

Volunteer Policy and Procedure

This policy applies to Volunteer workers who are involved in work carried out by, or on behalf of the council at all locations and across all sites.

The Council aims to support and encourage volunteer involvement within different service areas of the Authority, including those from underrepresented groups such as young people, those with a disability, older people, and those from minority ethnic communities.

This policy does not apply to people on government programmes such as Community Service or to work placements from schools or other academic institutions.

Policy Title	Volunteer
Policy Author	HR Team - PSPS
Policy Issue date	January 2023
Policy Review date	January 2027, or earlier if required
Policy Consultation	Trade Unions recognised by the Council Council Reader Panel Senior Leadership Team
Policy Sign-off	Head of Paid Service/SHDC Council

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Introduction

People choose to volunteer for a variety of different reasons. For some it offers the chance to give something back to their community and for others it provides an opportunity to develop new skills and knowledge. Regardless of the motivation, volunteering can be both challenging and rewarding.

Volunteers bring an array of knowledge and expertise to an organisation. Their work should complement and add value to the skills of employed members of staff. In many instances, volunteers can provide a range of support to service users that cannot be provided solely by paid staff. Therefore, the Council welcomes volunteers to all service areas. The Council is committed to engaging with volunteers to complement and expand the delivery of services.

Purpose

Overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy lies with those Council officers who manage Volunteers. The Manager recruiting volunteers to work in their service area is responsible for making this policy work in practice.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Acknowledge the value and contribution made by volunteers;
- Outline how the Council is committed to supporting volunteers and adopting best practice in Volunteer management;
- Clarify the roles of volunteers, their tasks and manage their expectations;
- Ensure fair and equal treatment of volunteers;
- Add value, support and diversity to the Authority.

Various service areas use volunteers in the delivery of their services to provide opportunities for individuals to contribute to the community and maximise the opportunity to lead fulfilling and independent lives. In return, using volunteers enables the service to take advantage of local knowledge and the enthusiasm some volunteers have for their community. By engaging volunteers from various groups within the community, The Council can help combat social exclusion and increase community engagement.

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1 . Employment Status

- 1.1 Volunteers are not paid employees and as such have no employment status. The Council does not enter into any form of legally binding agreement or contract with a Volunteer, either in writing or verbally that suggests the presence of an employment relationship.
- 1.2 It is therefore the intention of this policy to provide a clear structure for volunteer management that reflects the unique nature of the volunteering relationship. Volunteers will not be used to replace paid staff or do work that was done by paid staff in the recent past.
- 1.3 A volunteer is defined as follows: “An individual who undertakes agreed activities on behalf of the Council without financial reward or a contract of employment, for the benefit of the service. Volunteers may be long term (commonly undertaking routine tasks) or undertaking specific time limited tasks”.
- 1.4 Volunteers are used to add value to the service and are never used to replace existing staff or reduce/eliminate the need to recruit to vacant posts. It is appreciated, however, that there may be occasions when the difference between addition and substitution is not clear cut: in those cases, it may be helpful to assess whether the activity under consideration is an essential one that we 'need to do' or one that is non-essential but would be 'nice to do' and is therefore suitable for volunteers. Volunteers will not be asked in this instance to do the work of paid staff. Volunteers may continue with their agreed duties but will not be asked to undertake any additional work in this instance.
- 1.5 Volunteers are not employees. However, under health and safety legislation the Council has a duty to protect volunteers, as well as others who could be affected by our activities.

2 . Recruitment of Volunteers

- 2.1 The Council aims to recruit volunteers from all sections of the local community and with a range of skills, life experiences and knowledge. We welcome volunteers of all ages. Where a volunteer is under 18, parental or guardian consent should be obtained and a risk assessment conducted by the Volunteer Manager.
- 2.2 Volunteering offers an array of benefits to young people and can teach them favourable skills and experience as well as offering numerous benefits to the organisation. However, care must be taken to ensure the volunteer activity is suitable for the age of the volunteer.
- 2.3 All volunteering opportunities will have a volunteer role description appropriate to the area of service and all roles will be risk assessed. All prospective volunteers will be interviewed to discuss their skills, roles and expectations.
- 2.4 Volunteers must provide complete employment history and named referees. Suitability of references taken will determine the placement. All Volunteers are required to provide evidence of their identity. Volunteers will agree their times and actual duties with the Supervisor/manager of the section they will be Volunteering in.
- 2.5 All volunteers will be required to disclose any criminal convictions (including spent convictions) when completing an application form.
- 2.6 All volunteers whose work will involve unsupervised access to children, young people and vulnerable adults, or alternatively employees working with volunteers under 18 (defined as a regulated activity) will be subject to the appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service checks. The DBS does not charge a fee for volunteers to undergo these checks

3 . Supervision, Support & Training of Volunteers

- 3.1 The general purpose, objectives and tasks involved in each volunteer role should be agreed between the volunteer and the Council prior to the volunteering, and this must be regularly reviewed. Induction, training and development for each volunteer is the responsibility of the volunteer manager and should be appropriate for the role. It is expected that all volunteers receive a basic induction and training around Health and Safety and Safeguarding.
- 3.2 The Council believes in making effective use of all of its resources by developing a culture of continuous improvement. Volunteers will be given training that is relevant and appropriate to their roles by an appropriately experienced person within the Authority.

- 3.3 All volunteers should have regular reviews with their manager, reviewing their job satisfaction, achievements and areas for further training and improvement.
- 3.4 Service Users have the right to expect high standards of service delivery and professionalism in their dealings with the authority and its representatives. Volunteers who persistently fail to perform their duties to a satisfactory standard will be asked to meet with a manager to discuss the problem. If the performance of a volunteer does not improve, he or she will be asked to leave or work in a different area of the service.

4 . Standards of Conduct

- 4.1 The public are entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from any person who is representing the Authority. These standards are detailed in the Council's Employee Code of Conduct. Once Volunteers are recruited, they will be expected to adhere to all of the Council's existing policies and procedures as if they were an employee of the Council. Volunteers are bound by the same requirements as paid staff, for example you will be required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement in the same way that a paid employee would be required to do.
- 4.2 In recruiting you as a volunteer we expect that you will:
- Work within agreed guidelines, attend at agreed times and undertake agreed duties. It is the responsibility of the volunteers themselves not to take on any 'extra' tasks which are over and above what has been agreed.
 - Be punctual and reliable;
 - Monitor your working time to ensure compliance with the Working Time Directive;
 - Claim any expenses to which you are entitled via webexpenses and submit VAT receipts as required.
 - Respect confidentiality: you will be asked to sign a Confidentiality Agreement as part of the recruitment process
 - Attend training where required, for example Induction and Health & Safety training.
 - Declare any interests which may be relevant to the role, please refer to the Employee Code of Conduct for further information.
 - Not act in any way which may bring the Authority into disrepute, please refer to the Employee Code of Conduct

5 . Health & Safety

- 5.1 We will not place volunteers in situations that will put their health and safety, or that of others, at risk. Volunteers must comply with Health and

Safety Policy requirements. It is the responsibility of line managers to ensure volunteers receive suitable and sufficient induction with particular attention to Health and Safety matters. The training will include information about personal safety, first aid and what to do in the event of a fire. It is the responsibility of all staff to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and for others who may be affected by their acts or omissions.

- 5.2 All volunteer roles will be risk assessed, covering both the tasks involved and the environment in which they will be conducted. In addition, where a volunteer makes us aware of a pre-existing medical condition or disability, an individual risk assessment may also be necessary
- 5.3 Volunteers undertaking normal Council business will be covered by our insurance in the same way as a paid employee
- 5.4 Where volunteers drive as part of their voluntary activity, and use their own vehicle, they must ensure they possess the relevant class of insurance. Further guidance should be sought from the Volunteer's own insurance company.

6 . Payment of expenses

- 6.1 You are not paid for your time as a volunteer but you may be able to get money to cover any expenses incurred while you are carrying out your volunteer role for the Council.
- 6.2 Volunteers will need to agree any expenses in advance such as mileage, with their Line Manager in advance. Where applicable they should complete the appropriate claim form for submission to Payroll. Claims received are paid a month in arrears, i.e. mileage incurred in July will be paid in August.

7. Confidentiality

- 7.1 All supervisors must ensure that during induction volunteers are aware of the Council's Confidentiality and Data Protection Policies. Volunteers are required to treat data and information that they come into contact in the course of their volunteering with confidentiality and within relevant data protection legislation.
- 7.2 Volunteers are required to provide such personal data about themselves as are necessary to maintain contact including name, address and relevant contact details, and other data necessary to meet safeguarding requirements and other reasonable requirements of the Council. Such data will be stored confidentially and within relevant data protection legislation.

8. Equal Opportunities

8.1 We are fully committed to the Council's Equal Opportunities Policies and will proactively offer volunteering opportunities to people from different backgrounds as a contribution to developing and maintaining an organisation where differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are fostered and valued and where those with diverse backgrounds and experiences are able to participate and contribute

9. Volunteering by Council Employees

9.1 Guidance around staff learning, development and appraisal should ensure that volunteering is considered as a potential learning and development activity at appraisal, and treated as any other learning and development activity.

9.2 Guidance and conditions of service around flexible working and work-life balance should enable managers to exercise reasonable discretion for staff to work flexibly in order to accommodate volunteering activity in their own time— particularly where the volunteering activity directly supports the Council's priorities, or supports the individual's learning and development

9.3 Please note that any voluntary activity must be declared as specified in the Council's Code of Conduct.