How to involve staff and existing volunteers

# There should be a commitment throughout the organisation towards the significant and valuable role that volunteers have in creating, implementing and enhancing services and a belief that volunteering should be a worthwhile and rewarding experience for volunteers. Without this your volunteer programme could face problems.

# Planning for the involvement of volunteers is essential, and should minimally involve the volunteer co-ordinator and members of staff and volunteers who will be working alongside and/or managing the volunteers on a day to day basis.

# • Staff should be consulted, particularly when the involvement of the volunteer/s will affect their workload.

# • Existing volunteers may have valuable insights and it is always helpful to look at roles from a volunteer's perspective.

# • Service users/clients may have ideas about how services could be enhanced or developed with the help of volunteers.

# • Be aware that all 3 groups could feel threatened by the introduction of new roles and may need re-assurance - for example that volunteers will not be used as a substitute for paid staff or that the quality of a service will not be less because it is delivered by volunteers.

# • Trustees, though volunteers themselves, will through their governance role need to ensure that any organisational policies are consistent with involving volunteers and include the volunteers where appropriate.

# • Staff and volunteers may benefit from being involved in writing the role descriptions as this will reassure them that the role will enhance any work/ roles they are already undertaking.

# Voluntary activity should complement the work of paid staff, rather than substitute work which staff currently do or recently did. There should be a commitment throughout the organisation towards the significant and valuable role that volunteers have in creating, implementing and enhancing services and a belief that volunteering should be a worthwhile and rewarding experience for volunteers.

# You may feel that before you involve volunteers that you might want to consult with other stakeholders such as staff, Trustees or committee members and service users.

# Depending on the services your organisation offers you might also decide to proactively involve service users as volunteers. This is a decision which is as much cultural as practical, which involves a shift of perception and practice for paid staff and Trustees, seeing service users as potential assets and resources, not just as dependants or recipients of care.