

Every Action Counts...

for our people management

**a guide to smart and
sustainable people
management**



Foreword

Making our organisations more sustainable isn't just about the simple physical actions and the choices we make, like turning off a piece of electrical equipment or using a recycled product. It is also about the processes and activities that we plan and undertake every day.

All voluntary and community organisations have people management responsibilities. Whether we manage staff, volunteers or trustees, we will be involved in the process of recruiting, managing and developing people and the processes that we have in place for this are crucial to enabling each person's understanding of our organisation and their role within it.

The way that we carry out these responsibilities can say a lot about the values of our organisation and how we live these on a day-to-day basis. So, if we are trying to make our organisations more sustainable then we also need to reflect this in the way that we manage our people and use the opportunity this presents to instil these values in those that give their time to us.

This short guide offers a host of practical advice to help you weave sustainable actions through your existing people management processes. It includes hints, tips, checklists

and, perhaps most valuable of all, direct experience from those who have done it themselves. It also recognises that becoming more sustainable in what we do is a learning process – we can't expect to do everything at once, so we need to make realistic decisions about what we can do now, soon or later. The main thing is that we get started!

This guide is one of a series which looks at how we can build sustainable actions into the processes that make organisations tick – like events, governance and finance. We hope they all help you to make sure that every action counts in your own organisation.



Mark Walton,
Head of Every Action Counts Programme

This guidance was written for Every Action Counts by Eleanor Pryde of bassac. It is the result of a thorough consultation process which was designed to produce guidance that is relevant and realistic for people working in the voluntary and community sector. To this end, a range of people from both national and local organisations came together for a facilitated discussion around an initial draft. The discussion was facilitated by Steve Evison from Resources for Change and recorded by Natasha Roe of Red Pencil Projects. Comments, experiences and action points from the discussion were taken away and used to produce this final guidance.

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Every Action Counts...

for our people management

How does my role in people management deliver the values of my organisation?

As a people manager you are in a great position to influence, promote and lead positive change and you therefore have a central part to play in delivering the values of your organisation. Whether you manage staff, volunteers or have people management responsibilities as part of a more general role, you are experienced in managing individuals, teams and organisational change as well as introducing new policies and procedures.

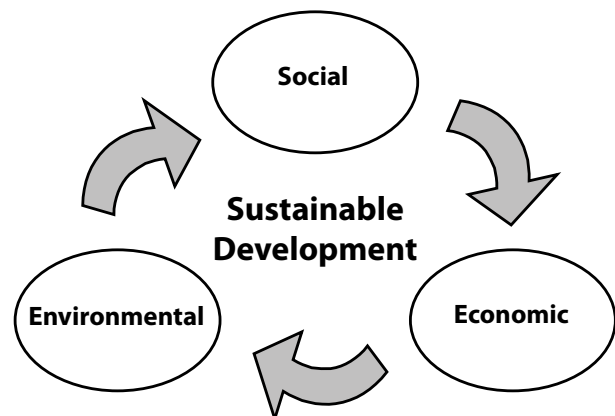
At the same time, you may also face a daily struggle with a stressful job and challenging organisational mission, not to mention limited resources of money and willing help. The current economic downturn has seen rising costs, hardship and shortages and you may be feeling extra pressure caused by the uncertain future that your organisation and its people are facing. However, you can build on your organisation's value base and develop new and creative ways to save money, generate income and foster external interest. Applying sustainable development (leading to increased organisational sustainability) can help you do this.

People work in the voluntary and community sector (VCS) for a wide range of reasons: a passion for equality and human rights, anger at discrimination and injustice, a determination to tackle poverty or an aspiration to build stronger communities and better lives. If you take equal opportunities as an example, this has been so effective in the sector because of our value base, respect for others and shared vision of a fairer society. Yet, whilst the sector has been good at addressing the social and economic factors that impact on people's lives, we have generally failed to address the environmental ones. Rising fuel prices causing misery for millions of vulnerable people in cold and damp homes, degenerating local areas with traffic pollution and lack of green space, rising costs of food and public transport, poor quality food in schools and hospitals: these are all environmental impacts that directly affect the people that we support. Likewise, injustice, lack of voice and inequality of experience are just some of the ways that vulnerable people experience these impacts. In your role as a people manager you can harness the energy and commitment that brings so many people to the sector, and use it to drive your organisation's approach to sustainable development; and in particular, tackling the environmental issues that face us all.

Taking action at a local and organisational level can make a difference and at the same time can bring together and empower individuals.

What do we mean by sustainable development?

It is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (The Brundtland Report, Our Common Future, 1987). Sustainability is often described as the goal, while sustainable development is the journey, achieved by balancing economic, social and environmental aspects, as in the diagram.



Is this guidance for me?

This guidance is aimed at you if you have people management responsibilities in your organisation. You may be a Human Resources professional, volunteer manager or have people management responsibilities as part of a broader role including finance, operations and office management. Whatever your role you will probably have many demands on your time, but you will recognise the important part you can play in making the most of your organisation's value base.

How can we make our people management count?

All organisations, large and small, create waste and use up valuable resources. Many staff, trustees and volunteers carry out sustainable action at home, but are not able to replicate it at work. At the same time, trustees, funders and charitable bodies increasingly expect to see a commitment to sustainable development which goes beyond the development of a sustainability policy.

As a people manager, you may already be taking action to improve your organisation's sustainability for the benefit of its people as well as its service users. You may have helped

to influence purchasing policies so that your organisation provides Fair Trade tea and coffee; developed travel policies that discourage car use and encourage other forms of travel; or introduced a recycling scheme. Your role may also involve managing projects such as gardens or play areas for young people or a 'grow your own food' club for local people.

This guidance encourages you to start asking questions, but it does not give all the answers. It is up to you and your organisation to decide how much you can do, what you want to do and how best to put these things into practice. Your choices will probably vary depending on the size of your organisation, the resources you have available, whether you are rural or urban and whether you employ mostly volunteers or paid staff. The important thing is that you are realistic – start with simple actions and succeed at those, rather than setting yourself challenging targets which you can't meet because you don't have the resources, energy or support.

The guidance is structured around the five stages of the employee/volunteer/trustee lifecycle - **Attract, Entry, Develop, Manage and Reward, Exit** – and encourages you to think about how you can incorporate sustainable development into your people management strategies, operations and administration.



1. Where do we start?

Before you begin to go through the five stage lifecycle and identify your goals, it may be helpful to consider the following:

Every Action Counts themes

When using this guidance, don't forget to use the five Every Action Counts (EAC) themes - Save Energy, Travel Wisely, Save our Resources, Shop Ethically and Care for your Area – to help you structure your approach and priorities. You could also use them as vehicles for highlighting and promoting specific sustainable actions. Try the EAC publications 'Your Community Building Counts' and 'Changing the Way we Work' for more ideas in this area (see Section 4 'Where can we find out more?' for information about how to obtain copies of these).

Be realistic

You know your organisation best. It is unlikely that you will be able to do everything at once and you will probably have to make choices and compromises. The important thing is to get as much information as you can so that you know why you are making these choices and compromises. You therefore need to decide what is important to you, what your message is and what steps you can realistically take – how can you do what you already do but in a more sustainable way?

“ *The Wiltshire Wildlife Trust is a rural organisation with about 80 staff but we have to cover the whole of Wiltshire. For volunteers and staff travel is a big issue. I would love to be able to use public transport more often but it's just not practical. One of the outlying offices in Swindon has just put in place a travel policy encouraging people to leave their cars at home. It is on a bus route, but it's a long way from the bus to the office. So there is an issue about how much time we should ask people to spend on public transport and walking. Where possible we share transport but this is not always possible given the wide range of activities we undertake. As many organisations do, we depend on volunteers for support in the office and on practical tasks. Some may need to travel from further afield, would it put them off if they were asked to make their journey on public transport? It's an ethical judgement and a practical one - we want to attract as many people as possible, but we also want to reduce the impact that our activities have on the environment. Travel is particularly relevant for rural organisations* ”
Jacky Thomas, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

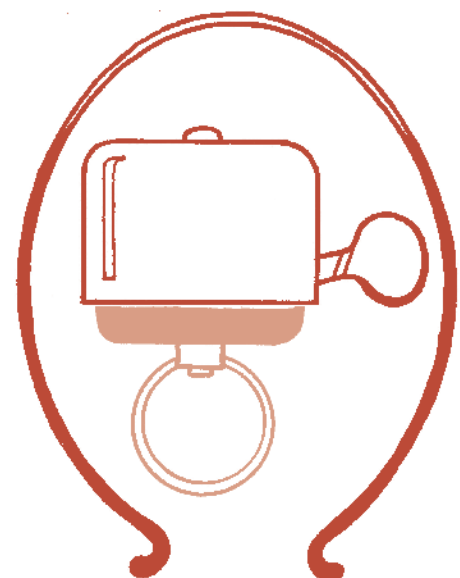
Be the change, lead the change

Remember to share what you are doing beyond the boundaries of your own organisation – not only will this show leadership, but it will also help to raise the profile of your organisation and potentially attract people to it! Equally, however, don't be afraid to look to others for inspiration. Picking up the phone to someone in a similar organisation can be a great way of finding out about opportunities and potential hurdles. If you are a member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) why not join their discussion forum and see what others are doing in this area? The CIPD and People Management run a joint campaign with a dedicated web resource to promote sustainable people management practices. You can find out more at: www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/hrgoesgreen.

Get support at a strategic level

Try to get support from the top for your activities. For real change to take place it needs to be built into the strategy of the organisation as this will ensure that the issue is taken seriously at all levels.

“ *I am a member of the working group that has helped my organisation achieve the Environmental Management Standard BS8555. The chair of the group was the Chief Executive and this ensured that the work of the group was considered a priority within the organisation. The achievement of the standard was also a key performance objective which impacts on an employee's overall performance rating, so this guaranteed that the work was prioritised by all staff* ”
Anne-Marie Lokwiya, Groundwork UK



2. The five-stage lifecycle

There are a wide range of actions that you can take to help bring your people management in line with the values of sustainable development. Have a look through the following list for ideas and inspiration – you may find that you are doing some things already! It is not an exhaustive list, but is aimed at getting you started and you will probably come up with your own ideas too.

Attract

Building sustainable development into the way that you recruit people sends out a message very early on about the values of your organisation. If you think of equality and diversity, these are social aspects of sustainable development that are central to your values and are probably woven

through every aspect of your recruitment process, policies and procedures. They send the message that you are an organisation that values all people and life experiences. With this in mind, you can begin to imagine what a similar pattern might look like for the environmental aspects of sustainable development. As with equality and diversity, environmental activity can help foster a shared set of values. It can also improve the health and commitment of those that give their time to you.

There is a lot that you can do at the early stages of the recruitment process to promote sustainable development. Some of these things are very easy, others a bit harder and it is up to you to decide what you can do now, soon or later.

Checklist...

Strategic

- Could you include a statement about sustainable development in your job/role adverts or application pack?
- Alternatively, could you display the Third Sector Declaration on Climate Change logo?
- How about including sustainable development as part of a wider statement on your values? This could also incorporate values around, for example, equality and diversity and investing in people.
- How could you make your commitment visible on your website and in all your literature? Could you build it into your value statement?
- How can you ensure that your recruitment supports the development of representation from all members of the community? Do you have systems to monitor representation of the workforce?
- How can you ensure that your terms and conditions reinforce your commitment to sustainable development e.g. travel, expenses, promote volunteering, discourage waste?

Operational

- Can you ask a specific interview question about the potential employee's/volunteer's/trustee's contribution to sustainable development in their other roles?
- If not, could you ask a question about the general values of your organisation, which includes equality and diversity as well as sustainable development?

- If so, what would such a question need to contain for a non-environmental role?
- How can you save resources during the recruitment process? For example, inviting applications by email and not printing off every one.
- How can you balance this with ensuring that applicants have a variety of avenues through which to apply and that all those on the panel have equal access to the information that they need?
- If you are holding an information session for prospective trustees or volunteers, can you use the opportunity to raise your commitment to sustainable development? Could you hold a session on sustainable development which puts across your organisation's position but also allows people to ask questions and find out how they can get involved?

Administrative

- If you do have to print off forms, can you ensure they are double sided, 2 pages per sheet and that the ink quality is set to 'draft'?
- Can you reduce the margins on your application forms so that they use up the whole of the page and therefore use less paper?
- How will you store your personnel files? Is there any way you can reduce the amount of paper you use?
- Do you need to keep everything in hard copy? Can you password protect electronic files? See Section 3 'What else do we need to think about?' for a list of documents that are currently recommended to be kept in paper form.

Listed below are some suggested wordings for role descriptions, person specifications, interview questions and website/literature. You may want to use them as they are, or as a starting point to develop your own.

Role description

"To respect and promote the values and practice of sustainable development both within the organisation and in contact with others"

OR

"To respect and promote [name of organisation]'s values, including equality and diversity and sustainable development"

OR

"To embrace in all areas of work, the values and practices outlined in our Sustainability Policy"

Person specification

"Demonstrable understanding of and commitment to the principles and practice of sustainable development"

OR

"Demonstrable understanding of and commitment to the values of our organisation"

Interview question

"Can you give us an example of how you have promoted sustainable development in your work, home life or volunteering?"

OR

"Can you give us an example of how you have promoted the values of our organisation in your work, home life or volunteering?"

Website/literature

"[Name of organisation] is committed to the values of sustainable development and we aim to respect these in every aspect of our work"

Entry

An employee/volunteer/trustee's induction provides the perfect opportunity to begin instilling the sustainable development values and practices of your organisation. But it is also a great chance to get a fresh perspective on what and how you are doing.

If people have been attracted to your organisation because of your commitment to sustainable development then they will expect to see you follow through on this so, having a structured approach to your inductions that builds this in, will be invaluable.

“ When we have new people starting, they may not be aware that they can claim mileage for cycling. It's not about setting stuff in stone and saying “you must do that” but rather about giving people the options and alternatives so that they have the information to make up their own minds. ”

Sharon Taylor, Development Trusts Association

✓ Checklist...

Strategic

- Can you introduce a competency framework that supports the skills, knowledge and behaviours that will ensure you embed sustainable development into your organisation?
- How will you introduce shared objectives around sustainable development, both for the individual and team as a whole?
- How are you going to present the terms and conditions in your inductions? Do you have a reward scheme and, if so, how will you introduce this?
- Could you implement a programme that looks at a different part of your organisation every six months, perhaps using the five EAC themes, and assesses your current practice and future opportunities in these areas? How could you build this into your inductions so that you engage new staff/volunteers/trustees from the start? Could you ask for feedback on initial impressions, or get new staff to take responsibility for gathering information on a specific aspect?
- If you are inducting trustees, how can you ensure that they understand the key function that people management provides as part of their governance role? Try 'Every Action Counts...for our board' for information about trustee responsibility in relation to sustainable development.

Operational

- Can you use the induction to begin embedding certain behaviours? For example, turning off monitors or hibernating computers when away from desks or turning off lights when leaving a room empty?
- When will you show the new employee/trustee/volunteer what facilities are available in the building, where these are located and how you use them?
- How can you be creative in the way that you induct new employee/trustee/volunteers around sustainable development? Could you include a short

game or quiz? Perhaps you could talk about the three elements of sustainable development and get them to suggest the ways in which they think the organisation might currently approach these. They might also have some good ideas for future activity!

- How about doing a walk around your local area with the new employee, trustee or volunteer, to show them where they can buy food, where they can sit to have their lunch and any local points of interest?
- If you have several people starting together, how about getting them to go out as a group and locate a list of local places. These could include the local post office, café, park/gardens, newsagents and a place of interest. They can find their way around, get to know each other a bit better and come back to tell you what they found. You might even learn something new!
- Could you invite new staff/volunteers/trustees to attend your Green Team (if you have one) meetings as observers?
- If you don't have a Green Team, could you set one up and encourage new staff/volunteers/trustees to get involved? (Take a look at Chapter 2 of Changing for good: An EAC guide to sustainable planning for more ideas about how to start up a Green Team).
- If you are training new volunteers to support your service users, how can you ensure that you build the values of sustainable development into your training courses? Try 'Every Action Counts...for our event' for more ideas in this area.
- How will you encourage new people to tell you what they think about what you are already doing? How can you capture new ideas and suggestions of more effective ways of doing things? How will you make sure that people know where to channel ideas so that they don't get lost?

Administrative

- How will you record people's inductions and ideas/suggestions that they give? How will you ensure that the induction is ongoing and not a one-off?

Develop

So now that you have recruited your staff, volunteers and/or trustees and introduced the organisation's commitment to sustainable development through their induction, you will want to make sure that these values stick.

“ Our ‘green lunches’ have become something that people look forward to. We hold them once every two months and structure them around the five Every Action Counts themes. They give people a chance to socialise, learn something new and share experiences and information. We have a speaker on the relevant theme for that lunch, and reinforce the messages with an activity. For our Saving Energy lunch we had someone from Creative Environmental Networks talk to us about ways that we can save energy at home and we also turned the heating off

for the day in the office. We had a prize for the person that wore the most creative outfit for keeping warm! For our Travelling Wisely lunch we had speakers from the London Cycling Campaign and The Ramblers. We are going to follow it up with a cycle/walk to work day in June. We will be asking people to either get on their bikes, or get off the train a few stops earlier and walk to the office. We will be using our training room to store bikes for the day and will be providing breakfast for everyone that takes part.

Kelly Essery, bassac

”

Checklist...

Strategic

- Have you considered the rewards and benefits system in place? How can you connect these better with sustainable development principles? For example, ensuring any pension scheme you offer has an ethical fund option.
- How can you ensure that the competency framework emphasises the importance of developing skills, engaging in activities such as volunteer day, participating in awareness raising sessions and receiving role specific training (i.e. green procurement, programme design and sustainable development, business skills).

Operational

- Are you able to help shape and inform policy and practice by offering incentives for people to participate in the process? For example, eco prizes for the person that does the most to reduce their impact on the environment, or contributes the most useful ideas.
- How can you build your sustainable development values into team days/training?
- How can you make time to discuss the issues? For example, could you have a sustainable development session at your board residential or a speaker at a volunteer team meeting? How can you link this in with the work that your staff/volunteers do with service users?
- Can you organise learning and development activities around the five Every Action Counts themes?
- Could you include a section on sustainable development in your learning plans?
- How can you ensure ongoing internal communication – to keep the conversation going

– and internal promotion of new activity? Try reading Chapter 5 of Changing for good: An EAC guide to sustainable planning, for more ideas on how to communicate your messages.

- How can you develop sustainable development activities for your teams? Could you hold green lunches or local walks? What about a volunteer picnic where everyone brings a dish that has been made with Fair Trade, locally sourced or organic ingredients? Could you include a tree planting session in one of your team meetings or team outings?
- Some people will need additional skills and knowledge to fulfil the policy commitments, for example Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE), green procurement, ICTs. Can you offer them training or hold shared resources in the organisation?
- Change management – not everyone will support activity around sustainable development, so how can you work with resistance? Could you use traditional change management techniques to get you thinking here? (See Section 4 ‘Where can we find out more?’ for some suggested resources)
- What knowledge and skills do your existing staff/trustees/volunteers have that they could share? Could you carry out a skills audit to find out? What will you do with this information?

Administrative

- Have you thought about using staff surveys to find out how you are doing and what skills people have or need? Can you use an online survey provider such as Survey Monkey www.surveymonkey.com instead of using paper forms?

Manage and Reward

Supervision and appraisal offer you another good opportunity to reinforce the values of sustainable development with employees and volunteers and encourage support for these.

Checklist...

Strategic

- Can you build targets into your strategies, business plans, work plans? If so, can you focus on how people can play their part as well as what they should do?
- Could you introduce a reward/celebration/thank you culture for sustainable behaviour?

Operational

- How do you make sure that everyone is playing their part and feels supported to do so?
- How will you provide regular feedback on the environmental performance of teams and explore solutions to difficulties encountered with shared performance?
- If you are managing volunteers, could you build a sustainable development element into certificate giving sessions and length of service celebrations?
- How can you monitor and evaluate the performance of the team and the individual?
- What outputs and outcomes will you be looking for?

Administrative

- How will reports on process/progress/output and outcomes be stored?

Exit

The exit interview is your final opportunity to discuss the values of sustainable development with an individual and find out from them how you could improve in this area.

Checklist...

Strategic

- How will you encourage learning at both the trustee and management level as a result of the findings in exit interviews?

Operational

- How could you explore the role of sustainable development policy and practice in the decision to leave?
- Could you have a specific question about the employee/volunteer/trustee's experience of sustainable development within the organisation?
- What will you do with this information?

Administrative

- Do you need to store the exit interview in paper format or can you hold a password protected electronic version?



3. What else do we need to think about?

There are a few other areas that you may want to consider when planning how to make every action count for your people management.

Other relevant roles

In addition to HR, there are a few roles where sustainable development is particularly relevant. These include Facilities/ Building Managers, IT Workers and those responsible for purchasing within the organisation. Depending on the size of your organisation, you may find it useful to consider how you gain these people's support and ask them to take specific responsibility for certain sustainable actions.

Policy

Having a sustainability policy is a really good place to start, but is it enough on its own? What about your home working/flexible working policies, travel policies, health and safety, risk assessment and finance/procurement policies? How can you ensure that the values of sustainable development are threaded through these as well? Could you create a new policy that combines Health, Safety and the Environment, instead of just the traditional health and safety or risk management policies?

Paperwork

There is very little that organisations are obliged to keep paper copies of so it may be worth taking some time to assess the following:

1. What you currently keep
2. What your organisational policies are around information storage and data protection
3. What is necessary for you to keep in paper form
4. What you could start storing electronically

The Acas website www.acas.org.uk has lots of useful information on record keeping. Generally, organisations keep paper versions of the following documents:

- Details of terms and conditions, including signed contracts
- Absence details
- Details of any accidents connected with work
- Details of training/further education undertaken with the organisation, particularly Modern Apprenticeships, which usually require a written agreement setting out terms
- Details of any disciplinary action
- Details of termination of employment
- Financial papers (for auditing purposes)

However, nothing is set in stone, so the kinds of documents that you keep in paper form may change over time. You may therefore want to check this information on an annual basis so that you are able to switch to electronic versions when the time comes. You may also find it useful to contact the Information Commissioners Office www.ico.gov.uk to find out about data protection issues related to electronic filing.



4. Where can we find out more?

Every Action Counts Publications

Changing the way we work: An Every Action Counts guide to greening your office

www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/guides

Differential Social Impacts of Climate Change in the UK (Scottish and Northern Ireland Forum for Environmental Research 2009)

www.sniffer.org.uk

Encouraging Walking, Cycling and Public Transport (Every Action Counts, 2008)

www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/upload_folder/factsheets/

[EncouragingWalkingCyclingandPublicTransport.pdf](#)

Environmental Management Systems (Every Action Counts, 2008)

www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/upload_folder/factsheets/EnvironmentalManagementSystems.pdf

Every Action Counts...for our event (2009)

www.everyactioncounts.org.uk

Induction Checklist (Every Action Counts, 2009)

www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/upload_folder/factsheets/AnInductionChecklist.pdf

Changing for good: An EAC guide to sustainable planning

www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/guides

Promoting and Supporting Fair Trade (Every Action Counts, 2009)

www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/upload_folder/factsheets/PromotingAndSupportingFairTrade.pdf

Your community building counts: Helping community buildings lead the way to a better future

www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/guides

General publications on sustainable development and/or employment

Going Green, Charities and Environmental Responsibility (Charity Commission, 2008)

www.charitycommission.gov.uk

PQASSO (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations) 3rd Edition (Charities Evaluation Services, 2008) www.ces-vol.org.uk/index.cfm?pg=339

Tackling climate change, reducing poverty: The first report of the Roundtable on Climate Change and Poverty in the UK (nef, with contributions from members of the Roundtable on Climate Change and Poverty in the UK, 2009)

www.bassac.org.uk/dms/list/139

The Good Guide to Employment: Managing and developing people in voluntary and community organisations (NCVO, 2008)

www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/publications/publication.asp?id=1474 (for details on how to order your copy)

The new politics of climate change: why we are failing and how we will succeed (Green Alliance, 2008)

www.green-alliance.org.uk/grea_p.aspx?id=3400

Climate Change and Resource Scarcity: A discussion paper for non-environmental civil society groups (2008)

[http://democracy.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/files/Climate_Change_and_Resource_Scarcity_Paper%20\(2\).pdf](http://democracy.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/files/Climate_Change_and_Resource_Scarcity_Paper%20(2).pdf)

Web resources for people management

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)

www.cipd.co.uk/default.cipd (you may have to become a member to access some areas of the site)

People Management

www.peoplemanagement.co.uk

(you may have to subscribe to access some areas of the site)

CIPD and People Management – HR Goes Green Campaign

www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/hrgoesgreen

Information Commissioner's Office (for information on data protection and information security issues)

www.ico.gov.uk

Tools

For organisational/behaviour change models and techniques, try the following:

Management Help http://managementhelp.org/org_chng/org_chng.htm

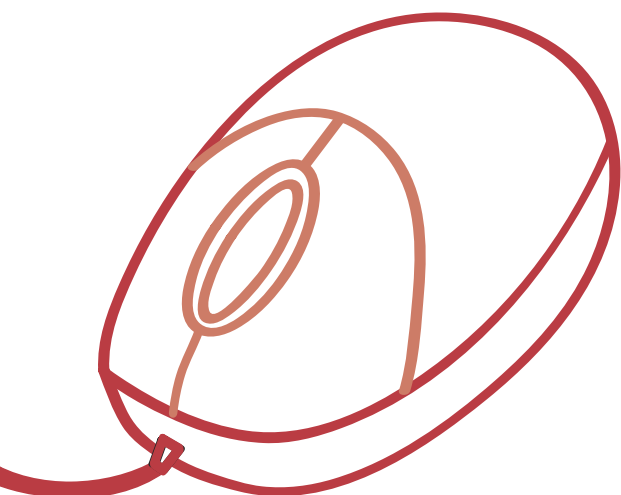
Entarga www.entarga.com/orgchange/resources.htm

NCVO www.strategy-impact.org.uk/page.asp?id=1502

If you need help with posters you could try the Carbon Trust or Envirowise websites where you can download free posters and signs: www.envirowise.gov.uk/posters www.carbontrust.co.uk/energy/startsaving/posterfacts.htm

If you want information, help or advice about how to work together, try the Collaboration Benefits programme at:

www.bassac.org.uk/collaboration





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