

National Occupational Standards Case Study

Warrington Volunteer Centre

Organisation

Warrington Volunteer Centre promotes the value of volunteering and the availability of voluntary opportunities to local people, and works with local organisations to develop opportunities and to encourage the spread of good practice in volunteer management.

Uses of National Occupational Standards

Training Project Manager, Sue Jones, makes use of National Occupational Standards (NOS) for volunteer managers in a variety of ways. Sue works with local organisations to encourage good practice in volunteer management, through providing training and 1-1 support, and uses the NOS as a tool in developing training programmes.

Local managers are also encouraged to make use of NOS as a tool for developing their practice. To encourage take-up, Warrington Volunteer Centre has rolled out the introductory *What's NOS* training programme, which provides an overview of the standards, and introduces a range of practical ways in which they can be used.

Warrington Volunteer Centre is itself a volunteer-involving organisation with a team of 8 reception volunteers, who work on a rota basis and have an important role as first point of contact for the centre. As a member of the centre's management team, Sue is also responsible for the overall management of these volunteers, and uses the NOS as a framework for reviewing the centre's procedures, setting clear objectives and developing her own professional practice.

Benefits and Challenges

In her role as a volunteer manager, Sue Jones finds NOS useful as a framework for reviewing established practices, for example in recruitment. They can help with recognising areas of current good practice and identifying gaps. As a result of a standards-based review, the centre has formalised procedures and introduced a more structured management process.

The value of the standards in developing training programmes was also acknowledged by Sue: "Looking at the NOS has really helped me in putting together sessions, write training materials, and to re-emphasise to funders the value of what we're doing." There was also acknowledgement of the value in mapping training against recognised standards and thus giving it additional value and credibility with learners. Where possible, training is mapped against both NOS and the LANTRA Award - an accredited level 3 qualification in volunteer management.

The standards are extremely detailed which was found to be an advantage in certain situations e.g. when using them as a basis for in-depth discussion based workshops. However, this level of detail could also be a barrier at times when using the standards as framework.

Future Development

As part of an ongoing commitment to the standards, Warrington Volunteer Centre would like to offer a proactive follow-up service to organisations who have trained in the use of NOS. This would emphasise the value of the standards as a framework for ongoing development coaching and goal setting, either on a 1-1 basis or within a group setting.