

EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING SCHEME

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Being a good corporate citizen and investing in the communities we serve is an important part of the way we do business as a public service employer. This Policy sets out the detailed requirements to implement Warwick District Council's commitment to supporting employee volunteering.

2. OBJECTIVE AND COMMITMENT

We are committed to playing our part as active corporate citizens by sharing our expertise, skills and resources and creating partnerships which have a positive impact on our wider communities. Accordingly, Warwick District Council encourages its employees to engage as volunteers in a broad range of social, environmental and economic initiatives in the communities in which they live and work.

By actively supporting the community and continuing to be a socially responsible organisation the Council believes that this will bring real benefits to our customers, our communities and our employees.

3. SCOPE

The Employee Volunteering Scheme is open to all employees with at least six months continuous Warwick District Council service.

Volunteering activity can be approved, on the following basis:

- The involvement supports the Council's Corporate Strategy
- There is no conflict of interest
- Time allocated will not disrupt or adversely affect individual or team activity in the Service Area
- The activity will not bring the Council into disrepute

4. TYPES OF VOLUNTEERING

Full details of types of volunteering opportunities available are given in the Employee Volunteering Guidelines, these include

- Team Challenges
- Individual Volunteering
- One-to-one support
- Using Professional Skills
- Board Membership
- Fund raising

5. REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCCESS

To be successful the time spent volunteering should aim to:

- 5.1 Meet employee learning objectives and expectations.
- 5.2 Meet the objectives of the external organisation.
- 5.3 Be led by experienced volunteers or staff within the external organisation.

- 5.4 Fit into the employees other time commitments, ensuring work/life balance.
- 5.5 Enable the employee to reflect on the experience and transfer the learning back into the workplace.
- 5.6 Enhance their team's business performance or contribute to the Council Corporate Strategy.
- 5.7 Promote the Community Leadership role of the Council.

6. PRINCIPLES

- 6.1 Staff may undertake up to 15 hours of paid volunteering each year, pro rata for part time employees. Further unpaid time may be agreed subject to 6.2 below.
- 6.2 The responsibility for determining who should participate in the Employee Volunteering Scheme will rest with the employee and their line manager and be based on the outcomes of appraisal and the ability to accommodate the time off without impacting on the delivery of the service.
- 6.3 There is no additional resource for covering time off authorised and this must be accommodated from existing resources.
- 6.4 Before approving an individual/group volunteering activity, managers should consider the type of volunteering and amount of time required to undertake it, in relation to the needs of their service and the individual.
- 6.5 If a request is refused valid operational reasons should be given, blanket refusals will not be acceptable.
- 6.6 Employees may follow the appeals process if their request is turned down.
- 6.7 Volunteering may be offered as one of a choice of methods for meeting development needs, but it will be up to the individual, not the line manager, to decide which organisation to volunteer for.
- 6.8 Volunteering does not have to be used exclusively for personal development but can be used where skills and competencies will benefit the community.

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 7.1 Where volunteering activity involves an element of risk for staff, line managers shall satisfy themselves that volunteers have considered and accepted the risks involved before permission is given to participate in the activity.
- 7.2 Individuals volunteering in their own time will also need to satisfy themselves that they are not putting themselves at any undue risk before participating. They should also satisfy themselves that the organisation is appropriately insured.
- 7.3 The Council is not responsible for any volunteering activity that individuals may carry out.

8. INSURANCE

Employees and line managers need to satisfy themselves that the voluntary organisation is picking up any liability from the work they do. The voluntary organisation's definition of 'employee' should include 'volunteers' under both the Employers and Public Liability policies. The Council's insurance does not provide any cover for employees whilst volunteering because it has no control over the work the volunteers are doing. The approval of any volunteering placement will be subject to the employee providing copies of the appropriate employee and public liability insurance documents to their line manager.

9. PROCEDURE

- 9.1 Employees requesting to undertake a voluntary activity with the Council's support should complete the **Volunteer Interest Form** and give it to their line manager.

- 9.2 The line manager will consider the request in line with the principles of the scheme and meet with the employee or group of employees within 21 days to discuss the request.
- 9.3 A response will be given by completing and returning the **Volunteer Interest Form** within seven days of the meeting.
- 9.4 If a request is declined valid reasons must be given.
- 9.5 If a line manager refuses a request there is a right of appeal to the Head of Service. This should be made in writing using the **Volunteer Appeal Form**.
- 9.6 The Head of Service will consider the appeal and respond within 14 days. The Head of Service's decision is final.

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EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING GUIDELINES

GETTING STARTED

The Council is committed to volunteering as a method of meeting staff development needs. We have a policy and guidelines to help you and your manager think about how taking part in a volunteering activity could be part of your learning and development and provide benefits to the community, or how your existing skills and competencies could provide benefits to the community.

WHERE DO I START?

You should start by considering the following points:

- § How volunteering can help your learning and development - look at the policy and guidelines.
- § Visit the extranet site that has links to other volunteering sites. These will give you more information about the range of volunteering opportunities available to you.
- § If you do not know the kind of volunteering that would fit with your requirements, any of the employee volunteering contacts may be able to help you. Also speak to the local CVS office.
- § Project and activities need to be safe, achievable and beneficial to your learning and development. For some volunteering tasks you will need a criminal records check and reference, e.g. working with vulnerable people. Voluntary organisations have their own processes to ensure both you and the work you will be involved in is safe. For instance, working on a conservation project for a day may require considerable physical activity, but would not require the same sharing of personal information that will be required to work as an Adult Literacy Volunteer.
- § Employee volunteering does give you the flexibility to do something of value that suits you and the community. We have links with a range of voluntary organisations that welcome the commitment of the Council staff.
- § The Council believes that the involvement of volunteers brings responsibilities and benefits both for the Local Authority, the employee volunteer and the voluntary organisation or community project.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

If you need to know about the Employee Volunteering Scheme, please read the Council's Policy of Volunteering' together with these guidelines.

This is important as it outlines not only the Council's commitment and the benefits of volunteering, but more importantly, the action managers and staff need to take to ensure that health and safety regulations are adhered to, resources are available and the 'requirements for success' are met.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING

There are numerous benefits for your staff, you as an employer and for the community:

- By actively encouraging voluntary activities, you are demonstrating that you value your staff, local groups and the community.
- Often employees are already involved in some form of voluntary activity. By setting up

an employee volunteering scheme you are showing that you recognise the relevance and importance of the work they are doing.

Benefits for the individual:

- Volunteering provides an opportunity to develop professional and personal skills. Whilst developing these skills, staff will be helping local people or improving the environment.
- It provides a chance to use existing skills in a different setting.
- Staff can explore and learn to cope with new situations and challenges.
- They can work with a wide variety of people from other departments or organisations.
- They can gain experience outside of the usual work and social environment.

Benefits for your organisation:

- A chance to provide different and exciting training and development opportunities.
- Employees' motivation can be improved when they are placed in situations that suit them and which they enjoy.
- Companies supporting employee volunteering have discovered benefits such as improved staff retention, staff morale and working performance.
- Employee volunteering can enhance an organisation's reputation.

Benefits for the community:

- Access to more volunteers with varied skills.
- Employee volunteering builds important links between the public sector and other organisations in the community.

WHAT CAN VOLUNTEERS DO?

There is a huge variety of ways to volunteer. A brief overview of some of the main volunteering activities is given below.

Team challenges

A team challenge is a one-off practical task completed by a group of employees, often in one day. Examples include refurbishing old rooms for new uses, clearing a riverbank or organising a Christmas party for a group of children. Team challenges are great for team building and offer staff a day away from the office where they can develop new skills and come away with a real sense of achievement.

Individual volunteering

Voluntary, community and other organisations value volunteers who are able to help regularly, perhaps for a couple of hours each week or fortnight. All kinds of volunteers are needed for all types of activities: administration, befriending, giving advice, helping at a youth club, conservation, etc. Employees can find activities that suit their existing skills or help them develop new ones.

One-to-one support

Supporting a person as a mentor, helping them through a difficult time or to achieve their full potential can be a rewarding experience for a volunteer. Schemes that rely on volunteers include those mentoring young people who are at risk, excluded from school, offending, abusing drugs or alcohol, or experiencing family breakdown. Employee volunteers are also welcomed at many schools to support clubs and activities, help children learn to read or to raise aspirations among older children. Volunteer mentors develop skills in communication, motivation, influencing and coaching.

Using professional skills

All employees have a whole range of skills which voluntary and community organisations need to help them run and develop their services. For example, they may have skills in IT, financial planning, management, marketing, gardening, accountancy or law. An employee volunteer can offer long-term commitment or undertake a one-off piece of work.

Board membership

Volunteers are needed to sit on the management committees and boards of voluntary organisations and schools. They can offer specialist knowledge and a different perspective, which can contribute enormously to the running of local groups. As a trustee, an employee can gain invaluable experience of the strategic management of an organisation.

Fundraising

Consideration will be given to allowing staff to use work time for fundraising activities. Alternatively, staff could support an annual appeal, for example Christmas present or Easter egg appeals, or Children in Need, etc.

HOW DO I ORGANISE IT FOR MYSELF OR OTHERS?

Volunteering in my own time?

The Council does not offer a brokering service, but the CVS can advise about opportunities available and which voluntary organisations to get in touch with.

Volunteering for Career Development Purposes

Your choice of activity may be prompted by your own interest or a need for personal career development. If you know what you want to do, first ensure that the activity has the agreement of your line manager. If you require guidance about a suitable volunteering opportunity to suit your career development needs, contact Human Resources.

Please complete the Employee Volunteering form, and obtain copies of current insurance certificates for the organisation you will be volunteering for, if you are volunteering in work time.

All volunteering undertaken by the Council in work time must be agreed, safe and undertaken in accordance with the Council's Policy on Volunteering.

Remember that it is important for your health and safety that the guidance and the policy are adhered to. You should ensure that you have checked that the Employers and the Public Liability insurances are current and cover volunteers. If you are in any doubt, speak to your line manager or Human Resources.

HOW MUCH TIME CAN I SPEND VOLUNTEERING?

In your own time

This is at your discretion.

In Work Time

Within the Employee Volunteering Scheme you can spend up to 15 paid hours per year, subject to the prior agreement of your line manager. Any time in excess of 15 hours would be unpaid and again subject to the needs of the service. This is pro rata for part time employees.

HAVING VOLUNTEERED IN WORK TIME WHAT DO I DO NEXT?

Use the 'requirements for success' outlined in the Policy for Volunteering, to help you in giving feedback to your manager.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING SCHEME

Q: Whose permission do I need to volunteer in work time?

A: Any proposed volunteering activity must be discussed with and approved by your line manager (complete Employee Volunteering Form).

Q: How many hours can I volunteer?

A: The Employee Volunteering Scheme (EVS) provides up to 15 hours paid time off per year. This is the total amount of time you may be credited with. These hours do not have to be used all at once, and with the agreement of your line manager it is possible to volunteer as the activity requires. For instance, reading in schools may need you for an hour a week, and so you will need agreement from your line manager to commit to a set time during the school term.

Q: All of my team want to do a Team Challenge but our line manager won't agree it

A: It is not possible to agree all requests but there must be valid operational reason for refusing.

Q: Am I covered by the Council's insurance while volunteering?

A: NO – The organisation that you are volunteering for should be picking up any liability from the work you do. Staff should check that the organisation's definition of employee includes 'volunteers' under both the Employers and Public Liability policies, and that both policies are valid for the whole period of volunteering. The Council's insurance does not provide any cover for volunteering, as it has no control over the work that you are doing. If volunteering in work time, managers should ensure that the member of staff has checked the organisation's insurance and signed the EV form accordingly.

Q: Will I be able to claim expenses?

A: NO – Expenses will not be paid by the Council, but you should investigate whether the voluntary organisation you choose is able to pay expenses.

Q: I do voluntary work in my own time can I use the Council's resources?

A: You can use the Council's ICT equipment to produce forms and letters in your lunch break. However you must fund your own printing costs - you could discuss with the print room to see if they can offer a 'charitable' rate.

Q: My line manager has refused my application what can I do?

A: You may appeal to the head of your service but his/her decision is final.

Q: Will the volunteering I already undertake be recognised?

A: One of the EVS aims is to use volunteering as a vehicle for developing skills that will help you do your job more effectively and develop as an individual. Any volunteering you already undertake is no doubt very valuable to your personal development and in many cases there may be the opportunity to develop an area of your existing volunteering activity to meet the needs of your personal development plan.

Q: I enjoyed my EVS volunteering so much that I would like to continue volunteering in my own time, is this allowed?

A: Definitely. Volunteering can be very rewarding in a number of ways and many people find that they want to become more involved during their leisure time. One of the aims of this scheme is to provide information about the wide range of opportunities available. So if you want to try something else please do!

Q: Where can I find out more about organisations which need volunteers?

A: Warwick District Council does not match employees with organisations but the Council for Voluntary Services is likely to be a good starting point.

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