

Investing in Volunteers and Approved Provider Standard - A National Standard for Mentoring and Befriending



The Approved Provider Standard (APS) is a national benchmark for organisations providing one-to-one, volunteer mentoring or befriending. It aims to provide programmes with a badge of competence and underpin safe practice. Many mentoring and befriending projects involve volunteers, so this standard compliments much of Investing in Volunteers (liV). Each liV indicator compliments at least one of the APS questions within the standard, so an organisation that has achieved APS would be in a very good position to achieve liV. As APS is a 'desk top' assessment, some new issues may arise when an liV assessor begins working closely with the mentoring and befriending organisation.

FAQs about liV and APS Mentoring and Befriending (go to page 12)

- Who is the standard suitable for?
- Who runs the standard?
- How much does it cost?
- What is the assessment process?

How do liV Indicators compare to APS Mentoring and Befriending?

Investing in Volunteers (liV)	APS Mentoring and Befriending	What evidence could you use to support liV?
<p>liV Indicator 1 There is an expressed commitment to the involvement of volunteers, and recognition throughout the organisation that volunteering is a two-way process, which benefits volunteers and the organisation.</p>	<p>Q2. What is the purpose of your project?</p>	<p>Policies and procedures that are used throughout your organisation. If you don't already have policies that include volunteers, then you will need to implement them, or devise separate ones.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">continued on to next page</p>

Investing in Volunteers (liV)

APS Mentoring and Befriending

What evidence could you use to support liV?

liV Indicator 1 continued...

There is an expressed commitment to the involvement of volunteers, and recognition throughout the organisation that volunteering is a two-way process, which benefits volunteers and the organisation.

Q3. What organisational and management structure is in place to support your project?

You should already have some evidence (minutes from meetings, strategic and business plans) about the reasons why your organisation involves volunteers. Also, minutes of when decisions were made to introduce, change or update policies.

Investing in Volunteers (liV)	APS Mentoring and Befriending	What evidence could you use to support liV?
<p>liV Indicator 2 The organisation commits appropriate resources to working with volunteers, such as money, management, staff time and materials.</p>	<p>Q2. What is the purpose of your project?</p> <p>Q3. What organisational and management structure is in place to support your project?</p> <p>Q8. How do you recruit your volunteers?</p> <p>Q14. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your mentoring or befriending project?</p>	<p>An annual plan, or Business Plan that includes volunteers and proposed objectives. Funding applications that commit resources for volunteering programmes.</p> <p>Job description/s for paid staff who are responsible for volunteers in your organisation. If that person is a volunteer, then a 'task or role' description is required.</p> <p>Key person or group of people who are responsible for recruiting, selecting, supporting and protecting the interests of volunteers in your organisation. Recruitment policy and procedure.</p> <p>Annual plan or Business Plan that includes volunteers and proposed objectives. Evidence that you are meeting your objectives.</p>

Investing in Volunteers (liV)	APS Mentoring and Befriending	What evidence could you use to support liV?
<p>liV Indicator 3 The organisation is open to involving volunteers who reflect the diversity of the local community, in accordance with the organisation's stated aims, and operates procedures.</p>	<p>Q4. What support mechanisms are in place to ensure that staff overseeing the project are operating effectively?</p> <p>Q8. How do you recruit your volunteers?</p> <p>Q14. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your mentoring or befriending project?</p>	<p>Staff should have Diversity training within your organisation as part of professional development or induction.</p> <p>You should have evidence to show that your organisation is open to involving volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities. Also, that you commit the necessary resources e.g. financial, time, training.</p> <p>Recruitment policy and procedure. This may be in your volunteer policy and volunteer handbook. Evidence should also include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of promotional literature person specification for volunteer role • Equal opportunities statement • Volunteer application forms or equivalent • Notes from volunteer interview/assessment processes • Where do you recruit your volunteers? <p>Do you have any analysis of the diversity of the local community compared to your volunteer team? How do you use this information?</p>

Investing in Volunteers (liV)	APS Mentoring and Befriending	What evidence could you use to support liV?
<p>liV Indicator 4 The organisation develops appropriate roles for volunteers in line with its aims and objectives, and which are of value to the volunteers and create an environment where they can develop.</p>	<p>Q8. How do you recruit your volunteers?</p> <p>Q11. How do you prepare volunteers so that they can offer effective support?</p>	<p>Volunteer 'Task or Role' descriptions for volunteers. Are the volunteer tasks adapted to meet volunteer needs and interests where appropriate?</p> <p>Volunteer 'Task or Role' descriptions should be in evidence when preparing volunteers.</p>

Investing in Volunteers (liV)	APS Mentoring and Befriending	What evidence could you use to support liV?
<p>liV Indicator 5 The organisation is committed to ensuring that, as far as possible, volunteers are protected from physical, financial and emotional harm arising from volunteering.</p>	<p>Q9. What screening procedures and personal protection arrangements do you operate?</p>	<p>Q9 of the APS standard is a good match with liV indicator 5. You should have a good range of evidence to help you to achieve it. Risk Assessments should be in place for volunteer roles. Legally allowable expenses and an expenses policy. Also, insurance guidelines. How do volunteers know whether they are covered or not? Health and safety issues which should be highlighted at induction. Much of this information should be in your Volunteer policy or Volunteer Handbook.</p> <p>Your organisation should be up to date with Data Protection and have confidentiality policies in place.</p>

Investing in Volunteers (liV)

liV Indicator 6

The organisation is committed to using fair, efficient and consistent recruitment procedures for all potential volunteers.

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Q8. How do you recruit your volunteers?

Q10. What process is used for matching clients and volunteers?

What evidence could you use to support liV?

Q8 of the APS standard is a very good match with liV Indicator 6. You should have a recruitment policy and procedure in place. This may be in your volunteer policy and volunteer handbook. Also, you should have evidence showing where you recruit your volunteers and from what communities. Do you have target groups e.g. young people, older people? Evidence should also include: copies of marketing/promotional literature; person specification for volunteer role; equal opportunities statement; volunteer application forms or equivalent. Notes from your volunteer interview or assessment process are required. Is this procedure standardised? Do volunteers know what to expect from your organisation when they are recruited? What is the probationary period? Is there any compulsory training? You should have evidence to show that your organisation is open to involving volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities. Also, that you commit the necessary resources e.g. financial, time, training.

In Q10 of the APS standard, it's worth checking out '...to make the best use of the attributes, experience and interests that the volunteer has to offer...'

This relates directly to the first point in 6.4 of liV: 'The organisation has clear criteria in terms of skills and abilities needed against which it assesses volunteers' suitability for particular roles'. Look at volunteer role descriptions and person specifications for those roles.

Investing in Volunteers (liV)

liV Indicator 7

The organisation takes a considered approach to taking up references and official checks which is consistent and equitable for all volunteers, bearing in mind the nature of the work.

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Q9. What screening procedures and personal protection arrangements do you operate?

What evidence could you use to support liV?

You should already have evidence for taking up two references, CRB checks and police checks. This process should be standardised. You also need to look at how you keep up to date with relevant government guidelines (e.g. Rehabilitation of Offenders Act.).

Is it someone's responsibility and is it recorded? Also, what policies do you have in place that relate to past convictions and other disciplinary actions?

Investing in Volunteers (liV)	APS Mentoring and Befriending	What evidence could you use to support liV?
<p>liV Indicator 9 Everybody in the organisation is aware of the need to give volunteers recognition.</p>	<p>Q11. How do you prepare volunteers so that they can offer effective support?</p> <p>Q12. How do you provide on-going support for volunteers?</p>	<p>How are volunteer's skills developed throughout your organisation? Do volunteers have Personal Development Plans or a scheduled training programme?</p> <p>There are a number of ways that you might thank or support volunteers, e.g. awards for service, accreditation of training, support and supervision, annual general meeting, team and staff meetings, annual report, newsletters, websites, etc. You also need to look at how volunteer's views on organisational issues and future plans are recognised.</p>

Investing in Volunteers (liV)	APS Mentoring and Befriending	What evidence could you use to support liV?
<p>liV Indicator 10 The organisation takes account of the varying support needs of volunteers.</p>	<p>Q3. What organisational and management structure is in place to support your project?</p> <p>Q4. What support mechanisms are in place to ensure that staff overseeing the project are operating effectively?</p> <p>Q11. How do you prepare volunteers so that they can offer effective support?</p> <p>Q12. How do you provide on-going support for volunteers?</p>	<p>An organisational chart will help to meet this liV indicator.</p> <p>How does your organisation ensure that staff are offered training in supporting and supervising volunteers? Do they have scheduled training plans?</p> <p>What training and support can volunteers expect from your organisation? Who do they talk to when they want some training and is there a procedure in place? How do you know if volunteers are aware that they can refuse demands they consider unrealistic, beyond the scope of the role or which they do not have the skills to carry out? This is usually part of volunteer’s induction and on-going training and personal development.</p> <p>What support and supervision is on offer for volunteers? Are staff who have responsibility for managing volunteers appropriately trained in areas of volunteer management?</p> <p>How can volunteers ‘unload’ if their work becomes too emotionally demanding? Do you have a staff room, ‘quiet room’, interview room?</p>

FAQs about IiV and APS Mentoring and Befriending

What type of organisation or project is the standard suitable for?

Investing in Volunteers

Suitable for any organisation that involves volunteers. Organisations should be involved in: recruiting, selecting, matching, supporting and retaining volunteers.

APS Mentoring and Befriending

The Approved Provider Standard (APS) has been developed as a national benchmark for organisations providing one-to-one, volunteer mentoring or befriending. Supported by the Home Office Active Communities Directorate and the Department for Education and Skills. It aims to provide programmes with a badge of competence and underpin safe practice in mentoring and befriending. Applications can be from organisations of any size.

Is the standard organisation based or project based?

Investing in Volunteers

The standard covers the whole organisation. It can be achieved by parts of an organisation so long as they can be seen to be discreet and self managed parts of the whole.

APS Mentoring and Befriending

The Standard is awarded to a provider based on an assessment of a particular project. The vast majority of providers, operating in a specific local area and using a single delivery structure will need to apply for the assessment of one project against the Standard. However, where an organisation is providing mentoring or befriending on a regional or national scale, it will be necessary to achieve the Standard for each project.

Who runs the standard?

Investing in Volunteers

The standard is run by the national Volunteering Development Agencies in England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland. Volunteering England manages the standard in England. The UK Volunteering Forum is the standards Awarding Body.

APS Mentoring and Befriending

The Standard is promoted and administered by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF) on behalf of the Government. Mentoring and befriending projects dependent on Government funding will be required in future to demonstrate a commitment to the Approved Provider Standard.

Who to contact to apply for the standard

Investing in Volunteers

Contact Volunteering England
Tel: 020 7520 8982

www.investinginvolunteers.org.uk

On the home page you'll also find links for contacts in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

APS Mentoring and Befriending

Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF),
FREEPOST NWW338IA, Manchester M30 IAXNB

Tel: 0161 787 8600

Email: info@mandbf.org.uk

www.mandbf.org.uk

How do organisations access the standard?

Investing in Volunteers

All information is supplied on-line with a password protected section for fully registered organisations. Forms and documents are downloadable word documents. A best practice library with downloadable resources is also available.

APS Mentoring and Befriending

All information is supplied on-line. Documents can be downloaded.

How much does the standard cost?

Investing in Volunteers

Depends on the size and complexity of your organisation. Prices start at £1000 + VAT for an organisation that has a turnover of less than £1 million per year. The fee includes:

- Subscription to the Investing in Volunteers monthly e-newsletter
- Access to the password protected pages of the website which contains a step-by-step guide, model documents and Best Practice library
- Introductory workshop with your assigned Assessor
- Feedback on self assessment of your organisation against the standard
- An assessment visit – interviews with volunteers, staff and senior managers
- A full written report suggesting areas for further development and highlighting areas of excellent practice
- The UK recognised Investing in Volunteers standard, including plaques and certificates, valid for three years.

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The Standard is free.

How much of the standard is accessible for free?

Investing in Volunteers

The full standard and practices can be downloaded from the home page without payment being made. The best practice library and documents to support an organisation through to achieving the standard are all within password protected pages.

APS Mentoring and Befriending

The full standard, guidance notes and 'Working Towards' (the standard) documents can be downloaded from the home page without payment being made.

What is the assessment process?

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1. A Self-Assessment is done by the organisation at an early stage. This is sent to an allocated assessor so that organisations are certain they are hitting the standards prior to their final assessment. Only a small number of written documents are requested and submitted by organisations.

2. Final assessment is undertaken through site visits, the length of which will depend on the size of the organisation and range of volunteering roles. Assessors will usually spend at least a day on site using the 10 iV Indicators as the assessment guide.

APS Mentoring and Befriending

Organisations self-assessing themselves use 14 questions on the APS application form. Each question requires organisations to submit documentary evidence. The excellent Guidance Notes explain what evidence is required for each question.

The assessment framework is focused on the key management and operational areas that underpin the effectiveness of any mentoring or befriending project. They are:

- The aims and structure
- Client referral and assessment processes
- Recruitment
- Selection and training of volunteers
- Monitoring and evaluation

The APS assessment process is primarily a 'desk-top' exercise, but organisations are sometimes visited or contacted to clarify certain issues.

What support is available during the assessment process?

Investing in Volunteers

The registration fee covers: advice and guidance from a local Volunteer Centre Partner; a workshop with an allocated assessor and all assessment (visits and report); and access to the password protected area of the Investing in Volunteers website. These web-pages include things like a tool-kit and tips from other volunteer managers who have achieved the standard. Additional consultancy support and training can also be bought from Volunteering England.

APS Mentoring and Befriending

There is support on the MBF website in the form FAQs, guidance notes, email support, and free workshops on implementing the standard that take place throughout the UK. Hints and Tips. Case studies. Information sheets.

How long will it take to achieve the standard?

Investing in Volunteers

This will vary from organisation to organisation, but normally the process will be completed within 12 months. Organisations that achieve the standard receive a plaque and certificate on completion and membership of the Achievers Club network.

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Usually within 12 months. A 'Working Towards' category allows organisations to sign up to the key principles of APS in advance of submitting their full application. Once registered, you will have 12 months within which to submit your full application. 'Working Towards' organisations receive a registration certificate and are registered on the MBF database.

What if an organisation does not achieve the standard?

Investing in Volunteers

Organisations can Achieve, Not Achieve or Achieve with Conditions. All organisations receive detailed feedback from their assessor. Organisations that achieve the standard with conditions are set a time within which to complete specific actions agreed with their assessor and are not entered into the quality assurance process until there are complete.

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Following initial assessment of your application, MBF will offer an interim conditional approval. The full standard will be awarded subject to the satisfactory resolution of certain issues or evidence requirements.

Once the standard is achieved, is it time limited?

Investing in Volunteers

Organisations must re-accredit every 3 years. Re-accreditation fees are the same as original registration as the assessment process requires the same amount of an assessor's time.

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Re-accreditation lasts for three years. The re-accreditation process requires an organisation to complete a questionnaire in which changes introduced to policies and procedures since the organisation was first accredited are described. Where policies and procedures have changed these should be backed up with documentary evidence. As part of the re-accreditation process a small number of organisations will be sampled for a visit by an experienced APS Assessor.