

## **WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS**

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### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Council/Governing Body recognises the contribution that volunteers make to enhance and support the work of the Council/School. This policy sets out the procedures to be put in place to ensure the safe, fair treatment of volunteers and to preserve the integrity and security of the Council/School.
- 1.2 The Council expects Managers/Headteachers and employees to treat volunteers with respect and protect them from exploitation.
- 1.3 For the purposes of this policy, volunteers are defined as individuals who choose to work without payment for the Council/School.
- 1.4 Where voluntary organisations or community groups are to supply the volunteers, a copy of the providers' volunteer policy is required to ensure that procedures are at least equal to those of the Council/School and that the volunteer has been properly vetted. Additional issues such as licensing arrangements must be organised with the assistance of Legal Services.
- 1.5 The Council/School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.
- 1.6 Volunteers are expected to adhere to the same high standards of conduct as employees when taking part in voluntary work on behalf of the Council/School. Guidance on appropriate standards of behaviour can be found in the [Code of Conduct](#) document.
- 1.7 In addition to this policy Schools should make reference to:  
  
Department for Education and Skills (DfES) Guidance Document - Safeguarding Children: Safer Recruitment and Selection in Education January 2007.  
  
The use of volunteers is not intended to replace paid employees.

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### **2. Approval**

- 2.1 Where new arrangements for the introduction of volunteers are proposed, approval must be obtained from the relevant Assistant Director or in the case of a school, the appropriate committee of the Governing Body. Risk assessments must be carried out in the same manner as if a paid employee were taking on the role.
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- 3. Recruitment of volunteers who will be undertaking unpaid duties on a regular basis.**
- “Regular Basis” is defined by the DfES as “three or more times within a 30 day period, or overnight”.**
- 3.1 The Council/School is committed to operating recruitment and selection procedures that help deter, reject, or identify people who might abuse children or vulnerable adults, or are otherwise unsuited to work with them.
- 3.2 The Council/School is committed to diversity and equal opportunity in all areas of its work and as such the recruitment of volunteers is subject to the principles of the Council/Schools [Corporate Equality Scheme](#).
- 3.3 The role of the volunteer will be clearly described in a written form, and where necessary make reference to the volunteers suitability to working with children or vulnerable adults. The activities to be undertaken will form the basis of the skills, knowledge and qualifications required.
- 3.4 Volunteers are usually perceived to be safe and trustworthy, in particular when they are working with children or vulnerable adults, therefore the Council/School adopts the same recruitment measures as it does for its paid employees. The volunteer will complete an application form and be interviewed before taking up duties to ensure the capabilities of volunteers match the work they are to undertake.
- 3.5 National Minimum Standards for Social Care stipulate that all Care staff are at least 18 years old, and staff who are given sole responsibility for children are at least 21 years old. No person is able to work in a children’s home unless they are at least 4 years older than the oldest child accommodated. These principals should apply to volunteers in the Care sector.
- 3.6 The person responsible for the Volunteer will be identified.
- 3.7 There must be two written references for volunteers, sought by the employer, from named and contactable referees. Where possible at least one reference should confirm previous employment history and experience as a minimum standard and contain verifiable information. Character references will suffice if the volunteer has no previous employment history. If a volunteer is to be working with children or vulnerable adults the references must state why they are suitable to work with them. If not deemed to be suitable, the reference should state the specific reasons why.

- 3.8 Before any unpaid work commences volunteers who's duties will include regular contact with, caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of children or vulnerable adults must have an enhanced Criminal Record Bureau check. Managers/Headteachers and volunteers should be aware that this will include Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) and Protection of Children Act (POCA), List 99 (the list held by the Department for Education and Skills of those people deemed to be unsuitable to work with children) checks and whether a person is subject to disqualification under the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000. General information regarding CRB checks can be found at [www.crb.gov.uk](http://www.crb.gov.uk). The Council's own policies and procedures regarding CRB checks can be viewed on the Human Resources Intranet site/Schools Document Store. Guidance regarding Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) and Protection of Children Act (POCA) checks is also available on the HR Intranet site/Schools Document Store.
- 3.9 The volunteer and their Line Manager/Headteacher will complete form [CRB1](#) and submit it to the Human Resources CRB Team for processing (there is an administration charge for this service). In common with employees, this type of post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and unspent, spent and pending convictions or cautions must be declared. Having a conviction will not necessarily disqualify an applicant from becoming a volunteer. Please refer to [www.crb.gov.uk](http://www.crb.gov.uk)
- 3.10 Where qualifications are required these should be checked with due care e.g. Drivers would be expected to have a current licence for the appropriate category of vehicle.
- 3.11 In order to be consistent with the Councils policies and procedures the identity of the volunteer should be verified to comply with the [Prevention of Illegal Working Policy](#). Managers/Headteachers should check and copy one of the original documents included in [List 1](#) or by checking and copying a combination of two documents specified in [List 2](#). All copies should be kept on the volunteers file. Please refer to the above policy for further guidance.
- 3.12 Volunteers must complete a pre employment health screening questionnaire to ensure they are fit to work. Managers/Headteachers should obtain these from the [Health and Safety Intranet](#) site. The Council/School has the same duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to volunteers as it has to employees. The Council's Corporate Health and Safety Policy states "the Council recognises its responsibilities both as sponsor and managing agents to all it's trainees. Therefore trainees and agency workers and volunteers

must be afforded the same level of commitment to health and safety as any employee”

- 3.13 Volunteers should be competent to carry out their role in a safe and healthy manner. Managers/Headteachers should ensure that appropriate risk assessments are undertaken and suitable and sufficient control measures implemented.

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#### 4. Appointment

- 4.1 [Form WWV 1](#) should be completed and signed by the volunteer and the Manager/Headteacher. This should include details of:
- Expected time and days of attendance
  - Probation period
  - Health and Safety advice
  - Confidentiality and conduct requirements
  - Training issues
  - Support available including procedure for dealing with problems that may arise
  - Termination arrangements
  - Expenses
  - Procedure for notifying absence
  - Relevant Child/Vulnerable Adult Protection Procedures
- 4.2 Volunteers should have a named supervisor who will provide them with an induction session on commencing their appointment. Health and Safety procedures, appropriate policies and site rules will be provided and an introduction to the office or site arranged. A Health and Safety Induction Pack is available on the Health and Safety Intranet Site and may be helpful in ensuring that all relevant issues are dealt with although some of the items listed will be inappropriate for unpaid volunteers. Included on the list are the Dignity at Work (Harassment and Bullying) and Smoking policies although it will be the responsibility of the Manager/Headteacher to determine which items are applicable.
- 4.3 It is important that there is adequate support and training for the volunteer and supervisors should review this on a regular basis. Volunteers should be provided with the skills and knowledge to safely and effectively contribute to the provision of the Service they support.
- 4.4 All volunteers should be issued with the Council/School's [Code of Conduct](#) and will be expected to adhere to it. This can be obtained from the Human Resources Intranet site.
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| 5. | <b>Recruiting 'One-Off' Volunteers</b> | 5.1 | In other circumstances where a volunteer's role will be 'one-off', for example, accompanying teachers and pupils on a <b>day</b> outing, helping at a concert or school fete, assisting with a jumble sale at a care home, the above procedures are unnecessary <b>provided that the volunteer is not left alone and unsupervised</b> in charge of children or vulnerable adults. <b>Subsequent volunteering must be in accordance with this procedure.</b> |
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| 6. | <b>Work Placement Students</b> | 6.1 | This procedure need not be followed in respect of work placement students if they do not have any contact with children or vulnerable adults. Section 10 of this policy should be followed to deal with any problems that may arise during the course of a placement. |
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| 7. | <b>Expenses</b> | 7.1 | The reimbursement of expenses is a matter for the Service Area concerned to control. However Managers/Headteachers should be aware that reimbursing volunteers' out of pocket expenses ensures that volunteering is accessible to all. Where volunteers are reimbursed for expenses, the Council/School's subsistence and travel rates apply. The current rates are available on the HR Intranet Site/Schools Document Store in line with financial regulations. |
|    |                 | 7.2 | Where volunteers are in receipt of benefits e.g. Job Seekers Allowance, housing benefits, the responsibility for informing the respective agency rests with the individual volunteer. Volunteers should only receive out of pocket expenses as their entitlement to benefits or tax liability may be adversely affected.   |
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| 8. | <b>Insurance</b> | 8.1 | The Authority's insurance arrangements will extend to cover voluntary workers or persons co-opted to assist the Authority whilst they are undertaking work directly for the Authority and in connection with Business Activities.<br><br>There is no requirement to notify the Insurance Section when voluntary workers are engaged by the Authority. However, if there is any doubt as to whether a volunteer meets the required criteria the Insurance Section should be contacted. |
|    |                  | 8.2 | Managers/Headteachers will ensure that volunteers using their own vehicle in the course of their duties are adequately covered by their insurance. In accordance with Council policy, volunteers will sign the <a href="#">Vehicle Details Form VEH1</a> to ensure that their documentation is current and lawful <b>prior</b> to travel.   |
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9. **Record Keeping**

9.1 Where it is necessary to keep a record of volunteer activities, for example for match funding purposes, the information collected should be held as for paid employees. The Line Manager/Headteacher will be responsible for keeping records of attendance, which may be placed with items such as references on the volunteer's file.

Where external funding is dependent on volunteer hours an auditable record of attendance should be kept. This information will only be held with due regard to the provisions of the Data Protection Act.

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10. **Dealing with Problems**

10.1 **Where the supervisor identifies a problem with the volunteers' capability.**

- Any minor concern should be dealt with informally by the supervisor and a reasonable timeframe agreed for improvements to be made.
- If the required improvement has not been achieved the volunteer will be informed that their services will no longer be required.

10.2 **Where the supervisor identifies a problem with the volunteers conduct.**

All volunteers are expected to adhere to the Council/Schools Code of Conduct. Where conduct falls short of the standards expected the following procedure should apply:

- Any minor concern should be dealt with informally by the supervisor.
- Where the problem is of a more serious nature the section Manager/Head Teacher should arrange a formal meeting and notify the volunteer in writing of their alleged offence and when the meeting will take place. The volunteer should be notified of their right to be accompanied by a friend (not from the legal profession) or colleague. The meeting should be held as soon as is reasonably practicable but no longer than 10 days after the alleged offence took place.

A written record should be taken of the meeting and agreed by both parties.

The supervisor should determine if: -

- The misconduct is of such a nature that it is necessary to issue the volunteer with a written warning (which will remain on their volunteer file for the period of their time with the Council)
- The misconduct is of such a nature that it would

constitute gross misconduct for an employee. In this case the supervisor can terminate the services of the volunteer with immediate effect.

The volunteer has the right to appeal against the supervisors' decision within 5 working days to the appropriate Manager/Headteacher who should be provided with the written account of the meeting and respond in writing within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal stating whether the appeal is or is not upheld.

**10.3 Where a problem is identified relating to the volunteer which has potential implications under Child Protection Procedures.**

If concern is identified that in the workplace a volunteer has:

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- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.

The appropriate protection procedures should be followed in all cases.

Likewise, if a concern arises outside of an individual's volunteering role i.e. if someone is alleged to be sexually abusing their child at home, allegations of this nature will impinge on their volunteering role and the above procedure should also be followed.

**10.4 Where the volunteer identifies a problem with the service/School or another member of staff.**

In the first instance the problem should be discussed immediately between the volunteer and the supervisor in an attempt to resolve the matter informally. If a solution cannot be reached a written record should be made and kept by both parties.

If the issue has not been resolved within 5 working days, the supervisor can request the Manager/Headteacher receive a copy of the complaint for consideration. The Manager/Headteacher should arrange to meet with the volunteer within 5 working days of receipt of this. The complaint should be duly considered and the volunteer informed within 5 days of the meeting whether the complaint is upheld or not. A written record of both the meeting and the decision made should be taken and agreed by both parties.

A volunteer may also make reference, if appropriate, to the [Whistleblowing Policy](#)

*If the complaint relates to the supervisor, the problem should be discussed immediately with the Manager/ Head Teacher and further advice sought from Human Resources. NB. If an employee is the subject of the complaint reference should be made to the appropriate internal procedures.*

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| <b>11. Review</b> | 11.1 | The operation of the volunteer scheme should be monitored and reviewed every quarter as a minimum to ensure that it continues to meet the requirements of the Service. |
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| <b>12. Income Tax and National Insurance Implications</b> | 12.1 | There are no direct income tax or national insurance implications arising as a result of this procedure. However, if the service area reimburse expenses incurred by volunteers this may give rise to tax and national insurance implications for both the service area and the volunteer. Therefore any service area reimbursing volunteers expenses should refer to the <a href="#">Expense Claims Procedure</a> |
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