

Title Induction and Training of new volunteers

Reference CAM005



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Introduction

When somebody becomes a volunteer with the Ramblers it is important that they feel welcome and able to carry out their role. It is also important to make sure that they have the right tools to complete their role as well as knowing what it is to be a volunteer in the Ramblers. A successful induction process helps a new volunteer and ensures that they are enjoying the role in which they volunteer as well as feeling they are making a real difference. Remember that everyone is giving up their time and so there should always be an element of fun associated with their work as a volunteer.

A Starting Point

When planning this process it is useful to remember the values of the Ramblers. The first few weeks as a volunteer will have a huge effect on their future involvement and how they talk about it to their friends. The values of the Ramblers state who we are and what it is we stand for and so any induction should reflect this. This is not only in the information that we give out but also in the way we act.

The Values of the Ramblers

Welcoming – To all, and particularly to newcomers

Positive – Looking to have fun and create enjoyment

Empowering – Helping to give people the confidence to help themselves

Inclusive – Welcoming people from diverse backgrounds, and being sensitive to the needs of different communities

Ethical – Being respectful of others, honest in what we say, and thinking through the consequences of what we do

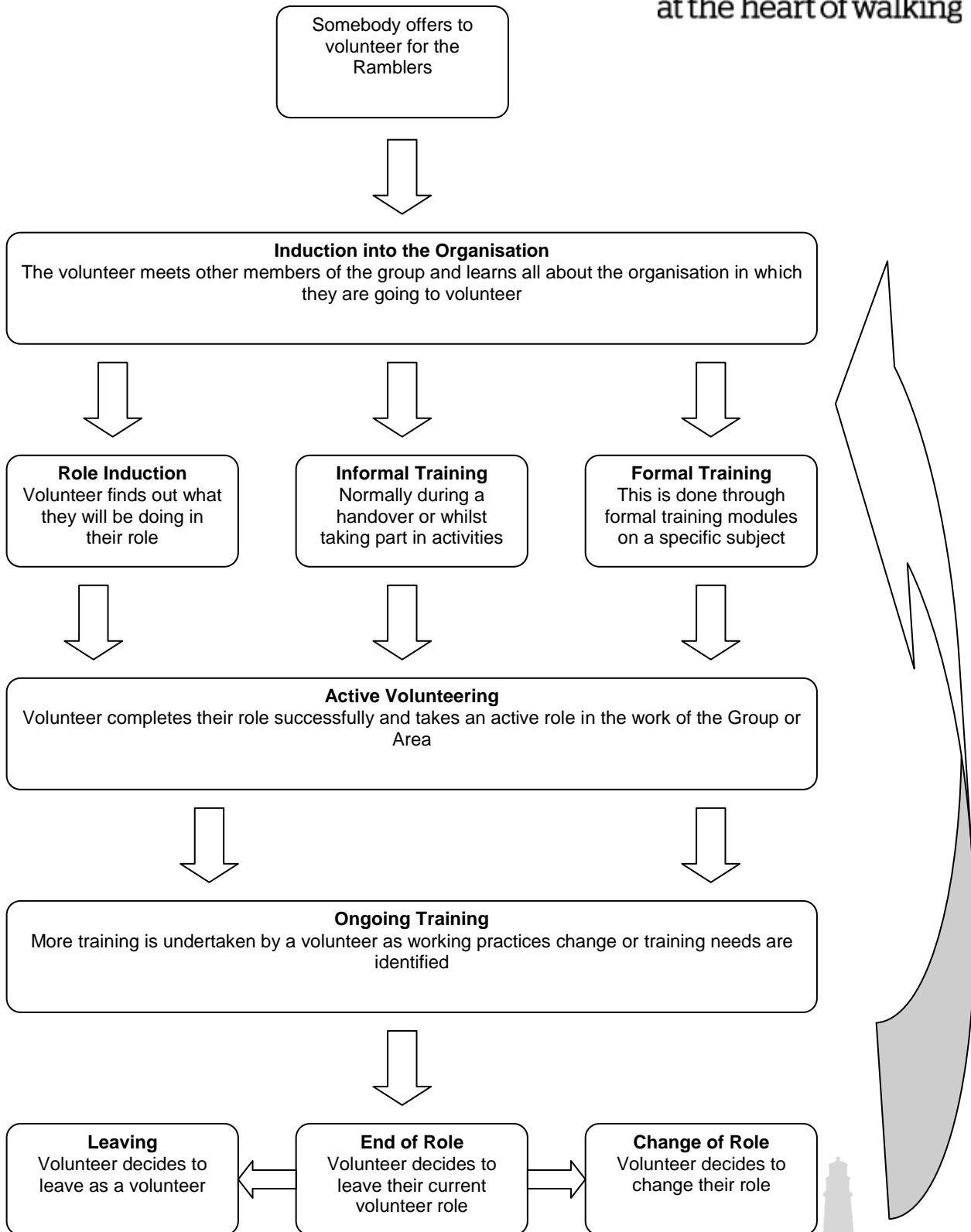
Democratic – Working to deepen and improve democracy within our organisation

Environmentally Responsible – Promoting activities and behaviours which are sustainable and which benefit the environment

It is also important to understand the difference between the induction process and training. Simply put, induction is the process by which volunteers find out about what it means to be a volunteer and the role that they have undertaken. However, training is the process by which volunteers gain the skills they need to complete their role. The diagram below outlines the process that a volunteer follows from the moment they offer their time as a volunteer to becoming an empowered and effective volunteer for the Ramblers.

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Induction into the Organisation

When somebody becomes a volunteer in the Ramblers there are certain things they need to know regardless of the role that they will be undertaking. These are the things that will remain constant throughout their time as a volunteer. Information you may want to include in this part of an induction may include:

- Who is who within the Group or Area
- All the opportunities available to volunteers in the Ramblers
- The general policy of the Ramblers
- The Code of Conduct of the Ramblers
- The aims of the Ramblers

You can identify these as they are the things that make the Ramblers the organisation that it is.

Role Induction

A role induction is subtly different to an organisational induction. In this phase of their welcome they have already found out about the people, policy and procedures that they need to follow as a volunteer. Now they are finding out about the specific information they need for completing their role. These are the operational aspects of their role and without them they probably cannot fulfil it. Remember that a volunteer who has all the tools to undertake their role will be far more positive and engaged and most importantly, is more likely to volunteer for a longer period.

During this stage of the induction process there is some core information that you should hand over. This includes:

- A role description
- A list of key contacts (including any reporting lines)
- Specific role information (Such as budget sheets, passwords or spreadsheets)
- A brief rundown of what the role entails including meetings to attend and reports expected.
- Information on claiming expenses

The best way to make sure you have included everything is to go through the role yourself and make a note of everything you do and any associated information that you use. Although this may take a little while in the long run it will mean that a new role holder will not need as much direct support. When you have done this once you will have a template for future use.

When organising the role induction you should ensure you have put enough time aside for both yourself and the new volunteer and meet in an environment which you both feel comfortable with. There is nothing worse than having to rush through an induction because you have run out of time. A good tip is to assume the meeting will last half an hour longer than you expect. The other thing is to make sure you have all the information at hand and that you write a list of everything you need to cover during the induction. If you don't plan the induction the chances are you will forget something. At best this will mean that you have to send more information out later and at

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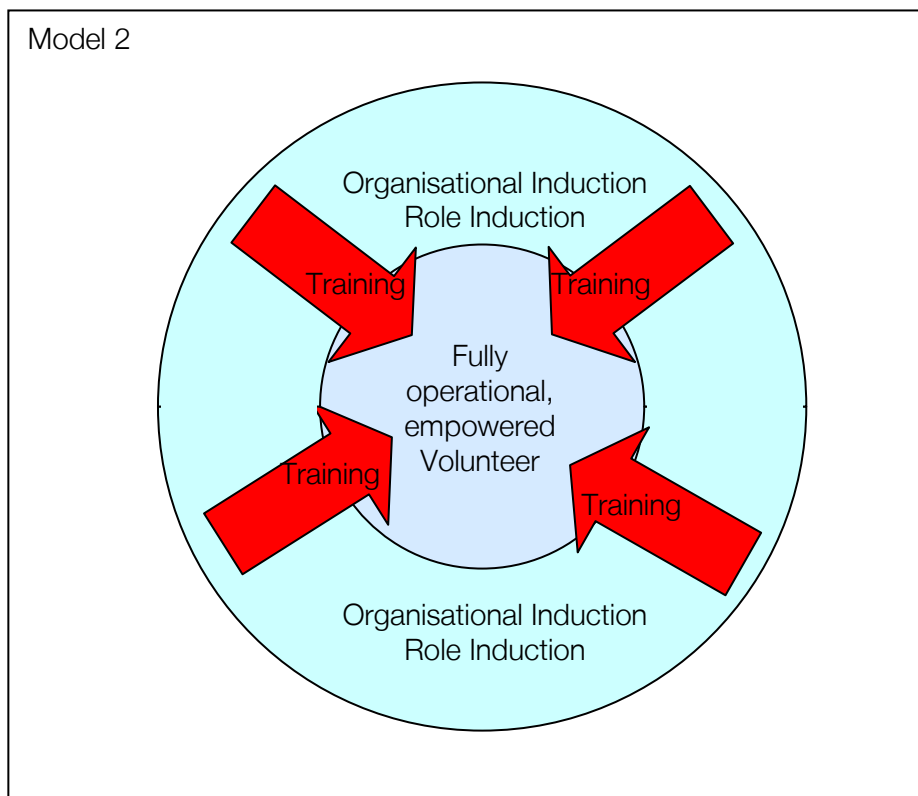
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worst you will have to organise another meeting. When putting the list together remember that you may be covering both organisation and role induction.

Training

The next step of the process is making sure that the volunteer has the correct skills for the role that they are undertaking. Put simply the induction is the process in which the volunteer identifies what it is they will be doing and the training is the process by which they get the skills to do it. Model 2 outlines this process.



There are essentially 3 different types of training that a volunteer can undertake. These are all useful in different situations and can be used to fulfil different needs. These can be summed up as:

- **Formal Training** – Formal training involves somebody going on a course or working through a work book. The main point about it is that it follows a formal syllabus and anybody from across the Group, Area or Organisation can access this. Materials and courses are provided by staff from the Ramblers offices, most often at the request of Areas.
- **Informal Training** – Informal training is bespoke and is put together with the needs of the volunteer as the main driver. This may have a large practical component or involve the use of online training materials.

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- **Ongoing Learning** – Ongoing learning is often used to help build on a skills set and to learn about updated practices or learn about a new system that is being implemented. The big advantage of ongoing learning is that it can also be used as a way of thanking or rewarding the efforts of a volunteer.

Formal and Informal training are normally, although not uniquely, used to give a new role holder the skills to do their role. A key point about training is that it does not have to end in a qualification. Competency levels and training should be regarded as two separate issues.

Identifying the need

Central to offering training is identifying the need. The easiest way to do this is to look at the skills set needed to complete the role and then go down this list ticking off the skills that the volunteer already possesses and those that they do not, or indeed those they need to brush up on. Once you have identified these you can decide whether they can be met with informal training, or by going on a training course. If the volunteer is taking over as a website editor and does not know how the website's content management system works the training undertaken will probably be to sit down for half an hour with the person who is standing down and go through the system. However, if the role requires a volunteer to give evidence to a public inquiry they may need to get training on presenting methods. The training may have to be carried out over a period of time given the restrictions on time and resources and in this situation it is important to prioritise the training needs.

This training will allow the volunteer to fulfil their role in a successful and rewarding way. The more they take from the role the more effective they will be and the longer they are likely to volunteer with the Ramblers.

Moving on

When somebody volunteers with the Ramblers the only thing we can be certain about is that they will eventually move on. We cannot be sure about how long it will be before they move on but we know that eventually they will. However, this does not have to be a negative experience. Indeed this can be very healthy for the Group or Area as long as this simple fact is not ignored and the right provision is put in place. If succession planning is not carried out there are two possible outcomes: the first is that somebody else covers for them and so they become less effective in their own role, or secondly, the volunteer continues in their role until somebody else can be found to take over and this can lead to resentment and make them less likely to volunteer again. Both these scenarios should be avoided at all costs. In short, the process of people moving on is not a negative experience, but the attitude we hold towards it can turn it into a negative experience.

When somebody says that they are going to move on the first thing to do is to talk through the various options with them. Find out whether they are moving on because they are ready for a new challenge or they no longer have the time to give. It is very rare that somebody wants to completely give up their association with the Ramblers. Where this is the case you will normally be aware of the reasons. Once you have ascertained the reason for them leaving ask if there is a different role they would like to take on, that fits in better with the time they can give. Remember, if they have decided to give up volunteering because of a change in circumstances keep them in mind as they may be able to come back after a break. Above all, when somebody says that they are moving on from their role remember to thank them regardless of the circumstances of their

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departure. Last impressions are important and future involvement will largely be dependent on whether they felt appreciated by the Ramblers and whether they felt that they had made a difference.

Conclusion

When welcoming new volunteers into the Ramblers remember that the first few weeks and months will shape their future involvement. A volunteer who has all the information they need to carry out their role is far more likely to make a positive impact. You will have to invest time in this process but once an induction process is set up you can re-use it, adding in specific details for future roles. However, time invested in the planning and execution of the induction and training process will lead to more engaged volunteers. The more engaged volunteers you have in your Group or Area the more you can achieve.

