

Volunteers Policy

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1. Introduction

The council recognises that individuals who volunteer play an important part in meeting the council's goals. They are individuals who put their experience, knowledge and skills at the disposal of the council free of charge with the primary aim of helping the council to achieve its service objectives and to bring benefit to the local community. This document sets out the principles, practices and procedures that should be followed for the appointment and management of volunteers.

2. Scope of the Policy

The volunteers that work with the Council fall into one of 4 broad groups as follows:

1. Council employees who do additional voluntary work with Council departments for certain special event or emergencies.
2. Members of the public who are doing voluntary work or work experience within the Council.
3. Members of the public who have formed groups that work alongside the Council supporting certain functions, for example the friends of the libraries.
4. Members of the public who are part of formal clubs or societies who assist the Council from time to time and for whom a memorandum of understanding exists between themselves and the Council.

Although this policy is primarily aimed at those in group 2 above, the general principles apply to all 4 groups of volunteers

3. Aims of Policy

The aim of the policy is to:

- Provide a framework for managers and employees to ensure that where individuals are volunteering they can be managed safely and appropriately.
- Ensure that risks to volunteers are assessed in a systematic way, and that safe systems and methods of work are put in place.
- Increase staff awareness of safety issues relating to volunteers and volunteering; and to reduce the number of incidents and injuries to volunteers.
- Ensure that current training available to all staff provides practical advice on safety when working with volunteers and equips them to recognise risks related to volunteering.
- Ensure that the recruitment of volunteers is undertaken in a suitable, sufficient and consistent way.
- Ensure that sufficient and appropriate safeguarding measures are in place for volunteers in relevant roles.
- Ensure that where appropriate volunteers are aware of and use the lone worker monitoring system.
- Ensure that appropriate support is available to individuals who volunteer.
- Encourage full reporting and recording of all adverse incidents and near misses relating to volunteering.

4. Responsibilities

Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that all members of staff are aware of this policy and the duty of care the Council has towards volunteers.
- Ensuring that risk assessments for volunteers and volunteering are carried out and reviewed regularly.
- Implementing procedures and safe systems of work which are designed to eliminate or reduce the risks associated with volunteer workers and volunteering.
- Ensuring that staff groups and individuals who work with volunteers are given appropriate information, instruction and training. This can include training at induction, updates and refresher training as necessary.
- Ensuring that any volunteers they are working with are covered by appropriate insurance, either via the Council or arranged independently by the person or group volunteering.
- Fully considering the issue of volunteers and data protection in their area and taking any action that may be necessary to ensure the Council fulfils its responsibilities under the Data Protection Act.

Employees should:

- Follow the guidelines outlined in this document and any local procedures that are in place relating to volunteers and volunteering.
- Take part in any training to meet the requirements of this document.
- Co-operate by following any control measures identified in risk assessments to promote safe lone working.
- Report all accidents or incidents that occur while working with volunteers.
- Report any dangers or potential dangers they identify or any concerns they might have in respect of volunteers and / or volunteering.

5. Instructions for Working with Volunteers

In appointing, managing and working with volunteers, all staff must follow the requirements as set out below:

- Volunteers must be treated in the same manner as paid staff in all matters relating to their health, safety and welfare. They must be provided with a safe place to work with adequate supervision to reduce the risk of ill health or injury. Appropriate risk assessments must be completed for all activities that they are involved in.
- Volunteers must be properly inducted into the workplace and have received any required training and instruction to enable them to carry out their duties safely and effectively.
- Managers and supervisors must make sure that all relevant policies and procedures have been made available to volunteers before they commence volunteering and that the volunteers have read, understood and agreed to abide by them. However, volunteers must understand that volunteering is not a formal employment relationship and this needs to be made clear in the offer letter (see Volunteering Agreement at appendix 1).

- Managers will need to make sure that appropriate supervision, guidance and support is made available at all times.
- Managers must ensure that all actions taken with volunteers are in accordance with the Council's Equality Policy Statement and Guidance.
- Managers must ensure volunteers are aware of the requirements placed upon them when working with vulnerable persons, children and young persons by the Council's safeguarding policies.
- Where a volunteer will be lone working they must be given training in and use the Council's Automated Lone Worker Call-back System
- Volunteers are not considered Council Employees and do not have access to the Employee Assistance Program or other Staff Benefits.

6. Recruitment and Induction

The procedure for recruiting a volunteer is as follows:

- Step 1: Advertising – This can be undertaken in a variety of forms including:
 - Word of mouth (volunteer to volunteer),
 - literature (leaflets and posters),
 - Community Action Isle of Wight (formerly IWRCC) Volunteer Centre which can advertise opportunities on behalf of the Council,
 - local media (radio, newspaper, posters), and;
 - open days.
- Step 2: Informal interview - managers will need to establish the volunteer's needs, aims and motivations along with their skills and experiences to help make a decision as to whether the volunteer will be suitable or not. They will also need to ask the potential volunteer to complete a volunteer information form. Equally, volunteers will be seeking to be provided with information about the organisation in general to enable them to decide whether they would like to become a volunteer.
- Step 3: Written references should be obtained wherever possible (see reference form at appendix 3). These can be from a variety of sources including previous employers, other organisations where the potential volunteer has undertaken voluntary work or a voluntary organisation that has supported them in securing work related opportunities (where applicable).
- Step 4: Statutory Checks – Where appropriate DBS checks must be completed if a volunteer will be unsupervised and interacting frequently with vulnerable service users (elderly, disabled, children, etc.) as part of their role. Advertising for volunteers will explicitly state the need for DBS and reference checks, in line with the Council's safeguarding responsibilities.
- Step 5: A copy of the volunteering agreement must be sent or given to the Volunteer by the manager who is arranging the placement.

Important Note: The Council has a responsibility to make sure that those appointed as volunteers whose duties may bring them in contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults adhere to the council's safeguarding code of practice. Managers will therefore need to make sure that all volunteers are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities, including the routes of reporting concerns.

7. Medical Issues

Although volunteers are not required to undertake a medical examination, it is important that managers are aware of any medical conditions that volunteers may have, which may increase any

work related risk to the volunteer and others. Examples may include diabetes, heart conditions, repetitive injuries and epilepsy. If there are any queries about a volunteer's health, advice and guidance should be sought from HR.

8. Work Equipment and Personal Protective Equipment

Where work equipment is supplied by the council the volunteer must be given a full induction and training in its use. This includes any Personal Protective Equipment identified as required in risk assessments.

Where the volunteer is providing their own equipment, they must also provide proof that the equipment is safe and fit for purpose. "Equipment" can include any item used in the course of their volunteering activities from tools through to vehicles used during bad weather to assist frontline services. Acceptable proof can include servicing records, thorough examination reports, test certificates and records of visual checks. Where voluntary work is dependent on the use of a vehicle or other equipment, these checks should be carried out prior to an offer letter being sent out.

Volunteers must confirm that they have valid insurance to allow them to use their car for 'business' purposes whilst volunteering. Valid MOT certificate, insurance and driving licence documents must be checked by the line manager responsible for the volunteer before commencement of any driving activity and thereafter on an annual basis as appropriate.

The Volunteer should receive appropriate induction which may include corporate induction, data protection, health and safety, equality and diversity and safeguarding. This should be organised by the responsible line manager.

If a volunteer has declared that they have a disability during the recruitment process then Managers are obliged to consider reasonable adjustments in a workplace to allow the volunteer to fulfil their duties. This may include the use of special equipment or changing the way something is done.

9. Expenses and Driving Whilst on Council Business

Volunteers are entitled to all reasonable out of pocket expenses incurred during the course of their volunteering and for volunteering related travel. This may include travel to and from the place of volunteering at the manager's discretion.

Vendor Master Request forms, available on the intranet, will need to be completed before payment requests can be processed. Payment would be made by BACS and bank details will therefore need to be provided. The expenses should be claimed on Payment Request Forms, available from Creditor Payments. The expenses should be split down as to miles and the mileage rate (paid at 40p per mile) or nature of expense together with any receipts.

10. ICT

Should the role involve access to any of the Council's IT equipment, volunteers are required to read and agree to comply with the Council's ICT policies, in particular the Policy for Non-Council Staff Using Council ICT Equipment and Services and undertake any training that may be identified as relevant to the role.

Volunteers using IT equipment should first complete a workstation self-assessment questionnaire for display screen equipment (DSE) suitability in order to protect against work related upper limb disorder.

11. Discipline, Grievance, Code of Conduct, 'Whistle blowing' and Reviews

Although not employees, volunteers engaged by the Council will be required to read and agree to the Council's Code of Conduct.

The Council's Disciplinary and Grievance procedures are not applicable to Volunteers. Volunteers will therefore not be able to use the grievance procedures to deal with any concerns about their experiences, but may nevertheless use the Council's complaints procedure if they so wish. Equally, Volunteers are encouraged to use the Council's Whistle Blowing Policy should they need to report any potential malpractice for example. Managers must make sure that Volunteers know where to find these policies and how to access them.

Managers are expected to supervise Volunteers and ensure that they demonstrate appropriate standards of behaviour. A Volunteer arrangement will be terminated with immediate effect if misconduct occurs that is deemed sufficiently serious to suggest that they are no longer suitable to continue.

12. Termination

Volunteers are free to end their volunteering relationship with the Council at any time; they are however encouraged to give as much notice of finishing as possible as it helps to plan for replacements. A discussion should be held with the Volunteer to agree, where possible, a mutually acceptable date. It would also help improve the experiences of future Volunteers if the Volunteer leaving could attend a leaving interview in order to provide valuable feedback on their experience and reasons for leaving.

A volunteering position can be terminated by the Council at any time for any reason. Managers should provide, where possible, both an explanation of the reason for the termination and a reasonable amount of notice.

When a volunteer finishes position with the Council they are expected to return any Council Equipment, including Personal Protective Equipment that they have been issued.

13. References requested from the Council

Any request for references received for someone who is or has been a Council volunteer needs to be treated in-line with the Council's references policy. Care needs to be taken when supplying references to make clear that the individual was working at the Council in a voluntary capacity and that were not an employee.

14. Young People

There are additional considerations when a volunteer is also a young person. Additional information and guidance can be found on the work experience part of the Council's Volunteering page found here:

http://wightnet2000.iow.gov.uk/staff/personnel_services/Human_Resources_Recruitment_Team/volunteer.asp

15. Further Information

Further information about volunteering, including many of the forms needed can be found on the Council's volunteering page on Wightnet:

http://wightnet2000.iow.gov.uk/staff/personnel_services/Human_Resources_Recruitment_Team/volunteer.asp

Appendix 1

Volunteering

Agreement

Volunteering Agreement

This Volunteer Agreement describes the arrangement between the Isle of Wight Council and you. We wish to assure you of our appreciation of your volunteering with us and will do the best we can to make your volunteer experience with us enjoyable and rewarding.

This agreement is between

Name of Department, Isle of Wight Council

and

Name of Volunteer -

Part 1: The Isle of Wight Council:

Your role as a volunteer is and starts on This volunteering role is designed to *[state purpose of volunteer role and how it helps the council]*

You can expect the Isle of Wight Council:

1. Induction and training

- To provide a thorough induction on the work of the Isle of Wight Council, its staff, your volunteering role and the training you need to carry out this role. We hope that you will take advantage of this to improve and maintain your skills

2. Supervision and support

- To explain the standards we expect for our services and to encourage and support you to achieve and maintain them.
- To provide a named person who will meet with you regularly to discuss your volunteering and any successes and problems.
- To do our best to help you develop your volunteering role with us.

3. Expenses

- To reimburse expenses following the procedures in the Volunteer Policy.

4. Health and safety

- To provide adequate training and feedback in support of our health and safety policy.
- To make risk assessments available for the activities being undertaken, where appropriate

5. Insurance

- To provide adequate insurance coverage for volunteers whilst carrying out their volunteering roles which have been approved and authorised by us. This excludes insurance for the use of your own vehicle during the course of your volunteer work which must be provided by you.

6. Equality

- To ensure that all volunteers are dealt with in accordance with our equal opportunities policy.

7. Problems

- To try and resolve fairly any problems, complaints or difficulties you may have when you volunteer with us.
- In the event of an unresolved problem to offer an opportunity to discuss the issues with a manager.

Part 2: the volunteer

We expect you:

- To help the Isle of Wight Council to fulfil its *[describe role/service the volunteer will be helping with]*.
- To fulfil your volunteering role to the best of your ability.
- To follow the Isle of Wight Council's procedures and standards, including health and safety and equality policy in relation to its staff, volunteers, clients, service users and members of the public.
- To maintain the confidential information you may come across about the Isle of Wight Council, its staff and its clients during the course of your volunteering. You must respect this confidentiality and not use the information for your own benefit or disclose the information during your period of volunteering or after the information becomes available to you including when you have ceased volunteering with the Council, except where required or permitted to do so by law.
- To meet the time commitments and standards which have been mutually agreed to and to give reasonable notice so other arrangements can be made where this is not possible.
- To provide references as agreed who may be contacted and to agree to a Disclosure and Baring Service check being carried out where necessary.

This is not intended to be a legally binding contract between us and may be cancelled at any time at the discretion of either party. Neither party intend any employment relationship to be created either now or at any time in the future.

Appendix 2

Volunteer

Information Form

Volunteer Information Form

Name:

Position volunteering for:

Address:

Postcode:

Phone: Daytime:

Evening:

Mobile:

Date of Birth:

Gender:

Do you have any access requirements or reasonable adjustments that need to be made: (e.g. large print, wheelchair access, etc.)

When are you normally available?:

How did you find out about volunteering at the Isle of Wight Council?

Appendix 3

Volunteer

Reference Form

Isle of Wight Council Volunteer Reference Form

Reference for:

Referee's Name:

Company:

Position:

How long have you known the Volunteer?

In what capacity do you know the Volunteer?

Please comment on:

The Volunteer's skills :

(Listening, written and oral communication, numeracy, using information, etc.)

Personal Qualities:

(Willingness to learn, initiative, organisation, etc.)

Other Qualities:

(Punctuality, ability to keep confidentiality, ability to work effectively with colleagues, ability to relate to clients, etc.)

Any other comments: