

**Telford & Wrekin Council**

# **Volunteers and Volunteering**

**Policy and guidance**

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**Developed by: Human Resources**

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The policy does not apply to staff employed in schools where school governing bodies have overall responsibility for agreeing employment policies for those staff

This policy and guidance will be amended as necessary to ensure it aligns with the council's priorities and will be reviewed no later than 12 months after its implementation

# Volunteering Policy

It is our aim to increase the quality, quantity, contribution and accessibility of volunteering opportunities in Telford & Wrekin as we are committed to encouraging individual involvement in the community. Volunteers are highly valued by the council as they are exemplars of our Co-operative Council approach.

We will promote the increased recognition, recruitment, development and retention of volunteers as a powerful force for change, both for those who volunteer and for the wider community. We will raise awareness that by volunteering, people can obtain useful skills and experience which will have a positive impact on their wellbeing, self-confidence and employability.

We will support better planning and management of volunteer activity in our services and seek to assess its value and impact.

We will offer opportunities and support to those who wish to volunteer to help the Council to enhance services for our residents. We will also support our employees who volunteer.

## Volunteering in Council Services

We aim to enable and support such volunteers by making the following commitments:

- ❖ give volunteers an introduction to the council;
- ❖ provide support and guidance from a council contact;
- ❖ give volunteers a clear idea of the things they are being asked to do and the responsibility that it will mean;
- ❖ give training to be able to do the volunteering activity;
- ❖ treat volunteers with dignity and respect;
- ❖ ask volunteers to do genuine volunteering **not** 'unpaid' work;
- ❖ provide appropriate tools and/or equipment;
- ❖ give volunteers the chance to discuss any changes which may affect their volunteering; and
- ❖ provide volunteers with a reference on the basis of their volunteering activities

## Supporting employees who are volunteers

It is our policy to support employees who wish to undertake volunteering in order to enhance their wellbeing and personal development as well as support and build relationships with the local community.

We believe that promoting opportunities for employees to volunteer will help them enhance and develop their skills and abilities which will improve their performance at individual and team level.

We aim to:

- Raise employee awareness and understanding of volunteering;
- Enable employees to enhance and develop their skills, support their learning, and increase their well-being by undertaking volunteering activities;
- Encourage and support council employees to volunteer within the borough;
- Contribute to the council's reputation as a good employer in the community

The council will help employees to find out more about the range of volunteering opportunities, which are available on [www.volunteertelford.co.uk](http://www.volunteertelford.co.uk)

Volunteering is encouraged by the council and line managers should be supportive of employees wishing to do so and make every effort to support requests. However, where requests for additional leave or flexible working in order to undertake volunteering are being considered, service needs/quality and availability must also be preserved.

# Guidance: Volunteering in Council Services

## Recruiting Volunteers

People can seek to volunteer to work in Council services by:

- responding to advertisements or campaigns by the Council to recruit volunteers
- asking to talk to a council manager about becoming a volunteer

Information on volunteering opportunities can be found [here](#).

There is a [Tool Kit](#) available for managers which should be read in conjunction with this guidance. The toolkit guides managers through the process of recruiting and managing volunteers in more detail. If you have any queries on this toolkit, please contact [get.involved@telford.gov.uk](mailto:get.involved@telford.gov.uk)

Managers should be available to discuss opportunities with potential volunteers and signpost them to the [Volunteers Handbook](#) . If the potential volunteer is firmly interested and there is a volunteering opportunity available, the manager should ask them to complete a volunteer's application form which is located at the back of the Volunteers handbook and invite them to an informal meeting.

## Informal Meeting

At this meeting the manager should fully discuss with the volunteer the contents of the Volunteer's Handbook. Prospective volunteers must be given a clear understanding of what would be expected of them in their voluntary role. Managers may wish to develop a volunteer role profile which clearly sets out the role and responsibilities of a volunteer in their service area. It is important the volunteers are not seen as an alternative to employing paid staff.

Potential volunteers should be made aware of key council policies, regulations and codes of practice and informed that they would be expected to adhere to them. The importance of client confidentiality must be emphasised. Managers should also explain what sort of support and training they will offer to the volunteers. Any special requirements or adjustments that the volunteer may require should also be assessed.

Managers should ask potential volunteers about their reasons for wanting to volunteer. When recruiting volunteers to work with children or adults who may be vulnerable managers should ascertain the potential volunteer's motivation for working with the vulnerable client group and assess their ability to form and maintain appropriate relationships and personal boundaries with the clients. Managers should also explain any background checks which will need to be completed before the potential volunteer would be able to start volunteering. A brief note of the informal meeting and any actions agreed should be made and attached to the Volunteer's Application Form.

## **Background Checks**

It may be necessary to seek a check on the appropriate barred list or an enhanced criminal records disclosure before agreement can be reached as to whether a volunteer can participate in particular areas working with children and/or adults which may be vulnerable. (There is a small fee for such checks for volunteers). If these checks are required the manager should **also** ask the prospective volunteer to give contact details of 2 referees who can provide a reference as to the prospective volunteer's suitability to volunteer with the relevant client group.

It is also important to check whether the prospective volunteer is on the Personal Safety Precautions (PSP) Register. If you or anyone in your team does not already have access to this then you can [request authorisation](#) to access here.

## **Insurance & Travel Expenses**

Managers must explain the necessity for volunteers to have adequate motor insurance if they are going to be using their cars whilst volunteering and explain which expenses they may claim. The main insurance covers held by the Borough of Telford & Wrekin comprising public liability, employers liability and officials indemnity extend to indemnify volunteers whilst acting on behalf of the authority. If a volunteer, however, is required to use their car, the volunteer must extend their car insurance to include business use on behalf of the Borough of Telford & Wrekin and written confirmation of this must be provided. Reimbursement for use will be in accordance with the Council's [casual car user allowance scheme](#).

## Managing a volunteer

Once an agreement is reached between the manager and the volunteer, and any necessary background checks have been completed satisfactorily, the [Volunteer Agreement](#) section of the Application form should be completed. This agreement includes brief details of the particular volunteer role and the usual volunteering times agreed. It also sets out a named contact for the volunteer. The manager should give a copy of the signed agreement to the volunteer.

The manager should then arrange for the original copy of the agreement and any references obtained to be kept securely for monitoring and contact purposes. Consideration should be given as to whether volunteers will require ID badges.

## Supporting volunteers

Depending on the nature of the volunteering opportunity and the individual volunteer different types of support will be appropriate at different times. All volunteers will need an introduction into their role and should be given a named contact person with whom they should meet at mutually agreed times for regular support and guidance and to talk through any issues or problems they may have. In addition there may also be opportunities for informal day-to-day support, for example by checking in with the volunteer at the end of each session and expressing thanks for their input. It is also useful to have mutual telephone contact details in case of emergencies.

If you have a group of volunteers they may find it useful if it can be arranged for them to meet and share ideas and experiences for peer support. An experienced volunteer may also be willing to help a manager support a new volunteer. All volunteers will require the necessary training and equipment to do their role safely and effectively and the manager will need to ensure this is arranged. Volunteers should also be kept informed of any proposed changes in their service areas and consulted on how these may affect their roles. A volunteer's support needs may change during their involvement with the service so managers should regularly review and adapt the support they are providing for volunteers. Managers must also be prepared to give volunteers a reference based on their volunteer role as required.

## Misconduct of volunteers

If the manager has any concerns about the conduct of the volunteer, these should be explored and addressed immediately. Advice should be sought from Human Resources on individual cases and may involve referral to a Vetting Panel. If it is decided that the volunteer cannot continue to work with children or vulnerable adults, they should be informed of this. Checks should be made as to whether the individual is volunteering in other areas of the authority. Human Resources should also be informed in order that other agencies can be informed if necessary.

## Ending Voluntary Activity

A volunteer can decide not to volunteer at any point and does not have to resign from their position nor does the council need to give notice to the volunteer if his or her services are no longer required. It is recommended that an exit interview is held to gather useful information that might assist volunteers in the future and promote continued improvement.

## Roles and responsibilities

Arrangements should be put in place by the manager to ensure that the council's policy commitments to volunteers are honoured. It is also important that volunteers understand their responsibilities.

	<b>Responsibilities</b>
<b>Volunteer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Undertake volunteering in accordance with Telford &amp; Wrekin Council's codes of practice, policies, aims and objectives</li><li>• Meet with their council contact at mutually agreed times</li><li>• Participate in relevant training opportunities and activities</li><li>• Notify their council contact of any absence and provide reasonable notice if they intend to stop volunteering</li><li>• Respect the privacy of staff and service users and maintain confidentiality at all times</li><li>• Carry out agreed activities to the best of their ability</li><li>• If they have been required to have a criminal records check as a volunteer, tell their council contact should they receive any criminal cautions, convictions or reprimands or if they subject of any</li></ul>

	allegations or investigations relating to the safety or welfare of others
<b>Manager recruiting volunteer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep a record of the volunteer agreement securely</li> <li>• Treat volunteers with dignity and respect</li> <li>• Ensure that volunteers have an introduction to the Council and receive ongoing support from a named contact with whom they meet on a regular basis</li> <li>• Explain what is required and the responsibility it means including any relevant council policies</li> <li>• Provide appropriate training, tools and equipment</li> <li>• Only ask volunteers to do genuine volunteering activities</li> <li>• Discuss any changes which may affect them and listen to their views</li> <li>• Provide a reference on the basis of the volunteering activity completed</li> <li>• Ensure that full and accurate details of volunteering opportunities are publicised (e.g. dates, particular skills needed, etc.)</li> <li>• To keep a record of the volunteers and provide this information, when required to do so, for monitoring purposes. In particular, record the number of council employees who take part.</li> </ul>

# Guidance: Supporting employees who volunteer

## Promoting volunteering opportunities

This will be done by:

### 1. Promoting council coordinated volunteering opportunities

These are one-off events or on-going volunteering opportunities within the local community, all of which will work towards delivering the co-operative council priorities. They are coordinated by the council (or by partners) and provide opportunities for employees to be involved on a voluntary basis.

These opportunities will be advertised to all employees throughout the year and employees are able to participate in **one community project or event day**, for up to **7.4 hours per annum** (pro rata for part time staff).

For events that take place during an employee's normal working day, he/she will be entitled to paid time, as normal, to attend. If however the event takes place during what is a non-working day for the employee, for example an evening, weekend, statutory holiday, he/she will be entitled to time off in lieu (up to 7.4 hours or pro rata for part time staff), to be taken at a later date in agreement with their manager.

Any additional travel expenses incurred whilst volunteering, which are over and above the employee's normal journey to work, will be reimbursed in accordance with the Council's [casual car user allowance scheme](#).

Employees who are interested in applying to participate in an advertised event should firstly discuss this with their manager, including details of the event and the date and times of it. Line managers will consider requests as they would any request for annual leave, Flexi leave or TOIL and a record will be kept.

Managers will support requests wherever possible, taking into consideration the needs of the service. Where multiple requests are received from members of a team for the same event, managers may wish to consider them on a first come, first served basis.

Where requests are agreed, employees should complete the Volunteer application form which is located at the back of the [Volunteers Handbook](#) this should be done by the recruiting officer for the volunteering opportunity.

## **2. Signposting to other volunteering opportunities**

We will promote volunteering opportunities within the borough, which are coordinated by individuals or organisations external to the council, but are linked to delivering council priorities. Information about volunteering opportunities for employees can be accessed via the [Employee Volunteering Intranet pages](#).

### **Time off to volunteer**

Various flexible working arrangements exist to assist employees who wish to volunteer. Some activities have separate arrangements for time off. These include acting as a magistrate, elected member of a local authority, member of statutory tribunal, member of a health authority, member of a health service trust, member of a family practitioner committee, a governor of a school or college, a member of a youth offending panel, a member of the board of visitors to prisons and remand homes. Full details of are given in the [Special Leave](#) policy.

### **Disclosure & Barring Checks and References**

If volunteering in council Services it may be necessary to seek a check on the appropriate barred list or an enhanced criminal records disclosure and/or it may be appropriate for a reference to be requested before agreement can be made for an employee to start as a volunteer.

Employees volunteering for another organisation should seek guidance from them on any checks they require. Checks for volunteers currently incur a small fee.

## **Insurance & Travel Expenses**

The main insurance covers held by the Borough of Telford & Wrekin comprising public liability, employers liability and officials indemnity extend to indemnify volunteers whilst acting on behalf of the authority.

Employees volunteering for another organisation are often covered by that organisation's insurance, however, employees should check with the organisation to ensure it has appropriate insurance cover.

If required to use their car when acting as a volunteer for the council, the employee must extend their car insurance to include business use on behalf of the Borough of Telford & Wrekin and written confirmation of this must be provided. Reimbursement for use will be in accordance with the council's [casual car user allowance scheme](#) (even if the employee is an essential car user in their post).

Employees volunteering for another organisation should check with their motor insurance provider that they are covered if using their car to volunteer.

## **Support for employees who volunteer in council services**

Employees who volunteer in council service areas can expect and are entitled to the same level of support and they will have the same responsibilities as other volunteers. Full details are given in the [Volunteer's Handbook](#).

## **Roles and responsibilities**

It is important that there are clear roles and responsibilities for the employees and Line managers to make volunteering operate effectively. The following table sets out these respective responsibilities:

	<b>Responsibilities</b>
<b>Employees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think through the any implications of volunteering e.g. their work commitments during the period that the volunteering take place, their suitability for the particular volunteering role.</li> <li>• Be fully committed to the volunteering role and to represent the council in a professional manner</li> <li>• Undertake their volunteering in accordance with Telford &amp; Wrekin Council codes of practice, policies, aims and objectives</li> </ul>
<b>Line Managers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure their team are aware of the volunteering scheme and how to view the opportunities</li> <li>• Be supportive of the scheme</li> <li>• When considering any request, consider workloads, planned or potential absences of other team members, timescales and dates, any additional costs that might be incurred by releasing the employee</li> <li>• Consider requests for volunteering reasonably and to explain their decisions, providing feedback and justification when they are unable to accommodate a request for volunteering</li> <li>• Ensure service needs are maintained</li> </ul>