

Volunteer Policy

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1. Introduction and Scope

- 1.1 Wyre Council recognise the important and valuable work that volunteers' provide to the community and the significance of their role in creating and implementing our services.
- 1.2 Whilst this policy presents the Council with a framework for effective and consistent engagement of volunteers within our services Wyre Council will support any employees wishing to carry out volunteering activities within the community.
 - Through the Wellbeing Champion Scheme, staff are able to claim one day's paid leave a year to enable them to carry out voluntary/charity work in the community for an organisation within the borough or endorsed by the council.
 - Unpaid leave is also available for staff wishing to carry out further volunteering activities (see section 7 of the Council's Leave and Work Life Balance Policy).
- 1.3 Volunteering should also be a worthwhile and rewarding experience for volunteers, who are an important community resource. Volunteers' experience of working with us will shape their overall view of the Council.
- 1.4 This document defines the term 'volunteer' and sets out our principles and objectives with regard to the use of volunteers. It provides a framework of best practice and procedures, which we will follow when appointing, managing and supporting our volunteers.
- 1.5 A copy of this policy will be made available to volunteers during the induction process and they will be advised where they can obtain a copy if required. Where possible a copy will be at premises where volunteers are based.
- 1.6 There may be occasions when individual departments will need to exercise discretion in the application of this policy.

2. Definition

- 2.1 Volunteers are individuals or groups who offer us their time, experience, knowledge and skills without financial gain beyond reimbursement of expenses, where applicable, helping us to achieve our service objectives, or with the aim of providing a benefit to the local community.
- 2.2 The role of volunteers is very different from that of councillors, employees, consultants or students on work placements.
- 2.3 There is no contract of employment or services between the Council and its volunteers.
- 2.4 Volunteers do not have to commit to a given number of hours and they will not be penalised if they are unable to attend for the hours requested.

3. Principles

- 3.1 We will apply our Equal Opportunity Policy to the recruitment and management of volunteers.
- 3.2 We will take particular care in relation to children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- 3.3 We will provide a volunteer agreement to all volunteers.
- 3.4 We will make information available for volunteers to enable them to claim expenses where applicable.
- 3.5 We will advise all volunteers of their rights under the Data Protection legislation and expect volunteers to respect the confidential nature of Council business.
- 3.6 We will provide appropriate public liability insurance cover for all volunteers whilst they are engaged in a volunteer activity with us (see paragraph 14).
- 3.7 We do not regard volunteers as unpaid employees and will not expect volunteers to be used in a situation where a paid member of staff or a person who provides services under contract to the Council should be used.
- 3.8 We will consult and involve volunteers on issues concerning their volunteering activity.
- 3.9 We will offer suitable training and support for volunteers.
- 3.10 We will provide suitable training and support for staff who manage volunteers.
- 3.11 In the event that volunteers are involved in workplace incidents or accidents the appropriate support mechanisms will be made available such as the Council's EAP service and/or Occupational Health.
- 3.12 We expect all volunteers to behave responsibly and not bring the Council into disrepute.
- 3.13 All of the information that we give to volunteers and all of the forms that we ask them to fill in will be clear and easy to understand.

4. New Volunteering Roles

- 4.1 It is recognised that volunteers can enhance and support the work of the Council. Where new volunteering roles are identified these should be reviewed by the Volunteer Co-ordinator in liaison with the Human Resources Department to ensure that the arrangements are in line with legal interpretation of a volunteer.
- 4.2 If the development of new volunteering opportunities is part of a wider restructure involving paid members of staff this would be considered as part of the consultation process.

5. Volunteer Agreement

- 5.1 We will record the arrangements for individual volunteer activities in a volunteer agreement. All volunteers are required to sign the agreement, which outlines the arrangement between themselves and the Council. No volunteer is able to commence any activity before it is signed and returned to the Volunteer Co-ordinator.

6. Recruitment

- 6.1 We will accept volunteers by applying the following process:
- (a) All volunteers will be asked to complete and sign a Volunteer Application/Agreement, Emergency Contact Details Form and Medical Form.
 - (b) We will invite all prospective volunteers to meet their intended supervisor for a two-way discussion of the proposed role, its requirements and each other's expectations. This meeting is an opportunity for both the supervisor and prospective volunteer to see if the volunteering opportunity is suitable.
 - (c) We have the right to refuse the offer of service of any volunteer.
 - (d) We will require two satisfactory references before a volunteer can take up a role with the council. Based on duties and responsibilities we may also need a satisfactory disclosure from the Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) before a successful volunteer can start their duties.
 - (e) Satisfactory medical clearance will also be required before a successful volunteer can start their duties.

7. Disclosure of Convictions and Safeguarding

- 7.1 Having a criminal record will not be a bar to volunteering with Wyre Council unless the relevant Corporate Director considers that a conviction means that the applicant is unsuitable. Under the requirements of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and any other relevant legislation, the council will ask all volunteers to disclose any 'unspent' convictions.
- 7.2 The Council has a legal obligation to protect children or young people under 18 and vulnerable adults. Volunteers who, in the course of their volunteering activity, are likely to come into contact with the following groups of people will (subject to DBS requirements) be asked to disclose all convictions including any that are 'spent' and a Disclosure Application will be made to the DBS:
- people aged under 18;
 - people over the age of 65;
 - people suffering from serious illness or mental disorder of any description;
 - people addicted to alcohol or drugs;
 - people who are blind, deaf or have a speech impairment;
 - other people who are substantially and permanently disabled by illness, injury or congenital disability.

- 7.3 It is the responsibility of the volunteers' supervisor in liaison with the Volunteer Co-ordinator to identify whether the role should be subject to a Disclosure Application.
- 7.4 The Council aims to comply with the DBS Code of Practice on fair use and handling of disclosure information.
- 7.5 The Council's Safeguarding Policy apply to all volunteers who work with or are likely to come into contact with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults in the course of their volunteering activity. It is the volunteer's supervisor's responsibility to ensure that in such cases the volunteers have appropriate training.

8. Volunteer Management

- 8.1 All volunteers will have a named supervisor who shall be responsible for:
- (a) Organising a planned induction to the particular service, including explaining relevant policies and procedures including health and safety and the duties and tasks agreed.
 - (b) Ensuring that during the induction volunteers are made aware of the Council's confidentiality and data protection policies and receive relevant training as appropriate.
 - (c) Ensuring that volunteers are aware of the need for confidentiality and not to enter into any relations with the media referring any media enquiries to their Supervisor or the Engagement Team.
 - (d) Ensuring that volunteers have adequate work space, equipment and services necessary to perform their tasks effectively and safely including personal identification where appropriate.
 - (e) Arranging a short, timetabled trial period during which new volunteers will receive close support and mutual feedback, including the chance for them to feed back their views.
 - (f) Providing regular support.
 - (g) Making sure that the role and activities are reviewed.

9. Training

- 9.1 We will provide training to make sure that volunteers can carry out their activities on behalf of the Council effectively. This training will directly relate to the activity for which they volunteer.
- 9.2 If there is any doubt as to whether the training is related to the volunteer's task, the relevant Head of Service should seek further advice from the Head of Business Support.

10. Conduct and Complaints

- 10.1 Volunteers will be given an opportunity to discuss any concerns that they may have about their volunteering and consult with us generally.
- 10.2 Volunteers should raise any complaints or concerns with their supervisor. If this is not appropriate or they are not happy with how this is dealt with, volunteers should take their complaint to the relevant Corporate Director or the Head of Business Support or follow the Council's standard published complaints procedure.
- 10.3 If there are concerns about the conduct or performance of a volunteer, their supervisor should investigate to find out what is happening. This should include talking with the volunteer concerned.
- 10.4 If conduct or performance is unsatisfactory, the volunteer should be informed that s/he will be offered guidance for an agreed specified period, the objective of which will be to encourage improvement.
- 10.5 If a volunteer does not meet our standards of performance, and the steps we have taken to encourage them to improve do not work, the volunteer should be offered more suitable alternative voluntary activities or leave with reasonable notice.
- 10.6 All volunteers should be aware that in carrying out their volunteering activities they are representatives of the council and should conduct themselves in a way so as not to bring the council into disrepute. e.g. through comments made on social media (see the Council's Social Media Policy).
- 10.7 If behaviour, which in our view is, equivalent to gross misconduct has occurred the volunteer activity will be terminated immediately.
- 10.8 In the event of conduct concerns and doubt as to the procedures to follow please contact Human Resources.
- 10.9 All volunteers have a fundamental right to be treated with Dignity and Respect and any volunteers who feel that they are being treated unacceptably should speak to their supervisor or Human Resources.

11. Ending Involvement

- 11.1 Either the Council or the volunteer can end the volunteering at any time and without any notice. However, unless there is an emergency or misconduct, we will usually try to give volunteers reasonable notice and hope that they will offer the same to us.
- 11.2 In all cases we will provide the volunteer with details of the reasons why their involvement is no longer needed.
- 11.3 If asked, we will provide volunteers with a certificate giving details of all the activities that they have successfully undertaken for us.

12. References

- 12.1 If asked, either during a volunteer's time with us or when it ends, we will supply a reference, based on a volunteer's service with the Council, indicating the skills and knowledge acquired as well as personal qualities observed.

13. Health & Safety

- 13.1 We have a duty to look after the safety and well-being of our volunteers. We will make volunteers aware of our Health & Safety Policy and any special safety arrangements relating to their individual role during their induction and any updates as necessary.
- 13.2 Volunteers as well as employees must take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others who may be affected by what they do, or omit to do, at work. Volunteers must also co-operate with the Council in performing any duty or complying with any requirement imposed by any relevant health and safety laws.

14. Repaying People their Expenses

- 14.1 In some circumstances we can reimburse expenses. Individual arrangements will be explained to volunteers before they start their volunteering activity.
- 14.2 If a volunteer wishes to claim expenses they should complete an Expenses Claim Form and attach corresponding receipts and/or travel ticket or other evidence of expenditure.

15. Insurance

- 15.1 The Council maintains insurance against risks including loss and damage to or destruction of its property, the injury or death of members of the public affected by its activities and its employees and volunteers undertaking authorised work for it.
- 15.2 The insurance does not, however, extend to unauthorised work or to authorised work carried on by people not authorised by the Council. It is therefore most important that volunteers comply with the conditions of the Council's insurance and do not do anything, which might result in the Council not being covered.
- 15.3 All volunteer activities carried out for us will be covered by public liability insurance as long as:
- Volunteers were acting within their authority at the time of the incident giving rise to the claim.
 - The Council would have been covered for the claim had the claim been made against the Council.
 - The Council has full control of any claim.

16. Copyright

- 16.1 All records in any medium (whether written, computer readable or otherwise) including accounts, documents, drawings and private notes about the Council and

its activities and all copies and extracts of them made or acquired by the volunteer in the course of their volunteering activity shall be:

- (a) the Council's property;
- (b) used for the Council's purpose only;
- (c) returned to the Council on demand at any time; and
- (d) returned to the Council without demand if the volunteer ceases for more than one month to be actively involved with the Council's work.

16.2 Volunteers should be made aware that information produced by them in the course of their volunteering may be made available to the public under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

17. Asylum Seekers

17.1 Since April 2000, asylum seekers (people in the process of applying for refugee status) and family members are allowed to volunteer. This includes whilst they are appealing against a decision to refuse them asylum. However, it must be kept in mind that they may not be given the right to remain here. They should not be led to believe that voluntary activity is regarded as a step towards refugee status being granted.

18. Equality Impact Assessment and Monitoring

18.1 The operation of this policy will be monitored for its impact on different equality groups in line with the Equality Act 2010. This will enable the Council to assess whether any differences have an adverse impact on a particular group, such that further action would be required.

19. Data Protection

19.1 In implementing this policy, the Council will ensure that any personal data relating to the application of this policy will be obtained, processed and destroyed in line with Data Protection requirements.