

Volunteer management



Technique

Using 'decision-making agreements' as a supervision tool for volunteers

Effective person-centred volunteer managers create an environment where volunteers can identify and solve problems on their own. They delegate real power and responsibility and build trust with their team.

Decision making agreements map out what decisions can be made by volunteers and which are the responsibility of the manager. These agreements provide clarity around decisions that the volunteer can make while being clear about when they need to "check-in" with someone else.

Doing this can support volunteers to feel confident when in situations that require a decision to be made and similar to the 'donut' tool it helps to clarify expectations and build confidence without overcomplicating the process.

Optional headings used within a decision making agreement

- * Decisions the volunteer can make on their own.
- * Decisions the manager makes.
- * Decisions the volunteer and manager make together.
- * Decisions the volunteer makes with an individual.
- * Decisions the volunteer, manager and individual make together.

e.g.

A volunteer supported a young girl Sarah to join in on different activities on the weekends. Sarah is non-verbal and communicates using her communication chart attached to her wheelchair. Sarah was clear in communicating things she enjoyed but new experiences came from others providing opportunities and learning alongside her.

The volunteer felt that she understood Sarah quite well and was learning more about the things that mattered to her and everyone agreed they were a good match. In a conversation with the manager the volunteer said she was clear on her role supporting Sarah but unsure about decisions that she could make on her own. Some of these decisions related to things like trying new food when they were out and what new activities they did together. They talked through some scenarios and came up with the following agreement:

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Decisions I can make by myself

- * *Offering new food that fit in with meal assistance guidelines.*
- * *Spending money when we are out (under \$15).*
- * *Trying new activities with Sarah that don't require her to get out of her chair.*

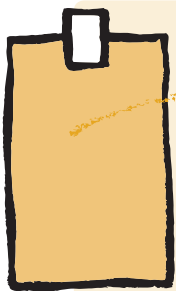
Decisions I make with Sarah's mum

- * *Spending money over \$15.*
- * *Staying out longer than agreed.*

Decisions I make with the manager and Sarah's mum

- * *Trying new activities that Sarah may have to get out of her chair for.*
- * *Going new places that we haven't been to together and may need a risk assessment.*
- * *Changing the day or time that I support Sarah.*

This allowed for more trust to be built while being clear about everyone's responsibilities when making decisions.



Tips

Identify key areas of decision making and the people involved.

Decision making responsibilities may change over time as the volunteer gains knowledge and experience.

This should be a living document that is continually added to by the volunteer, manager and individual.

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Additional resources

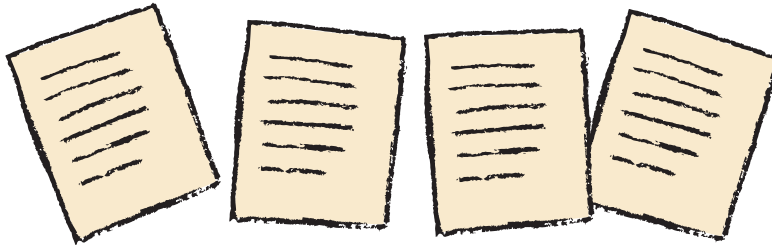
- * Tool, technique and template - using the donut with volunteers

Definitions

The term **individual(s)** refers to an individual with a disability and their family and/or circle of support.

The term **staff/employees(s)** refer to paid members of the organisations workforce. Employment relationships with the organisation may be permanent, casual, full-time, part-time, etc.

The term **volunteer(s)** refers to an unpaid individual willingly giving their time to provide a service or support.



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