of their planning.

One of the priorities in the organisation's business plan is for local teams to take forward the recommendations and address feedback from the impact assessment to help improve the involvement and management of volunteers. The organisation feels it is using the results of its impact assessment to 'effect organisational change' and local teams now have an understanding of the potential of the tool after first use and a desire for closer ownership in future to assess the impact of changes they are making.

Case study

This case study is fictional, although it draws from real experiences of organisations that have used the toolkit. It is designed to illustrate the different steps and a range of different methods, providing examples of transcripts to give you an idea of what carrying out your own assessment might look like.

About the organisation

Rainbow is a community organisation working with children and families in a deprived area of a large town. Rainbow has six members of paid staff including a part-time volunteer manager, Julie Bright. Rainbow is managed by a director, Philip Scott, who reports to a board of trustees.

Rainbow involves around 300 volunteers each year across a range of different projects, which include:

- a six-week programme of camps for children each summer that involves 50 volunteers
- a parent and child drop-in three mornings a week, which has a rota of volunteers, including users of the service
- occasional activity days and holiday schemes for children
- a befriending programme that matches vulnerable parents with volunteers, which involves around 30 regular volunteers
- a young carers' youth club once a week, which involves a team of 10 regular volunteers
- volunteer drivers – about 10 volunteer drivers who help to transport children and parents, including disabled children, to Rainbow's various activities.

General support is offered by a pool of 10 office volunteers and local students are occasionally recruited to give support in particular areas such as IT, designing publicity materials or marketing.

The organisation can draw on additional support from a broader group of casual volunteers, who help with fundraising activities, such as an annual local fun run or summer fair.

Rainbow has just completed a year-long impact evaluation using the *Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit*. The following sections detail this process.

Planning the assessment

(Steps 1–4)

Julie Bright was asked to undertake the impact assessment by the director, who provided the following brief.

- To provide evidence of the impact of volunteers on service beneficiaries.
- To explore the impacts of volunteering on volunteers' personal development.
- To identify areas for improvement within the volunteering programme, especially in relation to training and support.
- To justify the investment in a part-time volunteer manager post to the board of trustees.

Using the matrix in Step 3, they identified that they were interested in two groups: volunteers and service beneficiaries.

It was felt that all of the types of capital were potentially important, so they designed the assessment to cover these.

Julie recruited two volunteers to help with the assessment. Paul Jones was a part-time mature student who had previously volunteered with Rainbow and Sofia Hussain was from the local university and was studying for a master's degree in social research methods.

The time period for the impact assessment was six months (November–April). Managing these two volunteers took several hours of Julie's time each week and she met with them every two weeks to get a progress update.

Philip made a small budget available for the impact assessment. This covered:

- travel and lunch expenses for the two assessment volunteers, Paul and Sofia
- refreshments and materials for participants at focus groups and discussion groups
- prizes up to the value of £100 to encourage volunteers to complete the survey
- the purchase of a digital recorder for focus groups
- printing costs for a two-sided research bulletin.

Given that they had been asked to look at the impact on both volunteers and service beneficiaries, Julie, Paul and Sofia sat down together and decided to use both a questionnaire survey and a series of focus groups.

Adapting the questionnaires and focus group topic guides from the resource pack, they developed the following tools.

- An online questionnaire survey for volunteers adapted from the core and supplementary questionnaires.
- Two focus groups with volunteers.
- Two focus groups with adult service beneficiaries.
- A discussion session with children.

Undertaking the assessment

(Step 5)

Survey

The survey was piloted with six volunteers. This pilot showed respondents had difficulty understanding one question, so the wording was changed. The revised questionnaire was uploaded on to an online survey tool.

The survey was sent as a link in an email to all of the volunteers on Julie's volunteer database. In order to encourage completion, Rainbow offered a prize draw. Julie sent several reminder emails to volunteers. In addition, because several volunteers were not very confident at reading or writing, Paul and Sofia sat at the computer with the volunteers, reading out the questions to help them complete the survey.

In total, 300 volunteers received the questionnaire and 145 completed returns were received, producing a response rate of 48%.

Focus groups

Four focus groups were held. These took place in the familiar surroundings of the parent–child drop-in centre. The groups were organised at different times of the day and a free lunch or refreshments were provided to encourage attendance.

In order to attract attendees to the focus groups, posters were placed around the drop-in centre and Rainbow's offices. Paul and Sofia also made a number of phone calls to volunteers and service beneficiaries to encourage them to attend. They had aimed for 8–10 people for each group, but invited 12 on the assumption that not everyone would make it. In one case all 12 turned up, and in one case just six, but in both cases they were able to manage, with the larger group just taking a little bit longer so that everyone could have their say.

Paul and Sofia attended each group, taking turns to take notes and facilitate the discussion. Julie did not attend. Each focus group was recorded and a transcript for each was later typed up, based on the notes taken in the groups and by listening back to the recordings (a section of the transcript is included on page 54).

Discussion session with children

In order to get the views of children who used Rainbow's services, a discussion session for children over eight years old was held. Children were asked to write or draw their thoughts and feelings about volunteers. Paul and Sofia then asked the children to explain what they had written or drawn and made notes.

Analysing the data and making sense of the findings
(Steps 6 and 7)

Paul and Sofia analysed the results of the survey using Excel. They had looked into upgrading from their basic subscription to SurveyMonkey, which was free, to a package that would allow them to export all the results into Excel automatically.

However, as this was a one-off survey on a low budget, they thought that the monthly subscription was not worth paying. They entered in the results for all 145 respondents which, given that most were just letters 'A–F,' took just over two hours and then another hour to double check. Afterwards they felt that maybe it would have been better to spend some money on a package that would do that for them.

They looked through the transcripts of the focus groups to identify key themes and colour coded them to help them in further analysis. For example, yellow was used to identify their perception of the training they had received as volunteers and green was used to identify the impact of their volunteering.

Communicating the findings and using them
(Steps 8 and 9)

Paul and Sofia compiled the findings from the assessment in a report, which was given to all staff members and the board of trustees. They also produced a two-page summary of the key findings, which was sent to all volunteers and to all of Rainbow's main stakeholders and supporters.

Paul and Sofia were invited to give a presentation of the assessment findings at one of Rainbow's trustee meetings. The board was pleased with the results and Julie felt that the assessment was useful in ensuring high-level support for the programme and her post.

In addition, Julie spoke about the assessment and reflected upon the process at a meeting of her local volunteer managers' forum.

Julie has already begun to implement changes to Rainbow's volunteer programme as a result of the assessment. For example, the assessment showed that improvements could be made to training for volunteers, with more of it in written form so they could refer to it after the actual training event.

Focus group with Rainbow summer camp volunteers: *Topic guide*

Introductions

Please can you introduce yourself to the group and tell us about the summer camps you volunteered at.

Was this your first experience of volunteering with Rainbow?

Routes into volunteering on summer camps

What did you think about the process of applying to become a volunteer on the Rainbow summer camp?

What elements were good and what could be improved?

How did you find the induction and training programme for the summer camps?

What did you think about the way you were introduced to the volunteering role before starting?

How well prepared did you feel?

Volunteer involvement and management

What are your reflections on the way you were managed and supported as a camp volunteer?

How could the support you were given as a volunteer be improved?

Impacts

In what ways do you feel you have personally gained through volunteering with Rainbow?

What skills do you feel you have used or developed though volunteering?

Future

After your volunteer experience, would you like to get more involved with Rainbow by doing other kinds of volunteering with them?

If you could recommend Rainbow to change one thing about the way they involve and support volunteers, what would it be?

What was the best thing about volunteering on the summer camp?

Focus group with Rainbow summer camp volunteers: *Section of interview transcript*

Interviewer: I'd now like to move on to ask about how you found the recruitment and induction process for the summer camp?

A: Well I was really happy with it all actually, right from my first email to Mary. The application process was pretty straightforward, I was impressed with speed with which she responded to my messages. And …

B: Yeah, me too. I really appreciated Mary's emails in the run-up to the summer project, I thought they were timely and well handled, basically putting you at ease about some of the issues that we might face.

C: Yes, that's true. Though I think I'd have liked some more information about what to expect, like, I turned up and I hadn't met any of the other volunteers before and they were sort of. It was like everyone already knew each other and I felt a bit lost.

D: Yes, I felt that a bit.

B: Didn't you get the camp volunteer handbook beforehand?

C: Was that the PDF thing she sent around? I think so, um, maybe not. But I just got on with it. Actually some of the best support came from just chatting to other volunteers, when I was there, you know? 'Cause some of them had done quite a few weeks in a row and they were sort of like the leaders. I could just go up to Shahid, for example, and ask, 'Did this happen last month?' That was really good.

D: Yeah, yeah I agree with that. I also was a bit daunted as it was my first time too and I knew some of the children had emotional and behavioural difficulties but didn't really understand what that was. I guess the training did help a bit there.

A: Okay, well a bit like you, I sort of knew a bit about the issues before but the training, I mean the training sort of put it in a broader context. The trainer we had, Geoff I think his name was, was really helpful, 'cause I emailed him afterwards and he answered my questions.

D: The child protection training was great, I'd definitely say that, but some of us found the pace too quick and would have liked more stuff written down – we couldn't remember everything he said.

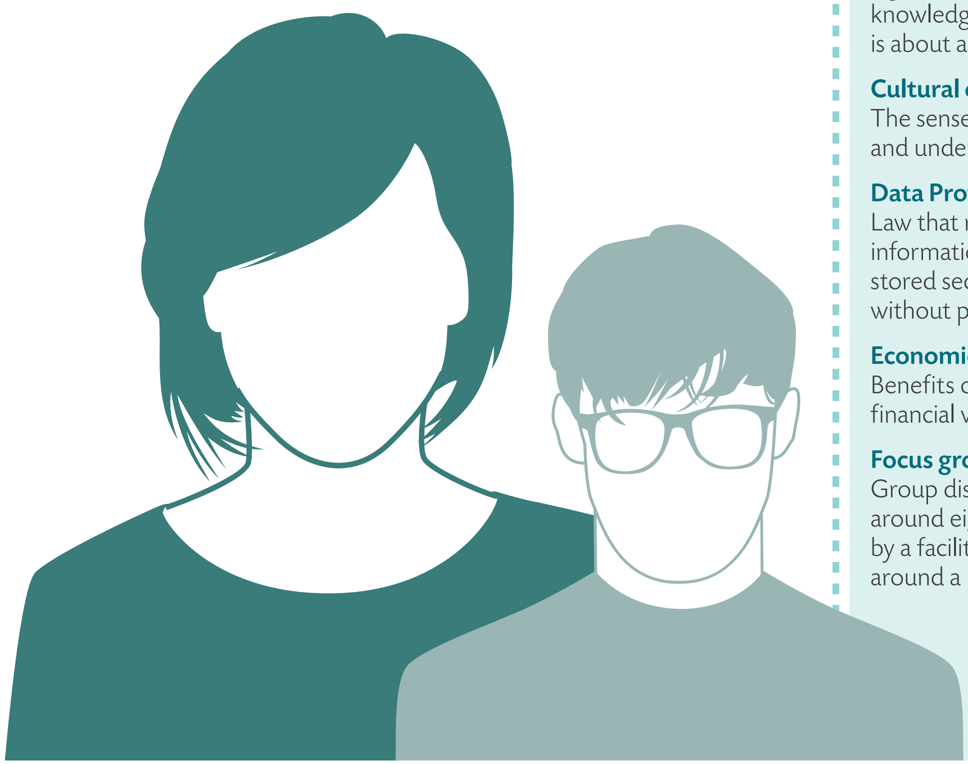
E: I enjoyed both training sessions – the health and safety, protection stuff was pretty basic but I think we had to do it? But I liked the second session because you got to practise activities with the other volunteers before meeting the children. Basically I think you really need to be quite confident and able to take the initiative on volunteering placements like this; it is quite tough. I mean the training can't really prepare you.

F: Yes, yes. I think the training made me a bit more aware of what some of these children have been through and sort of, where they are coming from, you know? It really opened my eyes. But it was really the experience, the camp. Like, before, when I saw a kid being really noisy or screaming in Tesco or something, you'd think, 'Oh what a nightmare, what is his mum doing?' But now I think I'd look at him differently, and maybe not be so quick to judge.

A: Me too, the more you talked to the children, the more you understand them and their lives. There was this one kid …

C: Yes, I heard some sad stories and some interesting stories, but not as many as I thought I would. Actually it was quite often just playing games with them and cooking and stuff.

Glossary of terms



Anonymity
When the identity of someone is not revealed when they are referred to in a publication.

Capital
A 'stock' of something that is useful and which can be created or built up over time.

Case studies
A more detailed focus on a particular subject, individual or group using a range of methods including in-depth interviews, diaries, observations and photographs.

Confidentiality
Restricting information to a very limited set of named individuals.

Consent
Agreement to take part with full knowledge of what the assessment is about and how it will be used.

Cultural capital
The sense of one's own identity and understanding of others.

Data Protection Act
Law that requires any personal information about people to be stored securely and not shared without permission.

Economic capital
Benefits or costs with a financial value.

Focus groups
Group discussions involving around eight to 10 people guided by a facilitator and structured around a number of questions.

Human capital
Knowledge, skills and health of people.

Impact
The broad or long-term effects of the programme or project.

Input
The resources needed to operate your programme or project.

One-to-one interviews
Structured conversations with one person around certain themes.

Outcome
The intermediary changes, benefits and other effects that result from the programme or project

Outputs
The products or services that the programme or project delivers.

Qualitative data
Information that cannot be quantified and is in the form of text or images.

Quantitative data
Numerical information that can be statistically analysed.

Questionnaire surveys
Small number of questions sent to a large number of people.

Sampling
Selecting a proportion of a population that you are interested in that are in some way representative of all of them.

Social capital
More cooperative relationships between people.

Tool
A structure or guide that will help you collect information from someone.

Toolkit in practice boxes
Illustrations drawn from real examples of how the toolkit has been used.

Topic guides
List of themes that should be addressed in an interview or focus group.

Traffic light scoring system
Simple tool for presenting the results of the core questionnaire surveys.

Transcript
Written record of a recorded interview or focus group.

Volunteer diaries
Volunteers recording their thoughts and feelings about volunteering over a period of time.

Volunteer investment and value audit
A simple tool for identifying the financial value of volunteering.

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