

DELEGATION

Delegation is a valuable management tool. It is a positive way to:

- involve new people in running the Group;
- relieve the pressure on key volunteers;
- ensure continuity in delivery of the aims and management of the Group.

RDA abounds with outstanding volunteers who donate passion, experience and skills to their Groups and willingly absorb additional responsibilities and duties. However, there are many reasons for considering delegation of roles or tasks.

The predominant reasons for considering delegation

By an individual

- change of circumstances;
- lack of time, energy or enthusiasm;
- forthcoming retirement.

By the Group

- succession planning;
- the introduction of a new activity;
- Group developments plans;
- management demands;
- volunteer development and management.

Health Warning

Delegation of a task (particularly one you are not keen on) can be a huge relief but if you are handing it over to make more time for yourself or family, make sure that you are not lured into taking on other duties that you are not ready for. However, when you have carried out a duty or held a position for a long time, it can be very difficult to hand over the reins even if, deep down, you know that it is the right thing to do. Standing back, taking a deep breath, and keeping quiet can be quite stressful.

Trustees' Responsibility and Delegation

The Trustees cannot delegate their responsibility. However, apart from the role of Chairman, they may delegate roles or tasks to other enrolled Group volunteers.

The Trustees should approve all formal, long-term, delegations. It is suggested that the Hon Secretary or the Volunteer Co-ordinator keeps a list of all allocated roles and tasks and to whom they have been delegated.

Group officers, instructors, or other volunteers carrying out specific roles may, of course, delegate tasks to other volunteers to help with day-to-day RDA activities without reference to the Trustees or Management Committee, but in the event of a problem arising, they will be answerable to them.

Role or Task Descriptions

It is always a good idea to get something down on paper before approaching likely volunteers. For a designated role, the Role Description should be a more formal document, but for a Task Description, it may be quite simple, although care should be taken to ensure that the volunteer taking on the task is absolutely clear what they are being asked to undertake.

For example, in addition to the description of the role/task, the mention of the following should be considered:

- skills required
- training offered
- time required
- expenses policy
- committees to attend
- recording and reporting procedures
- chain of command
- social activities
- trial period
- offer of an informal chat
- formalities required by the Trustees
- whether there is any flexibility in what is being asked for and how it can be done
- if the appointment is likely to lead to other commitments, i.e. if it is for a deputy who could be seen as a replacement for a retiree

It is important to match up the volunteer with the role/task, so a degree of flexibility or the offer of more than one role/task is suggested.

"Nobody offered to help so I had to take it on myself."

It is a recognised fact that volunteers rarely come forward to take on something they are unsure about. Natural instincts are: not to 'get involved'; think 'they' would not want me to do it; think that they are not qualified; and to hope that somebody else will do it. So if there is not an obvious candidate for a post or to take on a task, it may mean some serious thought about a strategy to attract one.

A Delegation Strategy

Identify all the roles and tasks for delegation – currently and perhaps in the foreseeable future.

Within the Group might require:

- checking the skills section of the Volunteer Enrolment Forms to see if there is a likely candidate you can target;
- setting up a Group Skills Bank;
- publicity within the Group – notice boards, News Letters, Group and RDA National web sites;
- personal approaches – within the Group (volunteers, participants, parents and supporters), friends and relations;
- if there are several roles or tasks, a Group meeting for all volunteers to explain the needs and discuss the opportunities to become involved or offer solutions.

Beyond the Group

Recruitment beyond the Group would use, as appropriate for the roles/tasks, the Volunteer Bureau, local newspapers, professional bodies, youth organisations, senior citizen groups, schools and colleges, the RDA web site.