

WHAT IF?

What if ... I bring my own baggage to an activity?

A first step is to recognise that we all have baggage shaped by our upbringing regardless of where and what that was. In Northern Ireland it may be shaped by a more segregated society and our perceptions or realities of the past.

Recognising that is often a first step in trying to genuinely understand others and listen to their views. The exercises in this Toolkit are about trying to get people to think and discuss...not setting a right and wrong answer to some questions.

The important thing is to start. The more dialogue we have, reasonably and respectfully with people from different backgrounds, the better we will get at it and the more we learn.

What if ... I make mistakes leading a discussion?

If you are unsure about something, then ask someone. People from the communities that you are discussing will usually be delighted to answer any questions you have. There are also support organisations highlighted at the back.

Mistakes are made by everyone; they are a natural part of doing something different, doing something that you have not done before, or that might change how people think. The important thing is to genuinely try to embrace minority communities and increase a sense of belonging.

What if ... I use the wrong language?

Language changes all the time. You will not be alone – people working on good relations for decades get language wrong.

Ask the people concerned and use the descriptions and language they would choose.

What if ... I encounter discriminatory behaviour like racism or sectarianism, homophobia or sexism?

What would you do if you saw bullying take place in your group? You would refer to a bullying policy, but you would also know what to do instinctively.

Rules should be made clear and implemented quickly and without exceptions.

Racism and sectarianism should always be challenged. Volunteers need to know that it will not be tolerated and those who do challenge it appropriately and reasonably need to know the organisation will support them.

Whatif ... I don't understand something?

Approach any discussion openly and honestly. If you don't know an answer don't try to "wing" it because people will catch on - be honest, tell people you don't know, and that you will find out and revisit the issue at a later stage.

This may be particularly important for building the trust of volunteers.

What if ... I need help?

We have provided the details of some people and organisations who you can approach for help. They may be willing to advise on a range of issues and questions. They may also be willing to come out and speak with your volunteers.

Volunteer Now provides a range of support around managing volunteers. Here is a link to those further resources: [Resources - Volunteer Now](#)