Volunteering Policy



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**South Oxfordshire District Council**

**and**

**Vale of White Horse District Council**

# Change Record­­

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# Introduction

## Purpose

The purpose of this scheme is to increase volunteering opportunities for employees at South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils.

## Scope

This Policy applies to all permanent and temporary employees of the councils, excluding Contractors/Agency Workers, who are the employees of third parties.

The councils reserve the right to revise, withdraw or replace policies at any time and to introduce new policies from time to time to reflect the changing needs of the organisations.

This policy document supersedes any previously existing or alternative policies, agreements or arrangements relating to employee volunteering opportunities at the councils.

## Contractual status

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment. The councils are entitled to introduce minor and non-fundamental changes to this policy by notifying you of these changes in writing. The council will consult all employees on any major changes to the policy.

## Relevant legislation

* Equality Act 2010
* Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974
* Police Act 1997
* Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
* Data Protection Act 2018
* Working Time Regulations 1998 (SI 1998/1833)
* Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (SI 1999/3242)
* Fixed-term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002 (SI 2002/2034)
* Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000 (SI 2000/1551)
* Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) Regulations 2002 (SI 2002/233)
* General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679 EU)

## Alternative formats

Please do not hesitate to contact a member of the strategic HR Team if you would like this policy in an alternative format. Email: StrategicHR@southandvale.gov.uk or Telephone: 01235 422196.

# Policy

## Introduction

Volunteering is a great way to support something worthwhile in our communities and the benefits to you as an individual are as equally rewarding. Volunteering offers vital help to people in need, worthwhile causes and the community, plus you may meet new friends, connect with the community and strengthen existing skills or even learn new ones.

## Why volunteer?

**Benefits to the organisation you are volunteering for:**

* Helps make a difference to the community / organisation you are supporting
* Opportunity to capacity build others and share your skills and experience
* Provides additional support and resources which will help make a difference

**Benefits to you:**

* Volunteering will give you the opportunity to develop and enhance your skills further. Examples include communication, problem-solving, creativity, innovation, decision-making, leadership and team-working in a challenging environment.
* Contribute to personal and professional development
* First-hand practical work experience
* Volunteering and helping others can also help maintain your mental and physical health. It can reduce stress, keep you mentally stimulated and provide a sense of purpose.

**Benefits to the council:**

* Builds relationships with the communities and organisations that benefit from the volunteering days
* Supports employee development
* Provides an opportunity for employees to develop new skills
* Supports morale and retention

## What can I volunteer for?

The council wants to be as flexible as possible in allowing you to volunteer for something that interests you. You can volunteer for any type of work – it doesn't have to be the type of thing you do in your 'day job'. You may choose to volunteer for work that the councils already have links with or that other public agencies have available e.g. to provide support to primary school children with reading, which is listed by the county council.

You are not able to use your volunteering days to carry out your normal responsibilities as a parent or carer for family or close friends, e.g. to volunteer as a governor at your child’s school or to run an elderly parent to hospital appointments.

## Where can I volunteer?

Volunteering ideally needs to be in either South Oxfordshire or Vale of White Horse. However, if you do wish to volunteer elsewhere (including Oxfordshire-wide and beyond), please have a conversation with your Service Manager to agree how this opportunity will support you in supporting our councils and / or residents.

## When can I volunteer?

All employees who have successfully completed their probation period are entitled to volunteer. If you work 18.5 hours per week or more you are entitled to take up to two full-time days per calendar year to volunteer (equating to 14.8 hours or 14 hours, 48 minutes in our annualised hours scheme). If you work fewer than 18.5 hours per week you may take up to 7.4 hours (7 hours, 24 minutes) per annum.

Your volunteering hours may be used flexibly depending on the needs of the organisation you are volunteering for and with prior approval from your Service Manager. We recognise that it may be more beneficial to volunteer for 2 or 3 hours per day or over the weekend rather than allocated blocks of time. You may add your volunteering time to your annualised hours timesheet.

Volunteering days cannot be carried forward from year to year, nor are they transferable between employees. Travel time should not be included in the time you book off for volunteering.

## Group volunteering?

You may want to volunteer as a group or a team and this can provide good opportunities for teambuilding. However, this type of volunteering opportunity is more difficult to find. If you and your colleagues feel this would be a good use of your volunteering days, you will need to discuss this with your Service Manager and decide collectively how to progress, as this has greater implications for things like office cover.

## Do I really get paid to volunteer?

Yes! The council will pay you for your volunteering hours. However, the councils will not contribute towards any expenses associated with your chosen volunteering opportunity.

## Further support and information

If you would like to volunteer, but would like to find out about other volunteering opportunities, why not contact Oxfordshire Community for Voluntary Action (OCVA)? OCVA has offered to act as a broker to help employees find volunteering opportunities, should you need some inspiration. OCVA will provide us with information on volunteering opportunities available, follow up any suggestions you have for potential volunteering opportunities and help your service manager with any concerns they may have about your requests.

The benefit of taking up opportunities already listed with OCVA is that they will already have checked out the arrangements that the voluntary groups have in place on things such as health and safety, insurance and Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks for volunteers. To do this you should initially check the [Oxon Volunteers](https://oxonvolunteers.org/vk/volunteers/index.htm) website for opportunities available.

If you do not find what you are looking for, you can contact OCVA directly for advice on how to find a type of volunteering that suits you. You may already have a clear idea of what type of organisation you would like to volunteer for, but they are not listed. Again, it is worth speaking to OCVA as they may be able help the organisation to get more volunteers on board, as well as checking out the above things for you.

# Approval process

**Step one:**Read the [Employee Volunteering Scheme – Risk Assessment Form](#_Employee_Volunteering_Risk), so you are clear on what you need to do and the information you need to ask from the organisation to ensure a fun and safe volunteering experience.

**Step two:**Decide what you would like to do.

**Step three:**Contact your chosen organisation to discuss how you can help them / if they would like a volunteer. You will need to ask for and receive a copy of their volunteering activity risk assessment and a copy of the Public Liability Insurance (PLI) Certificate.

**Step four:**Request your volunteering leave by completing the [Volunteering Application Form](#_Employee_volunteering_application).  You will need to attach the organisation risk assessment and PLI Certificate to the email to your Service Manager.

**Step five:**Next arrange a conversation with your Service Manager (Service Managers and above will need to agree with their respective Line Managers) to talk through the opportunity, agree your lone-working arrangements, discuss any safeguarding issues or any risks to your volunteering. This is important and your responsibility to make it happen.

**Step six:**Send your completed and approved application form to: volunteer.support@southandvale.gov.uk

**Step seven:**Start volunteering and reap the many benefits of volunteering!

**Remember:**You need your Service Manager approval before you can start your volunteering.

Any questions, email volunteer.support@southandvale.gov.uk

Service Managers will look to support volunteering activities, and where possible, will approve volunteering requests by demonstrating flexibility and organising cover arrangements e.g. swapping shifts, or asking employees to cover each other’s work. If, however, there are reasonable concerns about management of workload, your Service Manager may decide to discuss alternative dates or opportunities with the employee.

It is the Service Manager’s responsibility to be satisfied there are no conflicts of interest and that you have considered and accept any risks. The council will not be liable for damages or injuries that occur whilst you are volunteering for other organisations.

Your Service Manager may decide to decline a volunteering request. In the event that a volunteering request is declined, the Service Manager will confirm the reasons for their decision to the employee in writing.

# Once your request has been agreed

You will need to add your agreed volunteering hours to your annualised hours timesheet (if applicable) by entering the hours you are volunteering as normal working hours, but specifying the number of volunteer hours in the notes column.

You can also update details of your volunteering experience in the “My Learning” section of the councils’ learning management system, LEAH.

# Employee volunteering application form

**To be completed by the employee. Once completed, the form will need to be signed by your Service Manager (an electronic signature is acceptable) and sent to the Community Enablement Team at** **volunteer.support@southandvale.gov.uk**

**All sections of the form must be completed.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| First name: | Last name: |
| Job title: | Contact phone number: |
| Service area: |
| Service team: |
| The name of the voluntary organisation you would like to volunteer with:  |
| A key contact name and telephone number in the organisation (in case of an emergency) |
| The type of volunteering activity you wish to undertake (e.g. befriending, mentoring, environmental/outdoors etc.):  |
| The location in which the activity will be carried out (e.g. town/village): |
| Please share the benefits of the activity to both yourself and to the voluntary organisation (how the activity will promote social, economic or environmental wellbeing): |
| What is the commitment required? (e.g. duration and frequency of volunteering): |
| What are the date(s) you wish to undertake the volunteering? |
| Number of hours / days you will be volunteering: |
| Will you being returning to the office **or** going home when your volunteering hours have finished?  |
| **Employee to confirm (please mark X)**1. I have emailed my Service Manager and the Community Enablement Team a copy of the organisation’s volunteering risk assessment and a copy of the organisation’s Public Liability Insurance Certificate for service manager review prior to leave approval.

 1. I have read the Council Employee Volunteering Risk Assessment and understand my role in ensuring a safe and enjoyable placement.
2. I have read the organisation’s volunteering risk assessment and I understand the specific volunteering tasks I am doing.
3. I am clear on what I need to wear/bring on the day and the equipment the organisation is providing.
4. I understand it is my responsibility, before any manual handling tasks start, to ask for clear instructions and to only do so if comfortable / physically able to do so and all equipment is in good working condition.
5. I am aware of the process for informing both the organisation and council if there is an incident or accident when volunteering.
6. I have discussed any additional risk(s) specific to my volunteering with my Service Manager and if needed have crafted a risk assessment for the placement and supplied a copy to the Community Enablement Team/ Health and Safety Officer.
7. I have discussed with my Service Manager lone-working and safeguarding measures and have robust arrangements in place.
 |
| **Service Manager**I confirm I have received and reviewed the necessary documents and am satisfied with the arrangements in place for a safe and enjoyable volunteering placement.Signed by Service Manager: Date:Please note: The Public Liability Insurance cover must be a minimum cover of £5,000,000 and cover the date of the volunteering leave request. |

# Employee volunteering Risk Assessment form

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Service team** | N/A | **Date** | June 2019 |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Assessed by** | N/A | **Review date** | June 2020 |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Location of activity** | Various | **Name of person carrying out activity** | N/A |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Description of activity/premises** | Employee volunteering with a diverse range of organisations. Premises could range from office based, home based, schools, museums to outside locations and working with animals. |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Hazards identified & risks posed by them** | **Who may be affected & how** | **Severity** | **Likelihood** | **RRN** | **Control measures/comments** |
| **The volunteering placement**The risks - employees volunteering for an organisation which does not have robust safety / safeguarding systems and insurance in placeIdentifying specific hazards is not possible as this depends on the specific volunteering activity. However, possible hazards could include…**Manual handling** – risks include hernia, prolapsed disc, muscle, ligament strain, cuts, bruises, lacerations and crush injuries. | EmployeeEmployee | 2 | 1 | 2 | Employees are advised both on the intranet and application form - it is the **responsibility of employees** either booking volunteering leave or arranging a volunteering day, of behalf of a council team, to firstly check with the Community Enablement Team if the council already holds volunteering risk assessments and Insurance certificates for the organisation and its volunteering activities in question. If the council does not hold the required documents then the employee **must** request, receive and share the documents with their Service Manager and Community Enablement Team, for review, before the volunteering placement can be approved by their Service Manager.Employees are advised both on the intranet and application form - It is the **direct responsibility** of both the employee and their Service Manager to discuss the placement, review the documents and discuss safeguarding measures. Only after this discussion can the volunteering leave be approved by the Service ManagerEmployees are advised on the application form and guidance sheet - It is the **direct responsibility** of employees volunteering to confirm with the organisation, the exact volunteering tasks they will to do, what they need wear/bring on the day and the equipment the organisation is providing. Employees are advised on the application form and guidance sheet - It is the **direct responsibility** of the employee volunteering to review the organisation’s risk assessment for the volunteering activity before the day, to familiarise themselves with both the risks, the control measures in place and their role in mitigating against such risks. Employees are advised on the application form and guidance sheet - It is the **direct responsibility** of the employee volunteering to ask, before any manual handling tasks start, to be clearly explained and to only do so if comfortable/ physically able to do so and all equipment is in good working condition. Employees are advised to contact the councils’ Health and Safety team if clarity is needed on safe manual handling / the need for a manual handling risk assessment.Employees are advised on the application form and guidance sheet– if they have an accident / incident / injury whilst on volunteering leave, they must inform the organisation volunteering with immediately and complete the organisations accident / injury form. Employees must also inform their line manager of the accident/ incident / injury and inform the councils Health and Safety team and complete the council accident / injury form, as necessary.  |
| **Fire -** risk of loss of life, injury and property damage. | Employee | 3 | 2 | 6 | Employees are advised on the application form and guidance sheet - It is the **direct responsibility** of the employee volunteeringat any offsite location, to ask the evacuation procedures are explained and to be familiarised with any emergency procedures.  |
| Environmental conditions – extreme weather conditions | Employee | 2 | 1 | 2 | Employees are advised both on the intranet and guidance sheet - it is the **direct responsibility** if a severe weather warning is issued to not travel to the volunteering location and to contact their service manager immediately.  |
| **Lone working** – accidents and/or illness, physical risk, robbery, vehicle breakdown resulting in failure to make an appointment and increased risk to personal safety. Not having the means to call for help and nobody being aware of what has happened | Employee | 2 | 1 | 2 | Employees are advised both on the intranet and application form – It is the **direct responsibility** of the employee volunteering and their Service Manager to discuss any lone working considerations and arrangements prior to volunteering leave being approved. Employee to contact Council’s Health and Safety team for guidance if required.It is a line management / team responsibility to ensure agreed lone working arrangements remain robust and responsive.**Comment -** with volunteering activitiesthere should be no increased risk of physical, verbal aggression and/or robbery than would be normally faced every day.Employees are advised on the application form - it is the **direct responsibility** of the employee volunteering to inform their Service Manager or line manager of where they are volunteering, provide a contact name and number, how long they are expected to be at that location and whether they will go home or return to the office. Employees are advised both on the intranet and application form – if they have an accident / incident / injury whilst on volunteering leave, they must report any incidents on the council’s incident reporting form. |
|  |
| **Conclusion (are the control measures adequate?)** With the control/line management supervision in place, the employee volunteering scheme is a low risk activity with most venues likely to be in a good, safe condition and any on site hazards and emergency procedures explained. There is likely to be plenty of people around should an incident occur, and the premises are unlikely to be in an isolated area. There should be no more risk to personal safety than would normally be expected in a daily routine. This type of lone working activity is therefore classed as low risk with the caveat that it remains the responsibility of both the member of and Service Manager to discuss the specific placement / volunteering directly as part of volunteering leave approval process and if needed craft a specific risk assessment if the risks are higher than low risk.  |
|  |
| Further Action |  |
| Ensure all employees are aware the procedures and their roles and responsibilities in approving volunteering leave. | Deadline | Responsibility**Community Enablement Team** |

**Risk Assessment Matrix**

**Likelihood x Severity = Risk Rating Number (RRN)**

|  |
| --- |
| **The likelihood of harm occurring may be rated as follows:** |
| 1 | Low | Where harm will seldom or is unlikely to occur. |
| 2 | Medium  | Where harm will often occur. |
| 3 | High | Where it is certain or near certain that harm will occur. |
| **Hazard** the potential to cause **harm,** including ill-health; damage to property, products, services, increased liabilities. |
| For guidance the severity of the hazard may be rated:  |
| 1 | Minor | All other injuries or illnesses. Minor injury or ill-health no incapacity. | Minor property damage – no interruption of service. |
| 2 | Serious | Significant injury or ill-health causing short-term disability. Medical intervention necessary. | Moderate property damage – minimal interruption of service.  |
| 3 | Major | Death or major injury (as defined by RIDDOR) or illness causing long-term disability. | Major property damage – loss of the building or department. |
| **Risk assessment matrix** |
| **Likelihood** of the potential harm from the hazard being realised  | **Impact** if hazard realised |
| **Minor****1** | **Serious****2** | **Major****3** |
| **Low** | **1** | **1** | **2** | **3** |
| **Medium** | **2** | **2** | **4** | **6** |
| **High** | **3** | **3** | **6** | **9** |

**Actions to be taken based on RRN**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **RRN** | **Risk Rating** | **Action to Reduce RRN** |
| **1**  | **Low** | * No further action
* Monitor to ensure controls maintained
 |
| **2 - 4** | **Medium**  | * Line manager together with head of service to take action within a specified and reasonable timescale to reduce risks
 |
| **6 – 9** | **High** | * Line manager together with head of service to take action within a specified and reasonable timescale to reduce risks
* Inform management team and place on risk register
 |