



# 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.

## 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>Council 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 these activities are independent from the Council and not undertaken under the direction of any council manager, the Council's insurance cover would not 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, the Council's insurance cover would not apply.   |

## 8. APPROVAL REQUIREMENTS

### 8.1 Council Volunteer and Council Group 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. To seek volunteering opportunities, this can be done by searching the Council's website [www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/volunteering](http://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/volunteering) email us at [volunteer@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk](mailto:volunteer@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk). or telephone 01642 774774.

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 and may only require the completion of a one-off event volunteer capture form. 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.

8.3 Council 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. An Activity Capture Form will be completed and agreed before any activities are authorised to take place. In such cases, the agreement will oblige the group to comply with all relevant requirements to ensure the wellbeing of volunteers. Groups who wish to become Council Group Volunteers can get involved by contacting the Council, by email at [volunteer@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk](mailto:volunteer@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk) or telephone 01642 774774. The relevant Assistant Director or Head of Service will advise of opportunities available within the service area or arrange for an appropriate Council officer to work with the group and develop plans for any specific proposals they might have. Any documentation that is required will be discussed with the group. Supervision of Group Volunteers will be discussed and agreed with the Council's Volunteer Supervisor prior to activities taking place.

8.4 Council Group Volunteers are required to have a nominated first aider for groups with 15 or more individuals who would always be on site. In all cases groups would be supplied with a first aid kit whilst carrying out their volunteering duties with the Council, the group would maintain the first aid kit and would let the Council know when it needs re-stocking.

#### 8.5 **Community Volunteer and Community Group Volunteer**

This category refers to those who undertake 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.

8.6 Where individuals or groups 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 all tasks an Activity Capture Form and evidence of risk assessments would be required. 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 to consider whether to put into place the arrangements as set out in paragraph 8.1 onwards for Council Volunteers, if agreed with the community volunteers and availability of relevant Council supervisor.

8.7 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, training and PPE are 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. However, where the activities of such a group come to the attention of the Council and it appears that there may be a high 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. An Activity Capture form for individuals to seek authorisation is available from the Councils internet page [www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/volunteering](http://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/volunteering) under the section Key Volunteering Information or by email [volunteer@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk](mailto:volunteer@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk).

## 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 for the area they are volunteering in.
- 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 Council Volunteers and Council 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**

Records for Council Volunteers will be held on the Councils Agresso system and will be kept in line with data retention policies. The Volunteer Co-ordinator will hold contact details of voluntary groups operating under this policy.

## **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.