

# Volunteer supervision : Sharing best practice

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# *Giving and Receiving Constructive Feedback*

A two-way street.



Having an effective, well maintained support and supervision structure will help your volunteers feel valued. It will also help the coordinator keep on top of problems before they become big issues, and to improve the programme through volunteers' input.



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# *Supervising Volunteers*

You've recruited skilled candidates whose values align with the prisons. Now how do you keep them?

***Connect volunteers to the whole prison: do all staff know who the volunteers are, what they do and the value they bring?***

***Invest in volunteers: spend the time to mentor, train and advance your volunteers.***

***Managing expectations: manage their expectations, their motivations, their problems, and even their joys.***

***Get their input: empower volunteers. Regularly ask how they think their roles would run better.***

***Provide regular feedback: make volunteers feel valued and heard.***



# *Connect Volunteers to the Prison*

*A fully integrated volunteer programme is more likely to succeed*

**A number of common factors support successful volunteering\*:**

- clear oversight and support at director level for volunteering
- flexibility on what and when volunteering is allowed in the prison
- robust procedures for recruitment, selection and training build staff trust and confidence in volunteers
- support for volunteers with security vetting leads to quick take-up of roles
- good management and supervision supports volunteer retention
- giving trusted volunteers appropriate responsibilities can ease pressure on staff
- promoting the positive role of volunteers helps to integrate them into the prison

[\\*Clinks: Valuing Volunteers in Prison: A review of volunteer Involvement in prisons, 2016](#)

# *Invest in Volunteers I*

*Spending time with volunteers*

**All volunteers need:**

- Support, guidance and feedback on their engagement
- A named person to resolve queries or concerns

**Assess each individual's need for supervision: Some Volunteers may need a little extra training or on the job coaching. Other volunteers may lack confidence and need reassurance that they are carrying out their roles correctly.**

**Alongside one-to-one types of support include:**

- Volunteer meetings
- Peer support, mentoring and buddying schemes
- Group supervision



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# Invest in Volunteers II

Ensure regular supervision meetings at agreed times, with realistic and constructive follow up.

Volunteers should have an informal but structured approach:

*Arrange a private space for the supervision meeting, or call them at home. Try to ensure that there won't be any disruptions. Try asking:*

- *What's gone well?*
- *What hasn't gone so well?*
- *Do they feel there is any support or training that they need?*
- *Is the volunteering role meeting their needs or fulfilling their motivations for volunteering?*
- *Are there any other tasks within the organisation they would like to do?*



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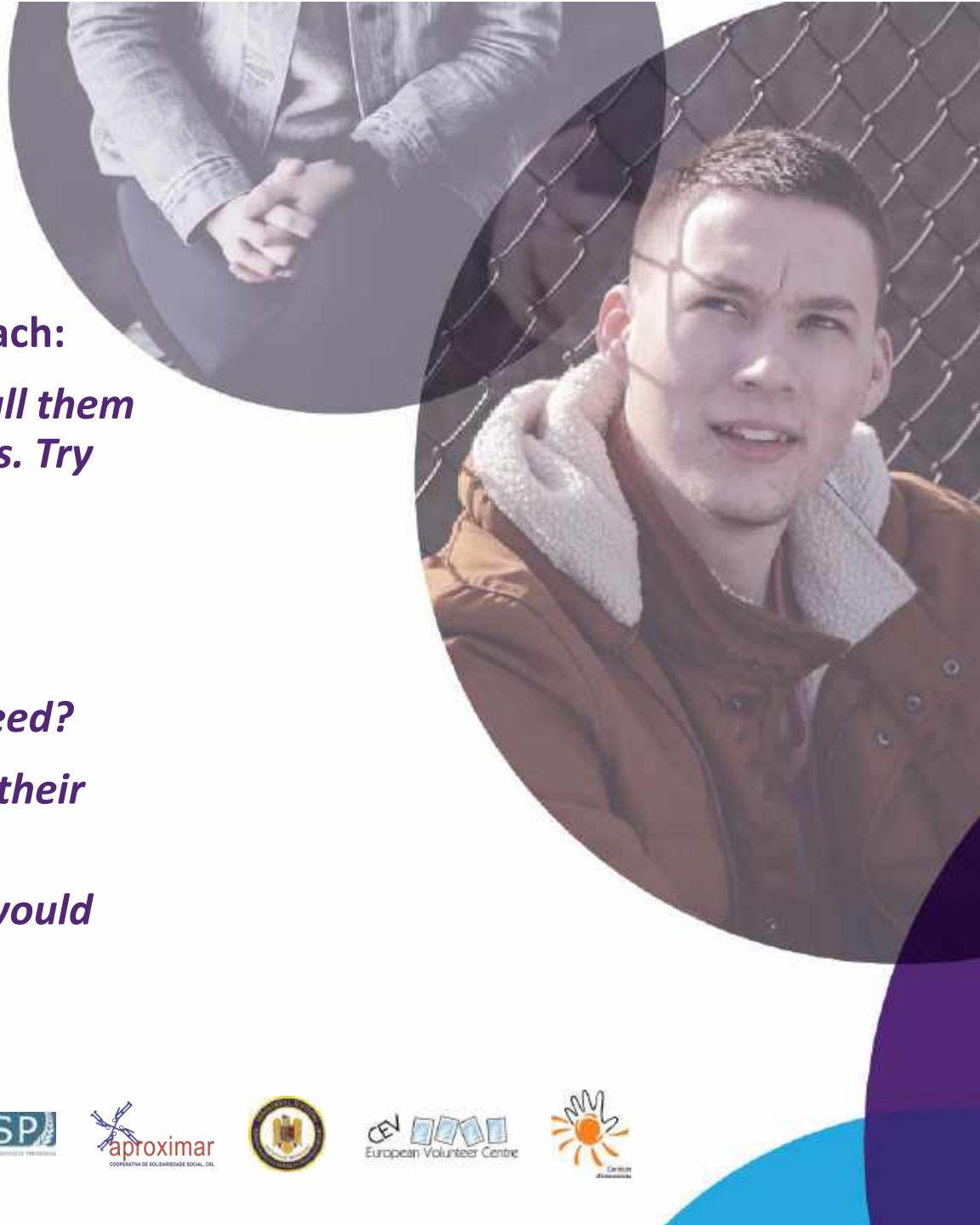
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# Manging Expectations I

Ensure basic workplace 'hygiene'

Volunteers should have basic 'hygiene factors' in the workspace, such as:

- *adequate space to work in*
- *break periods*
- *chairs and desks that conform to health and safety standards*
- *IT equipment that works properly*

Ask volunteers if their workplace meets their needs – do they feel secure? Are the bathroom facilities OK?



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# Manging Expectations II

Asking about motivation and expectation.

Understanding volunteer motivations enables you, the coordinator to build up a picture of how each individual likes to be managed. For example:

- *some volunteers like to be left alone to work on their own initiative, while others prefer more hands-on management*
- *some individuals find criticism motivational, but others will feel hurt and demotivated if it isn't delivered sensitively*
- *one volunteer may be desperate for public recognition whilst another team member may hate the idea of being praised publicly.*

You should not promise anything that you cannot deliver and must deliver on any promises made within the agreed timeframe.

## 5 minute activity:

*Turn to the person on your left. Ask them:*

- *What motivates you to do your job?*
- *What would make you more motivated?*

*Summarise what they have said to show you have been actively listening.*

*Now swap.*



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# Get Volunteers' Input

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# *The Trouble with Feedback...*

*It's not as easy as it might seem!*



**You avoid giving feedback**

**You don't know how to give feedback**

**Volunteers don't listen to, understand or accept your feedback**

**The feedback you are giving quickly escalates into conflicts**



**Volunteers listen to and clearly understand your message**

**Volunteers less offended and fewer conflict situations**

**Volunteers accept your feedback more easily**

**Volunteers take actions after your feedback**

**Volunteers feel supported and appreciated**

# *Giving and Receiving Constructive Feedback*

*Group discussion: can you give examples of ineffective feedback to volunteers in the prison context?*

Effective Feedback	Ineffective Feedback
Describes the behaviour which led to the feedback	
Comes asap after the behaviour	
Is direct, from sender to receiver	
Is owned by the sender, who uses 'I' messages	
Is checked for clarity, to see that the volunteer fully understands what's being conveyed.	
Allows the volunteer to 'come back' with comments	
Is given in the right environment, preferably in private	
Refers to behaviours about which the volunteer can do something, if s/he wants to	
Empowers the volunteer, makes them see that they contribute to making a better programme	



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# Measuring supervision success

*How can you check and demonstrate that your supervision procedures are fit for purpose?*

- Turnover rates (the number of volunteers joining and leaving your organisation).
- Volunteer satisfaction surveys: solve problems by asking the right questions.
- Reduction in sickness/ absence levels.
- Growth in volunteering capacity (e.g. volunteers recruited, numbers of service users supported).
- Increased diversity among volunteers.
- Feedback from prison staff, prisoners etc.
- Levels of learning and development available (type of activities, cost and length) for volunteers.
- Exit interviews with volunteers who leave.



# 20 minute activity:

Developing a volunteer satisfaction survey.

***10 minutes: Agree 10 good questions you could ask your volunteers so that your organization can leverage their insights and make changes that benefit your program.***

***5 minutes: Now write a one sentence introduction to the volunteer satisfaction survey which will help avoid the 'halo effect' (where volunteers tell you everything is already great!)...***

***...and a one sentence conclusion, saying how future change will be connected to the data they have submitted.***

***5 minutes: Finally, decide on when and how is best to implement your new survey***

**Now feedback to the group!**



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*Thank you.*

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