

Handbook for Volunteer Supervisors



2016 - 2017

Document owner for review	HR Policy & Reward Advisor
Date document approved at CMT	May 2016
Date of last amendment	
Details of last amendment	
Date implemented	1 st July 2016

Handbook for Supervisors of Volunteers

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Volunteering – Frequently Asked Questions.....	1
What activities can volunteers carry out?.....	1
How do I recruit volunteers?.....	1
Who supervises volunteers?.....	1
Identifying opportunities & engaging volunteers.....	1
Developing Ideas for Volunteering.....	1
Advertising.....	2
Volunteer Selection.....	2
Induction.....	2
Volunteer Personal Folder.....	3
Day to Day Supervision of volunteers.....	3
Dealing with Complaints and Volunteer Problems.....	3
Complaints about volunteers.....	4
Complaints by volunteers.....	4
Moving On.....	4
Equality and Diversity.....	5
Safeguarding.....	5
Who needs a DBS check?.....	5
Insurance.....	6
Expenses.....	6
Volunteers claiming benefits.....	7
Information Governance.....	7

Introduction

Volunteers have played an important part in the delivery of the Council's services for many years and are greatly valued. Today volunteers fill a variety of roles across Flintshire including for example those within our library or heritage sites, Flintshire Archives and in the Countryside. This handbook explains how you can engage volunteers to support our services, what you should do to manage volunteers effectively, and where you can go for support.

Identifying opportunities & engaging volunteers

Developing Ideas for Volunteering

To develop your ideas for volunteering, you first need to draw up a Volunteer Role Description. You should liaise with an appropriate manager at this stage to ensure they are happy with your site/team/project taking on new volunteers, particularly as there may be some expenses payable. Ultimately the decision to engage with any new volunteer should be taken by a relevant manager.

Advertising

You can either advertise your opportunity as you would a normal recruitment campaign with a closing date, or you can have an open ended campaign with a continuing advert.

If agreed with your manager, you could start by placing a poster advertising the opportunity in a prominent position within your site (if working on a public facing site). The opportunity can also be advertised on the Volunteering pages of the Flintshire website (email the Role Description to Sianwilliams@flintshire.gov.uk).

It is also recommended that you provide details of the opportunity to the Flintshire Local Volunteering Council (FLVC). If you provide the Volunteer Role Description, they will be able to match volunteers to opportunities.

Don't forget to let the Volunteer Centre know when your opportunity no longer needs to be advertised. The advert may remain live and people may still approach you to enquire about the opportunity.

If you are particularly interested in student volunteers, you could contact the local Universities to see if they have any departments that coordinate volunteers with volunteering opportunities.

Volunteer Selection

It is encouraged that prospective Volunteer's complete the Volunteer Application form, however where you feel you have gathered enough information from another source (i.e. a face to face discussion or through a volunteer open day) you do not need to ask the volunteer to complete this. However, please feel free to use the form if you feel you require further information on a potential volunteer. Please note, it is recommended that two references are taken up.

Once you have gathered sufficient expressions of interest in your activity, you should invite the prospective volunteer(s) to meet you for an informal discussion. You could include another manager to be part of this discussion if required. Ideally the Volunteer Supervisor should lead the discussion. You should make it clear to the potential volunteer the tasks that you wish them to carry out, as well as agree with them their availability. You need to consider before this discussion, whether or not you have a minimum time requirement for the proposed activity.

It is best practice to inform unsuccessful applicants when we are not able to provide a volunteering opportunity and signpost them back to FLVC and other relevant voluntary organisations as appropriate.

Induction

Prior to the volunteer's first day, the Volunteer Supervisor should ensure that all employee's and other volunteers are aware of the fact that a new volunteer is joining the team, and clearly explain what activities they are expected to carry out. The first day for a new volunteer may be as daunting as it is for a new employee, therefore you should make the volunteer feel welcome and comfortable. You should make sure a full site/team induction is carried out. Please ensure you introduce the volunteer to employees/other volunteers and make them feel part of the team. Please also ensure that you inform the volunteer that they can refuse demands made of them if they consider them unrealistic, beyond the scope of their role or if they feel they do not have the appropriate skills to carry them out.

Volunteer Personal Folder

You should also maintain a personal folder for each volunteer. The induction is an ideal time to begin work on this folder. The folder should contain their contact details, plus details of an emergency contact. The folder should also contain a copy of the Volunteer role description, correspondence from referees as well as notes from any supervision sessions you undertake.

To ensure you have done everything necessary, please follow the Induction checklist included as an Appendix at the end of this document. Please take time to look through this ensuring you have completed all required actions.

Day to Day Supervision of Volunteers

Once an induction has taken place, and the volunteer has commenced their activity, be sure to:

- Conduct regular, informal, 'supervision' sessions with your volunteers
- Offer relevant training
- Deal with any issues/complaints promptly

It is also best practice to agree in advance with the volunteer, any times when they will not be available, so that you can consider any continuity of service requirements. Remember, volunteers do not need to adhere to the Council's Annual Leave policy. However, volunteers should inform you if they are going to be unavailable for their task for any length of time. If you become overly concerned about the irregular attendance of a volunteer, then please arrange to discuss this with them, and try and agree a solution. If the volunteer is unable to guarantee their regular attendance, then you may wish to consider terminating their involvement with the service.

The contribution of volunteers is invaluable to the provision of our services, and therefore it is imperative that we show our thanks on a regular basis. Remember, they provide their time and efforts free of charge, and it can often be easy to overlook their role. Simply saying 'Thank You' can make a big difference to a volunteer and can help with volunteer retention.

Dealing with Complaints and Volunteer Problems

Although the majority of volunteers find their experience rewarding, there may be occasions when problems occur. Most issues can be resolved quickly through an informal discussion with the volunteer. However, sometimes a more formal approach is needed. If you find yourself in this position, you should consider carefully how the situation can be resolved. For example, you may find it necessary to consider ending the activity. If in doubt, seek advice from your line manager.

Complaints about Volunteers

The complaint may arise for a number of reasons, and could be made by a service user, another volunteer or an employee. If a complaint is made against a volunteer you should endeavour to investigate the causes of the complaint as promptly as possible. It may be possible to resolve the issue informally through discussion with the volunteer. Try to agree what changes need to be made, and a timescale for when you would expect the changes to be in place.

If it is not possible to resolve the issue via an informal discussion, you should invite the volunteer to a formal meeting to discuss the issues with you and your line manager. This meeting should attempt to resolve any concerns. If this still fails to resolve the issue, then you may need to consider bringing the activity to an end.

Please also remember that volunteers are not paid employees, therefore the Council's code of conduct does not apply and you should not attempt to follow the Council's disciplinary or grievance procedures.

Complaints by Volunteers

Volunteers may themselves have a complaint, for example about other volunteers, employee, service users/customers, or general complaints about the task they are carrying out. Volunteers should feel able to make a complaint, and you should reassure them that everything they say will be treated in confidence, and will have no impact on the continuation of their activity.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve issues as soon as possible. An informal discussion or meeting may well resolve any concerns that exist. You should always try to resolve complaints at as low a level as possible. Volunteers may feel the need to take notes during any meetings, and this is perfectly normal so you should feel free to take notes yourself.

Whatever the complaint, it should be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Complaints procedure and not the Council's Grievance Procedure for employees.

Equality and Diversity

The Council has a responsibility to look after volunteers' wellbeing, and it is important for volunteer morale, that volunteers feel that they are treated fairly; therefore exercising good practice is a clear way to ensure that we are fulfilling our duties as an organisation.

When producing a task description, or recruiting to a volunteer role, it is important that you make it clear that you do not intend to create a contractual relationship with a volunteer. However, as a matter of respect and dignity, volunteers deserve to be treated fairly and inclusively wherever reasonable.

Volunteers should be provided with a copy of The Councils Handbook for Volunteers during their induction. This handbook outlines the standards expected in terms of conduct and behaviour.

Safeguarding

It is important to assess whether or not a volunteer requires a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. Please read the Council's DBS Policy and Safeguarding Policy for further guidance.

The requirement for a DBS check should be included in the Volunteer role description. The requirement is dependent on the actual activity being carried out, and you should reassure volunteers that undertaking a check does not imply any criminality on their part.

Who needs a DBS check?

In general any volunteer who provides care, instruction or teaching for the same child/group of children 4 times a month or is working in a regulated setting would need a DBS check. Volunteers who provide any kind of personal care (including dealing with financial affairs) for an adult only once (regardless of their 'vulnerability') would also require a DBS check.

All volunteers should have a Volunteer role description attached to their activity. The Volunteer Supervisor is responsible for drawing up the Role Description and assessing whether or not a volunteer role requires a DBS check.

Recruitment should be a vital part of the safeguarding process. Volunteer Supervisors should take references during the recruitment phase to ensure volunteers are of good character regardless of whether or not they require a DBS check. On-going management and supervision is also essential to spot and deal with any issues as they arise.

Volunteer Supervisors should ensure they regularly review The Council's Safeguarding policies and procedures. This will ensure that current safeguarding best practice is adhered to.

Insurance

Volunteers are covered under the Council's insurance policies as the Volunteer is carrying out work for and under the guidance of the Council.

You must complete all relevant health and safety checks prior to allowing volunteers to undertake their tasks. This may include carrying out risk assessments and providing training; such as manual handling to mitigate any risk.

If driving is a part of the volunteer role or if motoring expenses are to be claimed you should ensure that you have checked the driving documents of the volunteer prior to the task commencing. Check for:

- Valid MOT certificate
- Current insurance. Volunteers should inform their insurance company that they will be driving in a voluntary role. Some insurers may see this as 'Business' and require a change in premium
- Evidence of current Road Tax

Expenses

Volunteers are not employee's and therefore receive NO remuneration for the activity they carry out. However, volunteers should not be 'out of pocket' for carrying our activities for the Council. It is best practice to pay reasonable out of pocket expenses for anybody who chooses to volunteer with us. Any pre agreed expenses can be paid via the "Non Flintshire Staff Claim Form", which you can get from Customer Services. You should discuss any necessity to claim expenses during the initial discussion with the volunteer.

Volunteers claiming benefits

Unemployed volunteers are entitled to volunteer for the Council whilst claiming benefits. Unemployed volunteers claiming Job Seekers Allowance have the following obligations:

- Continue to actively seek employment
- Attend interviews with 48 hours' notice
- Start work within one week

Unemployed volunteers should be advised to read DWP Pamphlet 1023 'Volunteering Whilst Getting Benefits' available from the Job Centre. If a volunteer is claiming incapacity benefit, it is their responsibility to ensure they are not breaking any rules by volunteering.

Information Governance

Volunteers are obliged to comply with the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts. Volunteer Supervisors should alert volunteers to their responsibilities during induction ensuring that volunteers fully understand this and/or undertake appropriate training where required.

Moving On

As with employees there are numerous reasons why a volunteer may cease their involvement with the Council. They may choose to leave or indeed you may choose to end their activity.

If a volunteer chooses to leave they are not obliged to provide you with any period of notice. You should ask volunteers to let you know as soon as they are able to of their decision to leave; and maintaining a good relationship with your volunteers will help with this. Before the volunteer leaves, it is good practice to hold a meeting with them to discuss how their activity progressed, and whether they have any suggestions to help us improve our engagement with volunteers in the future.

Alternatively you may decide to end your involvement with the volunteer. There are two main reasons why you may want to do this:

- *The activity has a specific end date.*
- *The volunteer is no longer suitable for the role.*

If the activity has a specific end date or is drawing to an end you should let the volunteer know as soon as possible, and assist them in trying to find a new activity. If you are unable to identify any other suitable activities, please signpost the volunteer to FLVC (Flintshire Local Volunteering Council). Please be sure to thank the volunteer for the contribution they have made to the service.

If you consider that the volunteer is no longer suitable for the activity, there is no obligation to provide any notice to the volunteer, particularly if there is a code of conduct issue. However, it is best practice to give the volunteer at least 5 days' notice of the termination of their activity. Again, you should ensure that the relationship ends on a positive note, by thanking the volunteer for the contribution they have made.

Volunteers who are leaving the organisation who have made a regular commitment to it should be offered a reference and/or statement of their achievements. Also, ensure that their services are properly appreciated.

Appendix 1 - Volunteering – Frequently Asked Questions

How do I recruit volunteers?

Volunteers are usually recruited either:

- Externally - by contacting the local Volunteer Centre. The Volunteer Centre holds a database of potential volunteers, and can match potential volunteer's skills to activities. They will interview candidates and forward their details to you, although you should also hold your own informal discussion. It is up to you to ensure that the volunteers are suitable for the activity, and that all appropriate checks have been carried out.
- Internally - for example, opportunities can be advertised via the Flintshire County Council web page. Other forms of media including Twitter and Facebook could also be considered. We have developed a standardised application form that volunteering applicants can fill in.

Step	Main Task	Other useful points
1	Do you need a Volunteer? Has your Senior Manager authorised the recruitment of Volunteers?	
2	Confirm who is going to be Volunteer Supervisor	
3	Write Volunteer Role Description	
4	Does the role require a DBS check? You can use the Disclose Risk Assessment procedure (on infonet).	Familiarise with DBS Policy http://infonet.flintshire.gov.uk/ser/vlet/infonet/Human-Resources/Human-Resources--DBS-Checks
5	Confirm key dates – when do you require your volunteer to start? When does the project end? Will this be an on-going campaign or have a closing date?	
6	Email all this information to Sianwilliams@flintshire.gov.uk who will advertise the opportunity on Flintshire Councils website.	
7	Email all this information to the Flintshire Local Volunteering Council (FLVC) who will advertise the opportunity and match volunteers to the role (info@flvc.org.uk)	
8	Collate application forms invite suitable potential volunteers for an informal discussion (interview).	
9	Share all details of the role and tasks and confirm availability	

10	If they are a suitable volunteer for the role, advise them of this subject to obtaining references and DBS checks (if applicable)	Start a Volunteer Folder
11	DBS checks ONLY – If your volunteer requires a DBS check, you will need to register YOURSELF (as the manager/volunteer supervisor) with Irene Jackson in Employment Services, who will set you up on the online DBS system. You can then send the volunteer the link for them to complete the relevant fields. You will then need to meet with the volunteer to verify their documents so you can approve their online DBS check. When you register, all the information on the process and what you will be required to do will be provided. There is no cost associated with a DBS check for a volunteer.	
12	Once references are satisfactory and DBS clear (if required), you can make arrangements for your volunteer to start.	
13	Meet with them and go through the Volunteer Induction checklist	
14	Maintain regular contact and one to ones	