

# VOLUNTEERS POLICY

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council recognises the vital contribution volunteers can make to the quality of services provided to our local communities. Volunteers are regarded as a valuable resource to the organisation and the Council is committed to increasing volunteering opportunities within the Borough.

## **2 AIM**

This policy aims to set out the arrangements to be applied in relation to the various types of volunteering which might occur in relation to the Council.

## **3 SCOPE**

This policy applies to all directorates within the Council. It will be for each directorate and service area to identify and/or approve volunteering opportunities as appropriate and to manage the supervision of volunteers as required under this policy.

## **4 DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEERING**

In general terms, the Council defines volunteering as:

*'The commitment of time and energy to services across the borough of Redcar and Cleveland for the benefit of our society, the local community and the environment. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain.'*

4.1 However, the reality is that volunteering can take place in various forms and under various arrangements and, accordingly, it is difficult to be completely prescriptive with regard to all eventualities within a single policy. That being the case, whilst this policy seeks to set out the general position for the most likely scenarios that might occur in relation to volunteers, alternative arrangements may need to be agreed in some circumstances.

4.2 The primary intention is that volunteers should enhance service provision and are not, in general terms, to be used as replacement or substitute for paid staff. However, in some local authorities, there are examples where services or assets are delivered entirely, or almost entirely, via volunteers and, therefore, it is possible that such circumstances might arise within Redcar and Cleveland.

## **5 ENGAGING WITH VOLUNTEERS**

It will be for individual directorates/services within the Council to consider the scope for volunteering within their respective remits and to arrange appropriate engagement / communications as are deemed appropriate in each case. However, it is important that the Council has appropriate arrangements in place to ensure that volunteering opportunities are as visible and, similarly, there is a clear route for individuals or groups wishing to indicate their wish to undertake volunteering roles to pro-actively engage with the Council.

5.1 The principle channels for engagement and communication will be as follows:

(A) There will be an identified corporate lead for volunteering who will champion the potential for volunteering opportunities across the organisation and coordinate relationships both internally and externally, with organisations within the voluntary and community sector to develop their capacity.

(B) A volunteering section will be developed for the Council's website. This will include key information, forms and policies relevant to volunteers. It will also include facilities for prospective volunteers to make contact and for potential volunteering opportunities to be advertised.

- (C) The Council already has various social media channels which will be used appropriately to communicate volunteering work and opportunities.
- (D) The Council will develop arrangements to allow current and prospective volunteers to engage with the Council on a face-to-face basis, including staff in identified establishments being aware of volunteering arrangements and able to signpost to the relevant services and/or assist with completion of forms.
- (E) Other engagement will take place as and when needed via other appropriate channels.

## 6.0 INSURANCE

Under our Combined Liability Policy, any volunteer who is acting on behalf and under control of the Council will be treated as an employee and covered under the policy. This essentially follows the legal position as to who would be deemed to be an employee.

- 6.1 The volunteer must be viewed to be under control of the Council in the eyes of the law. If they are undertaking work for the Council, they will be given appropriate instructions, guidance, and any appropriate PPE/equipment. If a volunteer is working independently, without acting under any instruction or control of the Council, they would not generally be covered by the policy.
- 6.2 It should be noted that the Council does not insure the personal possessions of volunteers against loss or damage and possessions are wholly the responsibility of the volunteer. Additionally, the Council does not provide any personal accident insurance and, in the case of personal injury, whether its insurance cover applies or not, no payment is due to volunteers unless the Council is found to be negligent.
- 6.3 In that regard, it is important to note the various categories of volunteer, as set out in section 7 below.

## 7.0 CATEGORIES OF VOLUNTEER(ING)

In broad terms, most types of volunteering benefiting the Council or the Borough in some way, or relating to Council activities, will tend to fall within the general broad categories:

Volunteer Type	Definition
<b>Council Volunteer</b>	An individual who undertakes a voluntary activity under the direction and support of a Council Manager. A Council Volunteer is someone who, without compensation or expectation of compensation (beyond reimbursement of expenses incurred in the course of their duties) performs a task/ role <u>at the direction of and on behalf of the Council</u> . This would include those who volunteer on a regular basis as well as those who, for example, support a one-off event in which the Council is responsible for the provision of volunteers.
<b>Group Volunteer</b>	An individual who works as part of an organised group to undertake voluntary activities where that group has a formal agreement with the Council to undertake a specific task or tasks and/or works <u>under the direction and support of a Council Manager</u> .

<b>Community Volunteer</b>	An individual who independently undertakes an activity to benefit the wider community without any alignment to any specific organisation or group or with little or no council involvement. As a rule, insurance cover would not usually apply.
<b>Community Group Volunteer</b>	An individual who is part of or affiliated with an organisation or organised group (including any social media groups), who decides to partake in an organised community-benefitting activity. As these activities are independent from the Council and not undertaken under the direction of any council manager, insurance cover would not usually apply.

## 8. APPROVAL REQUIREMENTS

### 8.1 Council Volunteer

In the case of formal Council Volunteers, the basic position is that the same vetting and other considerations that apply to Council employees will also need to be applied to this category of volunteers. Volunteers in this category will be covered by the Council's insurance arrangements. Volunteers will be issued with a Volunteer New Starter Pack which must be completed prior to the volunteer commencing the volunteer role.

8.2 Where the Council is seeking volunteers to help with events, the arrangements for recruiting and appointing such volunteers will depend on the nature of the event in question. Suitable arrangements will be implemented as appropriate and will incorporate the appropriate level of training or briefing as is required. Volunteers in this category will usually be covered by Council's insurance arrangements for events organised by the Council (either solely or in partnership with another organisation) where recruitment and supervision of volunteers is the Council's role. Prospective Council Volunteers may use the form at **Appendix 2**, to seek volunteering opportunities, but are more likely to be introduced to role via other routes, such as adverts for formal volunteering opportunities via the Council's website or direct approaches to Council services in which they have a specific interest.

### 8.3 Group Volunteer

Group Volunteers are those who are part of an organised group with whom the Council has entered into a specific agreement to allow them to undertake specific tasks or activities. A suitable agreement will need to be drafted and agreed before any activities are authorised to take place.

8.4 In such cases, the agreement will oblige the group to comply with all relevant requirements to ensure the wellbeing of volunteers. The agreement will also specify whether the group will be required to have its own insurance policies in place or whether the Council's own arrangements for insurance will apply.

8.5 In the latter case, given the need to protect the Council against the risk of financial liability it must be accepted that if a group wishes to avail itself of the benefit of the Council's insurance cover and/or other arrangements, then the group will need to comply with similar requirements as the Council's own staff and services.

8.6 The arrangements/requirements which apply to group volunteer are attached at **Appendix 1**. An application form is attached at **Appendix 2**.

## 8.7 **Community Volunteer**

This category refers to those who undertake low-risk tasks for the benefit of the community without any alignment to a particular group or the Council. Such activities may, for example, involve individuals removing litter from the beach or ad hoc low-level maintenance of flower-tubs.

8.8 Where individuals carry out tasks of this nature without the input or knowledge of the Council then they are not generally covered by this policy or the Council's insurance arrangements. However, where the Council supports or encourages such tasks in any way (e.g. by way of equipment being supplied), then appropriate steps must be taken to ensure that the tasks can be undertaken safely. For example, for low-risk tasks an information sheet and/or verbal briefing explain may be sufficient. Where specific instructions are given by the Council then the Council's insurance may apply. Where there is an intention to carry out activities in this way on a regular basis then, in general terms, it would usually be appropriate consider whether to put into place the arrangements as set out in paragraph 7.1 onwards for Council Volunteers.

8.9 Community volunteers should not generally be permitted to undertake activities involving any significant health and safety considerations on behalf of the Council (e.g. heavy manual lifting, use of power or cutting tools, working at height etc) unless appropriate instruction, guidance and PPE is to be provided and the Council is satisfied with the arrangements. There may be instances where this is acceptable because the appropriate safeguards can be put into place, in which case any proposed arrangements should be discussed with the Health and Safety and Risk and Insurance Teams before any work is carried out. A relevant form for individuals to seek authorisation is attached at **Appendix 2**.

## 8.10 **Community Group Volunteer**

In general, organised groups delivering community-benefitting services without the approval or knowledge of the Council will not fall within the provisions of this policy. However, where the activities of such a group come to the attention of the Council and it appears that there may be a risk of liability for the Council should the activities continue, then discussions may need to take place in order to determine whether the activities should be formalised in some way or, in some cases stopped, in order to address any concerns in that regard. It may be that planned activities are acceptable in some cases, depending on the nature of the activities and whether suitable safeguards can put into place.

8.11 The same considerations as set out in paragraph 8.9 will also apply to Community Group Volunteers and Community Volunteer Groups should seek authorisation to carry out activities using the form attached at **Appendix 2**.

## **9 EQUALITY**

9.1 The Council is committed to providing equality of opportunity when developing and supporting volunteering.

9.2 We value all volunteers and celebrate their diverse and unique identity and background, including (but not exclusively) religious belief, social background, ethnic and national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or age.

9.3 We believe that volunteers should reflect the diversity of communities they work in, and they have the right to work in an environment which is free from discrimination.

9.4 If you experience any form of discrimination or harassment while volunteering you should initially discuss this with the relevant Council manager/officer.

9.5 If you are unable to reach a resolution you have a right to raise a complaint with us and you will be advised of the Council's Corporate Complaints procedure. All complaints will be dealt with seriously, promptly, and confidentially.

- 9.6 When representing this organisation as a volunteer we expect you to support our commitment to equality. You should treat others with dignity and respect and not discriminate against them.
- 9.7 You are expected to support us in making clear that discriminatory behaviour is unacceptable. You should alert a member of staff if an incident occurs which causes you concern.
- 9.8 We will take all reasonable steps to protect volunteers from discrimination. Volunteering opportunities should be accessible and inclusive for all where possible, regardless of background or experience and the Council will aim to recruit a diverse and inclusive group of volunteers which reflect the communities in the Borough

## **10 SAFEGUARDING**

- 10.1 The Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk.
- 10.2 If at any time a volunteer has any safeguarding concerns relating to individuals they are working with or supporting they should raise with their Council Volunteer Supervisor in the first instance. If the concern is in relation to or involves the supervisor, then the concern should be escalated to the next level of management or the Council's Whistleblowing Policy should be used.
- 10.3 As part of their induction, Council volunteers and Groups will be provided with particular information on safeguarding relating to their area of activities. Volunteers should be aware of the most up-to-date policy and may be asked to take part in training prior to carrying out their duties. This will ensure that volunteers are aware of the requirements and what to do if they identify a potential safeguarding risk.
- 10.4 Volunteers must have an understanding of, and have access to, the relevant safeguarding policies.
- 10.5 DBS disclosures will be carried out for any volunteer whose role requires it. Council managers should seek further advice from the Human Resources team if they are unsure as to whether a DBS check is required or whether a conviction confirmed as part of a DBS check should impact on the suitability of a volunteer for a particular role.

## **11 CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION**

- 11.1 Volunteers should regard all information they have access to, or are given as a result of their volunteering, as being confidential unless otherwise advised.
- 11.2 Volunteers may be expected to sign a confidentiality statement/agreement depending on their role.
- 11.3 Volunteer contact details and personal information is confidential and is only available to relevant staff for the purposes of volunteer management. These details are not divulged to any third parties.

## **12 EXPENSES AND BENEFITS**

- 12.1 Before undertaking any voluntary activity with the Council any potential volunteer in receipt of state benefits should contact their Job Centre Plus Advisor to ensure that they are not adversely affected by the duties undertaken.
- 12.2 Volunteers should be advised of the expenses that they can claim before commencement of any voluntary duties.



- 12.3 Volunteer expenses are paid at the Service's discretion based on the business need for that service. 'Reimbursement' over and above actual expenses could affect the legal status of volunteers, making them eligible for the national minimum wage and other employment rights. Expenses will therefore only be reimbursed against receipts, public transport tickets etc. Reimbursement will be in accordance with limits set for paid staff.
- 12.4 Any reimbursement of vehicle mileage should be in accordance with the Revenues and Customs tax-free mileage rates. Currently, the tax-free approved mileage rate for 10,000 miles or less is 45p. Please note that mileage expenses can only be claimed when appropriate insurance is in place and documents and driver checks have been undertaken. (NB Any payment above the Revenues and Customs mileage rate could invalidate the volunteers' insurance as they could be seen to be making a profit from driving).
- 12.5 Any volunteer driving a Council motor vehicle must obtain authorisation and pass the relevant permitted driver test.
- 12.6 Expenses are not payable by the Council for business or voluntary group activities.

### **13 INDUCTION, LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

#### **13.1 Individuals**

All individual volunteers should take part in an induction, receiving information on their role and responsibilities, health and safety requirements and details specific to their activities.

- 13.2 At the beginning of their induction, each volunteer will complete the Volunteer Agreement. This is to ensure that the volunteer fully understands the information outlined in the Volunteer Policy; however, it is not a legally binding contract.
- 13.3 Inductions will be held at the start of the volunteer's first session or new specific task by the volunteer supervisor or group representative, and these will cover: - Site task and description - Introduction to staff and other volunteers - Equipment safety talks - Information on welfare facilities (e.g. bathrooms) and emergency procedures.
- 13.4 Further training will be provided when it is required, as each project develops. The Council are committed to personal development of volunteers and will try to provide training opportunities where possible based on their primary motivation for volunteering.

#### **13.5 Group Volunteers**

Discussions will take place between the relevant Council Volunteer Supervisor and the lead member of the group to discuss inducting the wider group prior to activities taking place. This will include: - Site task and description - Introduction to staff and other volunteers - Equipment safety talks - Information on welfare facilities (e.g. bathrooms) and emergency procedures.

- 13.6 Agreement will then be reached as how the wider group will be briefed/inducted before any activity takes place.

### **14 RECORDING**

Council Volunteers will be entered onto the Agresso system by the relevant manager and the HR team as per employees. A central records of groups operating under this policy will be created and kept up-to-date.

## **15.0 POLICY MONITORING AND REVIEW**

- 15.1 This Policy should be reviewed every two years,. However, if national guidance changes, or local issues arise which may impact on this policy, it should be updated as and when appropriate.

## **16.1 PRIVACY NOTICE**

All data will be processed in accordance with our GDPR Privacy Policy Statement for Employees, Workers, Volunteers and Contractors.

## Appendix 1

### Group Volunteer Requirements

- 1.1 Groups can seek to get involved in volunteering by contacting the Council via the website or other channels mentioned above. The relevant Director or Assistant Director will advise of opportunities available within their service area, or arrange for an appropriate Council officer to work with the group and develop plans for any specific proposals they might have.
- 1.2 If the volunteers are engaging as a volunteer group a meeting will be arranged and they will need to complete this form.
- 1.3 In some cases, depending on the nature of the activity being undertaken and the level of Council supervision, groups volunteering for the Council on a formal basis may be required to carry out their own risk assessment and provide their own insurance to cover their team whilst engaging in activities. This will be discussed before any arrangement commences and, if required, copies of the relevant documents must be provided to, and agreed by, the Council prior to the commencement date.
- 1.4 Supervision of volunteers should be discussed and agreed with the Council's Volunteer Supervisor prior to activities taking place.
- 1.5 If groups are made up of more than 15 individuals, they will be required to provide their own first-aider to be on site at all times.
- 1.6 In all cases groups are expected to supply and maintain a first aid kit whilst carrying out their volunteering duties with the Council.

## Appendix 2

### Application to Undertake Volunteering Activities

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council is committed to ensuring the welfare of all our volunteers. The relevant Council manager(s) should complete this application, in partnership with the Volunteer/Volunteer Group contact if applicable. Once complete, please send this application to [volunteering@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk](mailto:volunteering@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk). Approval will then be sought from the Health and Safety and Risk and Insurance departments and the Assistant Director and /or Service Manager. Please allow up to 28 days for applications to be approved.

#### Name of Group or Individual

<b>Name:</b>	
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#### Council Manager

Name	
Email	
Telephone	
Service Area	
Assistant Director	

#### Volunteer/Volunteer Group Contact Details

For groups enter the name of the proposed Lead Volunteer here	
Email	
Telephone	

#### Volunteering activity

Proposed Date(s)/(or 'ongoing'):	
Total Number of Volunteers	
Max. No. of Volunteers to be onsite at any time	
<b>Brief Description of Activities to be Undertaken</b>	

<b>Will the voluntary work be supervised by a Council Officer</b>	<b>Yes / No</b> (If 'No', please enter details of supervising volunteers who will be responsible for ensuring the activity is undertaken safely. If 'Yes', please enter name and contact details)

### **Volunteer Supervisors (where applicable - Groups)**

Name	Date of Birth	Relevant experience, skills and knowledge.

The group must ensure they have all the full names, addresses, dates of birth, genders, disability details, medical needs and emergency contacts for all volunteers taking part in this activity. Please note that if groups are made up of more than 15 individuals, they will be required to provide their own first aider to be on site at all times.

### **Insurance**

I am seeking the Council insurance coverage for this volunteering activity. ☐

I attach a copy of the group's public liability insurance coverage and any other insurance which may be required for the volunteering activity. ☐

### **Risk Assessment**

Will the volunteer activity involve any of the following?

Work at height (e.g. scaffolding, roof work, ladders) ☐

Work on or near the highway ☐

Work/digging that could interfere with buried services Work with pesticides or biohazards. ☐

Work with hazardous chemicals ☐

Work with machinery and power tools ☐

Hot works (e.g. soldering, welding, bitumen) ☐

Work near deep water Work interfering with a fabric of a building (asbestos risk) ☐

- Driving ☐
- Lone working ☐
- Work involving children or vulnerable adults/safeguarding (See section 5 of the Volunteering Policy.) ☐
- Any other relevant risk (please provide further information below) ☐

If you have ticked any of the above for your volunteer activity you now need to complete the risk assessment below.

Hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	Action to be taken to mitigate the risk?	Further actions that might be necessary.	Action by Whom?	Completion Date?	Completed?

### Declaration

All the information requested above is supplied to the best of my knowledge and I will comply with minimum requirements expected by the Council. If applicable, I have liaised with the named Business or Voluntary and Community group and I am satisfied after consultation with all parties that this volunteer project will be adequately managed. I understand that if the nature of an ongoing volunteering activity changes in the future I will need to submit an updated application prior to the activity taking place.

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Date of application</b>	