

Managing and Mitigating Risks for Volunteers and Volunteer Managers

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Capability &
Capacity Series

Volunteer Management Sandbox Learning Resource:
Guiding SSAs in Managing Risks, Ethical Dilemmas and
Corresponding Mitigation Strategies in Volunteer Management

Introduction

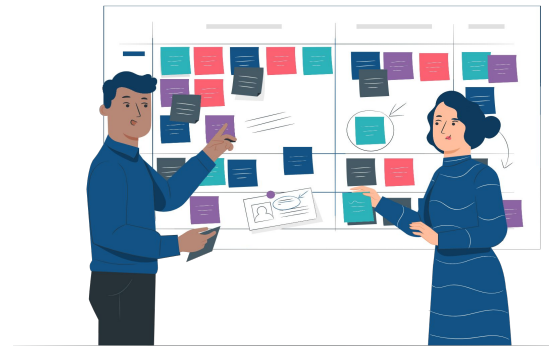
About this Learning Resource

This learning resource was curated from the inaugural National Council of Social Service (NCSS) Volunteer Management Sandbox Series. The series brought together volunteer managers and sector leaders, through thematic workshops, promoting discussions on strategic alignment and resource development to address challenges in sustainable volunteerism. The VM Sandbox Series aim to:

- Spark innovation and empower participants
- Foster collaboration and camaraderie among participants
- Co-create valuable learning resources for the sector

This learning resource on **“Managing and Mitigating Risks for Volunteers and Volunteer Managers”**, is a collection of volunteer management best practices and insights of 31 volunteer managers from 25 Social Service Agencies (SSAs), strengthened through NCSS and its appointed consulting partner – Impact's strategic perspectives to deliver comprehensive guidance for the social service sector.

This learning resource serves as a guide to address the most common risks identified during the session and outlines mitigation strategies to address them.

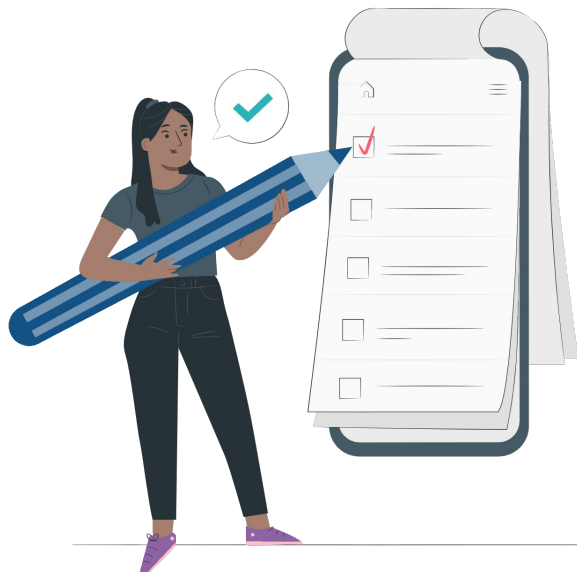


Who is this Learning Resource for

This learning resource is intended for volunteer managers and any staff and volunteer leaders in SSAs, who manage volunteers and may encounter the listed risks. It can also be used to value-add to SSAs' organisational risk management processes.

What does this Learning Resource covers

This Learning Resource covers the essential aspects of risk management in volunteer programmes. It explores seven key risk types and their associated scenarios, providing practical mitigation strategies and guidance on handling ethical dilemmas, thereby helping volunteer managers identify, assess, and address potential risks effectively.



Types of Risk

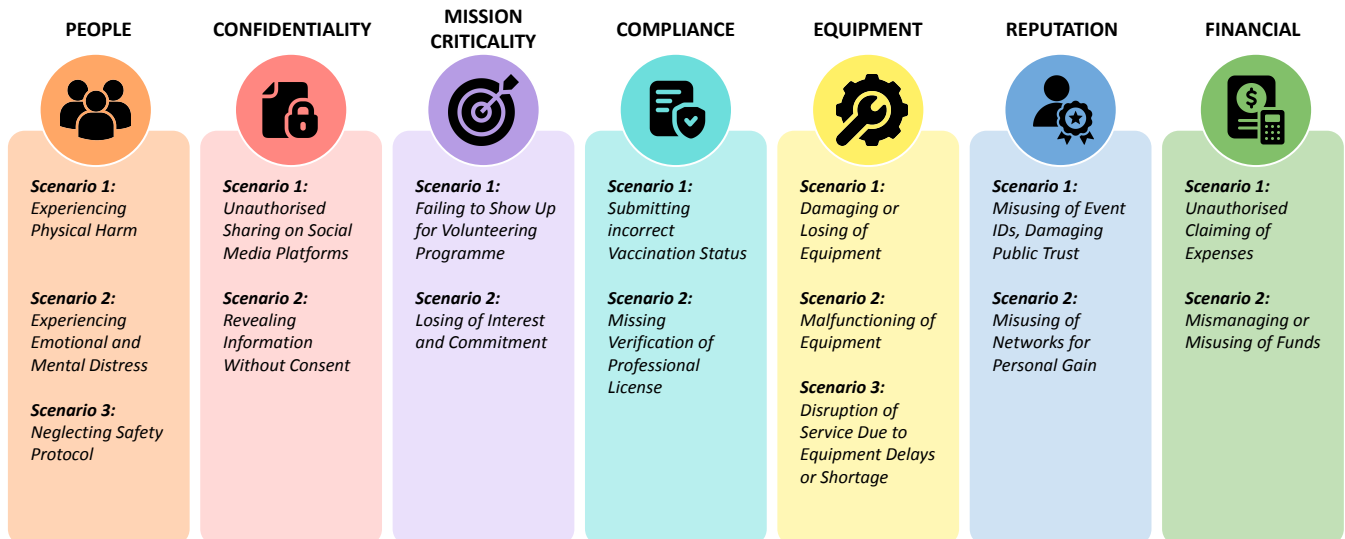
There are **7 risk types**:

	1. People	These risks relate to volunteers, staff and service users during volunteering activities. They may include physical harm or injury caused by negligence or an accident, as well as incidents that have an impact on volunteers' emotional or mental wellness after volunteering programme.
	2. Equipment	These risks relate to the use and potential damage or loss of equipment owned by the SSA. Equipment failure due to normal wear and tear is not excluded.
	3. Confidentiality	These risks relate to unauthorised access to or sharing of confidential materials, such as personal data, SSA-designated materials, or photos of service users taken without consent. Risks may arise from physical negligence or cyber negligence, or from ill intentions by disgruntled staff or volunteers. Additional risks may also occur when volunteers disclose past convictions or lifestyle choices after they are accepted into a programme, particularly if these are in direct conflict with the SSA's value or programme objectives.
	4. Mission Criticality	These risks relate to volunteers' contribution to project deadlines or their responsibilities in delivery of services. Risks may arise when volunteers fail to submit deliverables or do not attend scheduled volunteer opportunities for service delivery.
	5. Reputation	These risks relate to misrepresentation of the SSA or substandard service delivery by volunteers, potentially damaging the SSA's reputation. Risks may arise when volunteers abuse their positions within the SSA or conduct volunteering activities or service delivery in a sub-par manner.
	6. Compliance	These risks relate to volunteers' adherence to policies and guidelines when engaging with the SSA, service users or fellow volunteers. Risks may arise from volunteers' non-compliance with policies, such as unprofessional behaviour when interacting with the SSA's staff and/or fellow volunteers, or infringing engagement guidelines when providing social services to service users.
	7. Financial	These risks relate to adherence to financial guidelines and budget management. Risks may arise from volunteers claiming unauthorised expenses or ineffectively managing budgets, resulting in budget shortfalls or overruns.



Risk Scenarios

The following segment lists the circumstances for each risk scenario, its identified root cause and corresponding mitigation strategy to address them. The insights reflected here are adapted mainly from volunteer managers, senior management and Board members of SSAs, who participated in the inaugural NCSS VM Sandbox Series.



Risk Scenario: People

SCENARIO 1: Volunteers experience physical harm from service users during volunteering programmes. This may be due to specific triggers (aggressive behaviour, unexpected violent outbursts, or communications barriers) encountered by service users during volunteering programmes.

Root Cause

Insufficient pre-deployment risk assessment of highlight safety risks and protocols related to service users.



Note: Other root causes may be due to insufficient pre-deployment training on managing challenging behaviour/situations or risk communication.

Mitigation Strategy to Address the Identified Root Cause (Reference: [VM Toolkit 2.0](#))

Implement Service Risk Assessment

Conduct a comprehensive risk assessment of the service users participating in the volunteering programme to determine appropriate mitigation actions for volunteers during service provision.

Identified risks related to service users may be assessed based on risk parameters, such as likelihood and impact of each risk identified. The risks may then be plotted on a risk matrix as follows:

Risk Impact	Likelihood of the risk occurring	Severity of impact
Low	Rare or unusual risk, very unlikely to occur	Little impact to the agency should the risk be realised
Medium	Risk has occurred before but not realised often	Moderate impact to the agency should risk be realised, but may still be tolerable
High	Risk has high possibility of occurring in the future	Catastrophic impact to the agency

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SCENARIO 1

❑ **Ensure Sufficient Support/Guidance**

If the risk is high for a particular service user, staff should be paired with volunteers to manage the interactions and/or to respond to risks. For new volunteers, they should be paired with an experienced volunteer who can provide guidance during the interactions.

❑ **Ensure Sufficient Insurance Coverage**

Insurance for volunteers is one method to reduce your organisation's liability. Some common types of insurance are:

Insurance Type	Purpose
Employer's Liability Insurance	Protects employer when the volunteer sustains an injury from the employer's negligence
Personal /Group Accident, Death & Disability Insurance	Provides the agency or individual volunteer with accidental death coverage or accident injury expenses of a volunteer
Public Liability Insurance	Covers the agency if a member of the public sustains an injury or loss as a result of its services
Travel Insurance	Provides coverage for volunteers who travel, to reimburse travel disruptions or loss of personal property

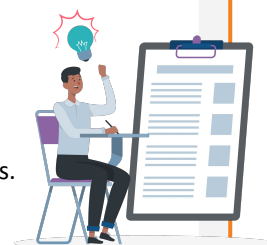
❑ **Develop a Volunteer Continuity Plan to effectively respond to crises**

Reference: Refer to Volunteer Continuity Planning [Guide](#) or learn through the [e-learning module](#).

A Volunteer Continuity Plan (VCP) is a document which outlines the key actions that enable SSAs to respond quickly and efficiently to manage risks during service disruptions. It is activated when a crisis occurs.

A VCP enables your organisation to:

1. Respond quickly and efficiently to crises.
2. Minimise disruption of services.
3. Minimise risk exposures to both volunteers and the organisation.
4. Achieve a quick recovery of volunteer activities and critical services.
5. Maximise volunteer retention through crises.



SCENARIO 2: Volunteers may experience emotional and mental distress due to interactions with service users who have special needs or are experiencing hardship.

Root Cause

Insufficient support mechanisms and procedures to support volunteers' emotional well-being, particularly the absence of effective debriefing processes following volunteering activities.

Mitigation Strategy to Address the Identified Root Cause

Institutionalise an additional step during post-activity debriefs to check-in on volunteers' mental well-being following their engagement. This check-in can be conducted through:

1. **A guided group discussion** using a set of predetermined questions
2. **An online survey** for volunteers to complete, with results discussed by the volunteer leader/volunteer manager/programme staff in a general and anonymised manner.

This step may be critical for the first 2-3 engagements between volunteers and service users but can be optional for subsequent sessions.

Based on the responses, the volunteer leader/volunteer manager/programme staff can support individual volunteer or group in processing their engagement experiences and emotions, as well as share self-care tips by trained staff.

Proposed Guiding Questions

- ❑ How did you feel about your volunteering session?
- ❑ What were the reason(s) for feeling so?
- ❑ Would you like to speak to someone about your emotional/mental well-being or your recent volunteering experience?



Note: For additional emotional and mental well-being support, volunteers can be directed to:

1. [Mindline.sg](#) for mental health support and resources
2. Institute of Mental Health's Mental Health 24-hour helpline at 6389-2222
3. Singapore Association for Mental Health's toll-free helpline at 1800-283-7019

SCENARIO 3: Volunteers, staff and service users neglecting safety protocol during volunteer activities, resulting in mishaps and grave repercussions.

Root Cause

Insufficient pre-deployment communication to highlight safety risks and protocols.



Note: Other root causes may be due to insufficient pre-deployment training or risk assessment.

Mitigation Strategy to Address the Identified Root Cause

❑ **Curate a Safety Briefing Checklist**

The safety briefing should encompass policies, procedures and scenarios to enhance awareness and understanding of possible hazards and ground realities, as well as necessary prevention and mitigation measures.

❑ **Conduct Safety Briefing**

Provide a comprehensive safety briefing through appropriate platform such as

1. Volunteer orientation
2. Volunteer training session
3. Pre-activity volunteer briefing
4. Staff meeting



1. Preparation

- ❑ **Identify Hazards:** List activity-specific potential hazards (e.g Slips and falls, lifting injuries).
- ❑ **Develop Scenarios:** Create Scenario-based examples that illustrate these hazards to make it easier for the audience to picture possible accidents. For example, a senior falling in the restroom during a transfer due to insufficient volunteer support.
- ❑ **Research Mitigation Measures:** Find appropriate solutions for each scenario (e.g ensuring adequate volunteer support, provision of first-aid training/resources).
- ❑ **Gather Resources:** Collect necessary handouts, visual aids, or safety equipment for the briefing (e.g first-aid kit, evacuation route).

2. Content and Delivery

- ❑ **Safety Culture:** Emphasise the importance of safety as a core value. Explain how following safety procedures protects volunteers, service users, and the organisation.
- ❑ **Hazard Identification:** Review the list of potential hazards and their associated risks. Use clear and concise language to explain each hazard and its potential impact.
- ❑ **Scenario Presentations:** Present each scenario and outline the potential consequences.
- ❑ **Mitigation Measures:** Demonstrate or explain the mitigation measures for each scenario, and provide clear instructions on hazards prevention and incident response.
- ❑ **Interactive Activities:** Consider incorporating quizzes, role-playing, or case studies to enhance engagement.
- ❑ **Question and Answer:** Dedicate time for volunteers to ask questions and clarify any uncertainties.
- ❑ **Safety Resources:** Provide information on additional safety resources, including emergency contact details and on-site first-aid kit locations.

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SCENARIO 3

3. Implementation

- ❑ **Schedule:** Choose an optimal time for the briefing to ensure maximum volunteer attendance.
- ❑ **Delivery Style:** Balance informational content with interactive elements to enhance delivery and understanding.
- ❑ **Visual Aids:** Utilise infographics or videos to illustrate hazards and clarify safety procedures.
- ❑ **Positive Reinforcement:** Acknowledge participants who actively engage and demonstrate safety awareness.

4. Follow-up

- ❑ **Attendance Record:** Maintain a record of volunteers who attend the briefing.
- ❑ **Feedback:** Collect participants' feedback about the briefing to improve future sessions.
- ❑ **Regular Updates:** Review and update safety briefing content periodically to reflect evolving risks or procedures.

5. Additional Considerations

- ❑ **Tailor the briefing:** Adapt the content to meet the specific needs and experience levels of volunteers.
- ❑ **Accessibility:** Ensure the briefing accommodates volunteers from diverse backgrounds and language abilities. Provide translation services or alternate formats as needed, including support for hearing-impaired volunteers.

By following this checklist, you can create and deliver a comprehensive and engaging safety briefing for your volunteers, staff and service users. A well-implemented safety briefing not only protects individuals but also fosters a positive and responsible volunteering experience.



Risk Scenario: Confidentiality

SCENARIO 1: Unauthorised sharing of service users' photos on social media platforms, resulting in a breach of confidentiality.

Root Cause

Volunteers are not adequately briefed on organisational policies and/or Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), including media release and photo-taking guidelines.

Mitigation Strategy to Address the Identified Root Cause

Implement a multi-channel communication approach to inform and regularly remind volunteers of organisational policies and SOPs throughout the duration of their engagement.

1. Communication Strategy

The following strategy outlines an effective approach to ensure volunteers understand and adhere to policies and SOPs during volunteering activity.

Pre-Event Preparation	 Identify Critical SOPs: Select the most critical SOPs that are relevant to the specific volunteering activity.  Develop Engaging Materials: Create content (posters, videos, quizzes, comics) that simplifies and communicates critical SOPs effectively. A sample of a digital poster is appended at the end of this section for reference.  Provide Digital Handbook: Share a digital copy of the volunteer handbook containing detailed SOPs for easy reference.
During Orientation/ Training/Briefing	 Verbal Explanation: Provide clear explanations of SOPs and their underlying rationale (e.g. protecting the privacy of vulnerable service users, by prohibiting unauthorised photography).  In-Person Training: During in-person training sessions, distribute physical volunteer handbooks or share the web link to the digital copy and highlight critical SOPs for volunteers to note.  Digital Utilisation: Share SOP-focused digital content to reinforce the key procedures after the training session.
During Event	 Pre-Event Reiteration: Highlight the critical SOPs for volunteers to take note during pre-event briefing.  Housekeeping Rules: Communicate general rules of engagement, specifically focusing on SOPs related to photo-taking and sharing consent to all participants (volunteers and service users) during the volunteer briefing.  Supervision: Deploy volunteer leaders or equivalent personnel (e.g. event ICs) to supervise and ensure compliance.

Overall, this strategy emphasises clear communication, comprehensive training materials, and effective supervision to ensure volunteers effectively understand and follow SOPs, ensuring a successful event.



In the event that the social media posting policy is breached, the following steps should be taken:

- **Reporting:** Immediately notify the volunteer manager if unauthorised photos are published without clearance from the SSA's designated personnel.
- **Initial Intervention:** Volunteer manager to reach out to the person who published the photos through informal channels (WhatsApp/Telegram), requesting immediate removal of the photos.
- **Escalation Procedures:** If informal requests are unsuccessful after a set period of time, the affected party may lodge a complaint with the SSA to ensure photos are removed subsequently.

SCENARIO 1



Digital media reference created by VM Sandbox Series participants

SCENARIO 2: Volunteers reveal information about service users without consent, both intentionally and unintentionally, resulting in confidentiality breach.

Root Cause

Volunteers are not adequately briefed on organisational policies or Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), relating to media release, photo-taking, and personal data protection. In addition, such policies or SOPs may be inaccessible to volunteers.

Mitigation Strategy to Address the Identified Root Cause

To protect confidentiality, the SSA should create, implement and clearly communicate their confidentiality policies to all volunteers. It is recommended for key clauses to be presented in a clear and easy-to-understand format, and made them readily accessible to all volunteers.

❑ 1. Checklist for Creating a Data Confidentiality Policy

The following checklist outlines the steps for creating and implementing a data confidentiality policy.

Step 1: Review Existing Policies

- ❑ Check if your SSA has an existing Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA) policy, usually found in documents such as Volunteer Code of Conduct.

Step 2: Create a Data Confidentiality Policy

- ❑ **Use available resources:**
 - PDPA Advisory Guidelines for the Social Service Sector: Refer to [PDPC "Advisory Guidelines to Social Service Sector" \(revised 18 January 2024\)](#) for the advisory guidelines.
 - Data protection advisory guidelines for volunteers – [Protecting Data, while Doing Good!](#)
- ❑ **(Optional) To create a Volunteer Code of Conduct:** Refer to [NCSS "Volunteer Management Toolkit 2.0" \(page 24\)](#).

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SCENARIO 2

Step 3: Identify Data Risks and Create Training Materials

- ❑ **Identify volunteer roles:** Determine the main volunteer roles in your SSA.
- ❑ **Brainstorm Scenarios:** For each role, brainstorm potential situations where data confidentiality could be breached (e.g accidentally mentioning client details in public).
- ❑ **Create infographic:** Develop an infographic for volunteers that:
 - ❑ Explain data confidentiality and its importance.
 - ❑ Illustrate potential data confidentiality breaches specific to volunteer roles.
 - ❑ Provide clear steps on how to handle potential breaches.

Step 4: Implement the Policy and Roll Out the Infographic

- ❑ Obtain management approval for the policy and infographic.
- ❑ Train staff to understand the policy through the infographic, and prepare them to train volunteers.
- ❑ Share the policy and infographic with volunteers.
- ❑ Collect feedback from staff and volunteers on the effectiveness of the infographic, and use them to improve overall data confidentiality policy and training.

This process helps ensure volunteers understand and comply with data confidentiality protocols, protecting the privacy of the service users.



Risk Scenario: Mission Criticality

SCENARIO 1: Volunteers fails to show up or arrive late for scheduled volunteering programmes, disrupting both the programme plans as well as service delivery to the service users.

Root Cause

Inadequate alignment of volunteers’ skills, experiences, and interests with volunteering programme requirements may lead to decrease in commitment and contribution to it. Volunteers may subsequently be absent or drop out of programmes without providing reasons.

Mitigation Strategy to Address the Identified Root Cause

Enhance accuracy of matching volunteers’ skills and interests to volunteering programmes during the recruitment and onboarding process.

-  **1. Guide to enhance volunteer role matching to mitigate absenteeism**
The following checklist outlines steps to enhance the robustness of matching volunteers’ skills and interests to relevant volunteering programmes to reduce absenteeism.

Enhancing Recruitment and Onboarding	 Clear Role Descriptions: Develop detailed descriptions for volunteer roles, including performance expectations for the role, time commitment, required skills, and service schedules. Refer to NCSS Volunteer Role Redesign Guide.  Role Clarification: During volunteer interviews and onboarding, (re)emphasise the specific requirements and expectations for different roles. This serves as a secondary screening process, allowing volunteers to opt out if the roles do not align with their expectations.  Staff Evaluation: Leverage the interview process for staff to assess volunteers suitability beyond the initial applications.
Contingency plans if volunteers are absent from volunteering programmes	 Replacement Strategies: For one-on-one engagements, assign a secondary volunteer to each primary volunteer-service user pair. This secondary volunteer can step in if the primary volunteer is unavailable, ensuring continuity of service.  Increase Volunteers’ Capacity: Consider allowing experienced volunteers to engage with two service users under staff supervision, maximising service delivery during volunteer shortages.  Staff Backup: Programme staff should be prepared to step in, when necessary.  Flexible Workload Distribution: Programme staff to redistribute tasks among available volunteers to address unexpected absences.
Addressing Consistent Absences	 Proactive Communication: Schedule check-in sessions (phone, virtual, or in-person) with frequently absent volunteers to understand and address their challenges.  Flexible Volunteering Opportunities: Explore alternative volunteering opportunities with varying levels of commitment to accommodate different schedules.  Volunteer Breaks: Offer volunteers the option to take a temporary break from volunteering, with a clear path for retraining and return.  Redeployment: Offer and match volunteers to a more suitable programme if their current role is not a good fit.  Programme Withdrawal: Consider withdrawing the volunteers from the programme in case of persistent absenteeism.

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SCENARIO 1

❑ 2. Alternative Volunteer Sources

Peer support volunteers and corporate partnerships offer additional volunteer sources. While these approaches may require customised deployments strategies, they lead to more inclusive and sustainable volunteering programmes.

Peer Support Volunteers

Engage individuals with lived experience to greatly enhance programme effectiveness and enrich engagement with service users. While these volunteers may occasionally need additional support due to health fluctuations, their involvement can be optimised by:

- **One-on-one briefings:** Conduct briefing to clearly communicate expectations and commitment levels.
- **Support network collaboration:** Maintain open communication with volunteers' caregivers and where required, to allow caregivers to sit in to volunteering programmes as observers.
- **Initial staff support:** Pair new volunteers with staff during initial volunteering sessions to provide guidance and assistance until they feel confident to work independently.
- **Gradual integration:** Start volunteers with roles that match their ability level, gradually increasing responsibility as they build confidence and skills.

Corporate Volunteers

Partner with corporates that implement structured *volun-teaming*, a system where employees are rostered for volunteer roles. This ensures a continuous flow of volunteers while minimising disruption due to dropouts.

- **Corporate Roster System:** Employees are pre-assigned shifts as pairs or in teams, and when one drops out, another automatically fills the gap.
- **Skills-Aligned Deployment:** Volunteers are matched to roles based on their professional expertise, enhancing engagement and impact.
- **Sustained Commitment:** Encourage companies to integrate volunteering into employee development programme to foster long-term partnerships.



Scenario 2: Volunteers lose interest over time and become less committed to their volunteering programmes, leading to insufficient manpower to maintain and sustain service delivery standards.

Root Cause

Volunteers may be experiencing life transitions, such as transitioning into careers or starting a new family. Additionally, volunteers may feel that they are not growing or developing sufficiently through the volunteering programme or within the organisation.

Mitigation Strategy to Address the Identified Root Cause

Clear Expectations and Goals	Set specific and achievable goals with volunteers, enabling them to track their progress and feel a sense of accomplishment.
Maintain Regular Communication	Keep volunteers engaged by sharing regular updates about the programme's progress, upcoming events, and new opportunities for involvement. Use multiple channels (emails, newsletters, social media) to keep communication fresh and engaging.
Provide Flexibility	Recognise that volunteers have busy lives outside the programme and may be transiting life phases. Offer flexible scheduling to accommodate their availability. If the volunteers' interests or time commitments change, offer them the option to adjust their roles within the programme rather than leaving altogether.
Solicit Feedback and Involve Them in Decision-Making	Regularly ask for feedback about volunteers' experiences and make improvements based on their input. Volunteers want to feel that their opinions are valued. Involve them in the planning process or seek their ideas on how to improve the programme. When volunteers feel that their contributions matter, they are more likely to remain committed.
Recognise and Appreciate Volunteers	Show appreciation regularly for volunteers' efforts. Simple thank-you notes, shout-outs during meetings and volunteer appreciation events can go a long way. Provide incentives like certificates, awards, or small tokens of appreciation for volunteers who go above and beyond.
Prevent Volunteer Burnout	Make sure that volunteers are not overwhelmed with tasks. Distribute work appropriately and respect their time commitments. If volunteers show signs of burnout, such as disengagement or exhaustion, offer them a break or lighter tasks to recharge.
Offer Variety	Provide diverse roles within the programme to keep volunteers' experience interesting. Volunteers may lose interest if they feel their work is repetitive or lacks challenge. Encourage them to switch tasks or try new roles after a certain period, allowing them to explore different aspects of the programme.
Offer Opportunities for Growth	Allow volunteers to take on more responsibilities as they gain experience, which can help maintain interest and motivation. Provide learning opportunities through workshops, training sessions, or shadowing experiences that help them build new skills. Refer to NCSS Volunteer Development Guide for more information.
Foster a Strong Sense of Community	Create a supportive environment by organising social events, team-building activities, or regular check-ins. Volunteers are more likely to stay engaged if they feel they are part of a community. Encourage peer support by assigning mentors or creating volunteer groups where they can share experiences, discuss challenges, and offer advice.
Communicate the Impact	Share stories of success and the positive impact the volunteers' work has on the community or cause. Volunteers want to know that their time and efforts are making a difference. Create a sense of mission and purpose that reminds them of the importance of the programme and the difference they are making.

Risk Scenario: Compliance

SCENARIO 1: Volunteers deployed to residential homes for frail seniors are required to be vaccinated in accordance with national vaccination policies established for healthcare and community care sectors. As the declaration of vaccination status is voluntary, non-vaccinated volunteers may inadvertently be deployed alongside vaccinated volunteers.

Root Cause

The declaration of vaccination status is currently on a voluntary basis and presents challenges for effective deployment. Volunteers may unintentionally declare an incorrect vaccination status, e.g when they are unsure if they are fully vaccinated based on the list of required vaccines.

Mitigation Strategy to Address the Identified Root Cause

1. Targeted Recruitment

Vaccination Checklist for Volunteers in Programmes with Mandatory Immunisation

Develop a vaccination checklist for volunteers who are keen to support volunteering programmes requiring immunisation as a prerequisite. This checklist, to be completed at the point of registration, should include all required vaccines such as COVID-19, MMR, Tdap and Varicella. The checklist should provide guidance on where to find vaccination information for submission.

Better Partnership with Volunteer Recruitment Channels

Volunteer recruitment channels, such as educational institutions, volunteer centres and Giving.sg, can be better leveraged for healthcare and community care programmes. These channels should emphasise the importance of vaccination declarations from interested volunteers. This will help prioritise the deployment of vaccinated volunteers in these roles.

Enhance Selection Process

Enhance existing volunteer selection process to mandate volunteers to submit vaccination status before deployment.

2. Inclusive Volunteer Engagement

Diverse Role Allocation

Offer non-vaccinated volunteers alternative volunteer opportunities that do not require them to engage directly with service users. These may include:

- Administrative support tasks
- Virtual volunteering projects
- Outdoor environmental initiatives, such as gardening
- Event planning and coordination
- Fundraising and awareness campaigns
- Skills-based volunteering in areas like marketing, IT, or graphic design



Scenario 2: Professional volunteers deployed to provide professional services, such as legal advice or medical treatments, are required to possess valid practice licenses.

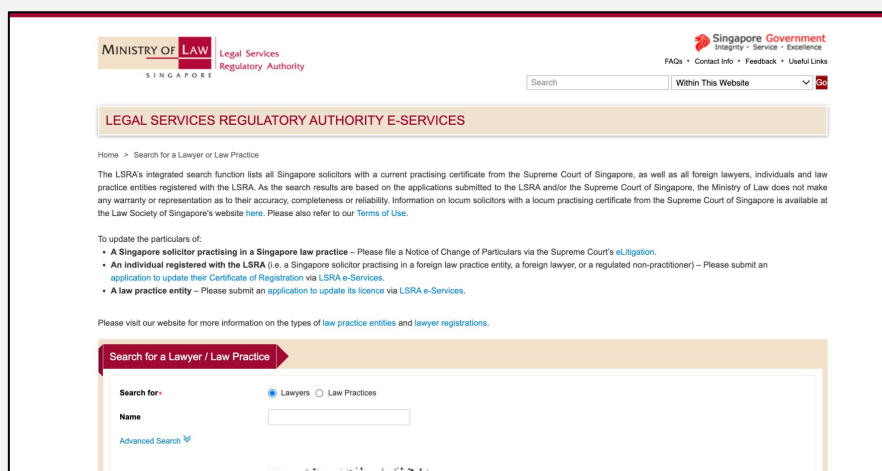
Root Cause

A valid license to practice is currently not a compulsory criteria when assessing volunteers for their suitability to support volunteering programmes, such as offering legal advice or providing medical treatment to service users.

Mitigation Strategy to Address the Identified Root Cause

- ❑ **1. Volunteer Application Form**
Include a requirement for volunteers to provide professional certification numbers for relevant professions
- ❑ **2. License Verification**
Check against public register to ensure individual is listed as a practitioner in related government agency list.

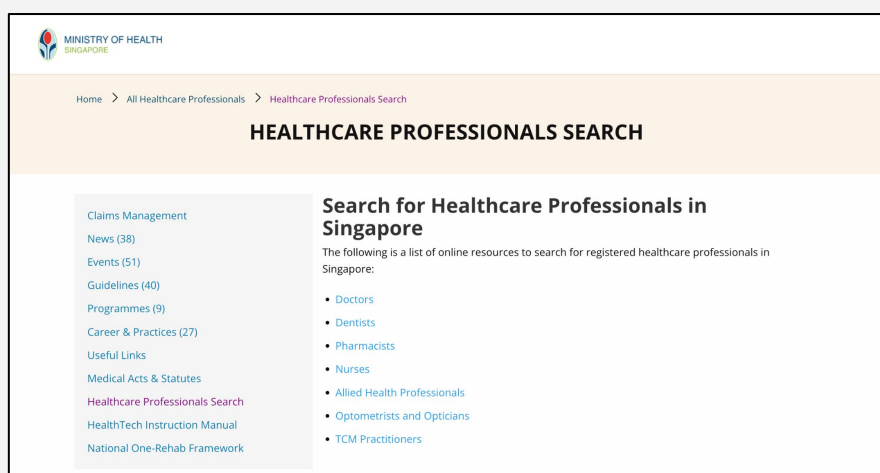
○ Legal Services Regulatory Authority E-Services (Ministry of Law)



Screen capture of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority E-services web page

<https://eservices.mlaw.gov.sg/lra/search-lawyer-or-law-firm/>

○ Healthcare Professionals Search (Ministry of Health)



Screen capture of the Healthcare Professionals Search web page

<https://www.hpp.moh.gov.sg/all-healthcare-professionals/healthcare-professionals-search>

Root Cause

Mitigation Strategy to Address the Identified Root Cause

To increase the accountability and ensure responsible use and care of SSA resources, SSA may ask volunteers to sign the Loan of Equipment form when borrowing the equipment. A sample form is provided below for inclusion into the Volunteer Handbook.

Name of Organisation		
LOAN OF EQUIPMENT FORM		
Name of Programme:		
Name of Borrower:		
Contact Details (HP/ Email):	HP: Email:	
Period of loan: (Maximum period of 7 days)	to	
Equipment Borrowed:	Description	Serial No
Purpose of Loan:		
Declaration by Borrower: - The equipment is borrowed for the stated purpose by me - The equipment has been checked and is in good working order - I undertake full responsibility for the condition of the equipment and will compensate for any cost of repair or replacement - I have been briefed on the equipment operational and safety protocols, where applicable, and am fully aware of the potential safety and health hazards involved - Upon the expiry of the loan, I undertake to return the equipment timely or renew the loan period which will be subjected to approval by the organisation		
Signatures and Date of Borrowing:		
Borrower	Organisation Representative	
Signature and Date of Returning:		
Borrower	Checked and Received by Organisation Representative	

Some equipment used during volunteering programmes may require training of users. SSAs can identify specialised equipment where an orientation is required, and conduct it before volunteers use the equipment.



SCENARIO 2: Equipment malfunctions due to wear and tear or improper usage, causing injuries to volunteers.

Root Cause

Equipment, such as kitchen appliances or sporting equipment, lacks proper maintenance.

Mitigation Strategy to Address the Identified Root Cause

- ❑ **1. Usage Logs**
SSA can implement a Usage Log form to track the utilisation of equipment. Users can also record the condition of equipment before and after use. Staff can conduct routine checks and maintenance of the equipment based on the User Log form.
- ❑ **2. Orientation on use of Equipment**
Provide orientation on proper use and basic troubleshooting of equipment, including kitchen appliances, before volunteers operate them independently.

SCENARIO 3: Delays or unavailability of equipment needed for volunteer activities, impacting project execution and timely service delivery.

Root Cause

Inadequate processes for identifying, scheduling and securing necessary equipment prior to volunteer activities.

Mitigation Strategy to Address the Identified Root Cause

- ❑ **1. Event logistics list**
Implement a standardised event logistics checklist to ensure timely identification and procurement of needed equipment and materials. This will guide volunteers and staff in thorough planning, reducing last-minute issues and improving event preparation efficiency.
- ❑ **2. List of suppliers and alternatives**
SSAs can develop a list of key suppliers' directory, listing primary and alternative vendors for each category of equipment or materials. The list can help to streamline procurement, provide backup options and minimise potential disruptions to SSA operation and volunteer activities.





Risk Scenario: Reputation

SCENARIO 1: Volunteers misuse their event identification cards after events to solicit unauthorised donations, potentially damaging the SSA's reputation and trust with the public.

Root Cause

Volunteers lack clear understanding of ethical guidelines, legal implications, and the penalties for unauthorised fundraising and misrepresentation of the SSAs.

Mitigation Strategy to Address the Identified Root Cause

Update the Volunteer Handbook to include clear guidelines on the proper use of event identification cards and ethical fundraising practices. During volunteer briefing or training sessions, emphasise the importance of authorised fundraising.



A draft code of conduct (based on [Singapore Police Force](#) website) can be found below for further adaptation:

"Volunteers should only use event identification cards for its intended purpose and during the event. These cards should be returned to the SSA upon completion of the event or destroyed. A person found guilty for an offence of unlicensed House to House and Street Collections (HHSC) shall be liable on conviction (a) to a fine not exceeding \$5,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years or both"

SCENARIO 2: Volunteers misuse their volunteer networks within the organisation to solicit business opportunities. This may negatively impact the volunteer experience.

Root Cause

Volunteers are opportunistic in leveraging on their personal networks, including fellow volunteers in the same service programme, to solicit for business. There is no existing volunteer engagement policy to clearly state that such activities are not allowed.

Mitigation Strategy to Address the Identified Root Cause

Update the Volunteer Handbook to include clear guidelines on the prohibition of business solicitation among volunteers and service users. Emphasise the ethical use of volunteer networks during volunteer briefings and training sessions.



A draft code of conduct (based on [Charity Portal website](#)) can be found below for further adaptation:

"Any member of the Charity or its consultants / business partners shall refrain from obtaining any list of clients for personal or private solicitation purposes at any time during the term of their affiliation"



Risk Scenario: Financial

SCENARIO 1: Volunteers submit claims for unauthorised expenses, such as gifts for service users or meals during volunteering programmes.

Root Cause

Volunteers lack guidance on allowable expenses and proper approval processes for claiming expenditures.

Mitigation Strategy to Address the Identified Root Cause

- ❑ **1. Developing an Expenses and Claims Policy for your SSA**
 - Include the Expenses and Claims Policy into the Volunteer Handbook, detailing allowable expenses, circumstances for claims and the pre-approval procedures.
 - Brief volunteers during onboarding and training to ensure their awareness of the policy before deployment.
 - Adapt the Expenses and Claims Policy from the Volunteer Management Toolkit 2.0, as follows:

Sample

Expenses and Claims Policy for <your agency's> Volunteer Programme

Policy Title: Expenses and Claims

Contact:

Relevant Forms:

Policy No:

Approved By:

Reviewed By:

Policy:

- All volunteers are entitled to reimbursement of allowable and pre-approved expenses incurred while fulfilling assigned duties.
- Expense claims documentations are to be completed, with original receipts to be submitted.
- Reimbursement claims are to be submitted within 14 days of incurring an expense or return from travel.
- Reimbursable Expenses may include:
 - Material cost from event set up
 - Transportation expenditure
 - Medical expenses (where approved) for service users



Scenario 2: Volunteers handling money, such as during project implementation, may misuse project funds or make unintentional financial errors.

Root Cause

Volunteers implementing community projects may handle large amounts of money. The combination of access to project funds and juggling multiple roles during the project increases the risk of both intentional misuse and inadvertent financial errors.

Mitigation Strategy to Address the Identified Root Cause

- ❑ **1. Volunteer Application Form**
 - Inclusion questions about previous experiences in handling finances while volunteering.
 - Declaration of past criminal records
- ❑ **2. Interview Process**
 - Ask potential volunteers applying for the financial roles to share their relevant experiences
 - Discuss roles and responsibilities thoroughly during the interview process to ensure full awareness of the financial responsibilities
 - Verify past volunteering experiences with previous organisations
- ❑ **3. Establish Clear Financial Policies**
 - Establish clear financial policies and procedures for volunteers to follow
 - Provide comprehensive training on implementing these policies
- ❑ **4. Set up Financial Controls**
 - Implement segregation of duties
 - Conduct regular audits
 - Maintain accurate record-keeping using prescribed templates
 - Assign a finance staff to provide close supervision and monitoring
- ❑ **5. Insurance Coverage**
 - Public liability insurance
 - Volunteer liability insurance



Quotes by Participants

“My biggest takeaway is that different organisations face different challenges. By networking and having this opportunity, it helps equip me with the knowledge and information that I otherwise would not have known. Thank you for this opportunity.”

Noor Jannah Bte Ahmad Hakim
Executive, Programme
THKMC Disability Services Sembawang Home

“Rethinking how the proper implementation of safety protocols for volunteers involves not just briefing the volunteers but the staff and clients too.”

Serene Cheng
Community Engagement Manager
Filos Community Services

“Coming together with other VM professionals and seeing how other organisations have managed the same risks”.

Nur Jasthina Jamaludin
Executive, Volunteer Management/Human Resource
Impart Ltd



Additional Resources /References

- [Volunteer Management Toolkit 2.0](#)
- [Volunteer Role Redesign Guide](#)
- [Volunteer Continuity Planning Guide](#)
- [Skills-Based Volunteerism Toolkit for Organisational Development](#)

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Singapore General Hospital
Singapore Red Cross Society
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Thye Hua Kwan Moral Charities
TOUCH Community Services
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