Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

**Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough**

Corporate Volunteer Policy

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Contents

This policy and guidance is provided by the Community Services Team. It will be amended as necessary to ensure it aligns with the Council's priorities and will be reviewed periodically to ensure it is kept up to date.

Introduction

Volunteering is what binds communities together and it plays a big part in community life here in Telford and Wrekin. Whether as individuals, organisations, businesses, or schools, we recognise a need and work together to help people and make a positive difference.

We find that people choose to volunteer for a variety of reasons:

- **For some it offers the chance to give something back or make a difference to the people around them**. Very often we find it is the people that have been in need themselves and have been helped by others that want to give something back as a way of saying 'thank you'.

- **For others it provides an opportunity to develop new skills or build on existing experience and knowledge**. Volunteering is looked at favourably by many educational establishments and employers.

- **Giving back and acts of kindness also benefit people's health** and form one of the components of the '5 Ways to Wellbeing' model which are to: connect, get active, take notice, learn, and give. Many volunteers have reported improvements in mental and physical health including reduced stress and symptoms of depression, increased confidence, and more social interaction which has helped them to feel less isolated.

- Regardless of the motivation, **what unites all volunteers is that it gives them a purpose and it is rewarding for them.**

Volunteering is a great way to make new friends, access additional training/qualifications and support people's personal or career development.

Our Approach

The Council works to **'protect, care and invest to create a better borough'** and working with community groups and volunteers is a key part of this, helping them become more active in their local area and working in partnership with council services. This helps build on the resources we already have and supports us in achieving our priorities for the borough and addressing particular needs.

Volunteers are highly valued by the Council and the number supporting our services is increasing on a regular basis. We have nearly as many volunteers supporting Council services as we do employees, making a difference in a variety of ways: In care services, libraries, environmental projects, at events and supporting health and wellbeing for example.

Just like employees, we have a duty of care for our volunteers and it is important we provide adequate support for them, show our appreciation and make them feel valued for all the amazing work they do to support us.

The Community Services Team leads on volunteering across the Council by:

- Working with residents and community organisations to build their skills and confidence to become active participants and develop schemes within their communities

- Supporting the Council to identify opportunities for volunteering to help us deliver services for our residents

- Delivering some Council volunteer schemes themselves (such as Street Champions, Health Champions and Snow Wardens)

The Community Services Team can provide advice and guidance if you are looking to set up or implement a volunteering scheme to support your service. There is also a range of volunteer toolkits available on the intranet providing guidance on planning through to recruiting and the ongoing management of volunteers. These should be read in conjunction with this policy and supporting guidance notes to provide clarification on key areas of importance.

Guidance Note 1 provides a summary checklist to support you through the whole process.

Section 1: Planning Your Volunteer Role

There are a number of things you will need to consider before developing your role description. These are set out below:

1.1 Are you sure this is a volunteer role?

In the first instance it is important to understand what role a volunteer can play in your team and what value they can add to your service. Volunteers should not be seen as a replacement for employees but rather, they are there to complement and enhance a Council service.

However, if services are looking at how communities can take more ownership of something in a voluntary capacity, the Council can provide support with that as well. Please contact cpt@telford.gov.uk for more information.

Questions to consider when creating a volunteer role:

- **Does this look like a job that someone should be paid to do?**

- **Look at the expectations and level of responsibility involved. Is this a reasonable expectation of a volunteer?**

- **Are you being clear that this is a voluntary role and that it is managed as such?** The Council's relationship with a volunteer is different to the relationship with an employee i.e., the volunteer can leave at any time and is under no obligation at all to achieve a certain number of hours or to achieve given targets. Managing a volunteer role like a staff role could result in inadvertently creating an employment contract. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has more information on how to avoid this in their information sheet entitled 'Making sure you don't create an employment contract'.

- **Are you being clear about expectations?** The role description, interview/informal discussion and induction should identify what volunteers can expect from the Council e.g., training and support for their role, and they should also be clear on what your expectations are of them. See the Volunteer Handbook for more information on this.

1.2 Being inclusive

We want to support as many people as possible to volunteer for the Council. To ensure fair treatment for all we should consider volunteers' needs and make reasonable adjustments where we can, so they feel valued, have the right skills and knowledge to aid them in their role.

When completing the role description, Telford & Wrekin Council gives an undertaking that all applicants for volunteering roles, will be treated with fairness, respect and dignity, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, gender reassignment, age, disability, religious or political beliefs, pregnancy or maternity, unrelated criminal conviction, care experience and armed forces community status.

We incorporate equality into our core objectives, making every effort to eliminate discrimination, create equal opportunities and develop good working relationships between different people. Further information is available on the Council's equality webpages, including the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy.

1.3 Special considerations for young volunteers

If you are considering a volunteer role for a young person under the age of 18, please note that they are legally classed as a child and therefore additional safeguards need to be put in place to protect them:

- When putting a role description together, managers should assess the risk to determine whether the role is suitable for a young person and whether it puts them or the people they are volunteering with at risk. When assessing this managers need to consider the Young Person's Risk Assessment which can be found on the Health & Safety sharepoint page.
- Written consent must be sought from the young person's parents or guardians prior to them starting a volunteer role, and information should be provided on what the role will involve and when and where the young person will be volunteering.

1.4 References and DBS checks

Before signing someone up as a Council volunteer we have a duty of care to ensure new applicants do not pose a threat in any way. As a minimum you should always check applicant details on the Council's Personal Safety Precautions (PSP) register.

Dependent on the type of volunteer role, there may also be a requirement for you to carry out references and DBS checks prior to appointing someone to their role.

See **Guidance Note 2** for more information on this. Further information on criminal record checks is also available on the Council's Recruitment, Selection & Induction SharePoint pages.

Information regarding convictions, cautions and contact details for references should be collected from volunteers as part of the application process, detailed in section 2.1. The template Volunteer Reference Request Form should be used to collect references.

1.5 Insurance & travel expenses

The main insurance covers held by the Council comprises of public liability, employers' liability and officials' indemnity which extends to indemnify volunteers whilst acting on behalf of the Council.

It is important that volunteers are clear on what they should and shouldn't be doing in their volunteer role as if they act outside this scope the insurance will not be valid.

Thinking about the nature of a volunteer role, responsible officers must also explain the necessity for volunteers to have an adequate level of motor vehicle insurance cover and which expenses they may claim.

If a volunteer is required to use their car to commute or travel as part of their role, they must ensure their motor vehicle insurance company are aware of their voluntary role and extend their cover to include business use. This is because they are carrying out Council business on our behalf. Confirmation of this cover should be provided by the volunteer and checked by the responsible officer/volunteer manager before the volunteer embarks on any journeys as part of their role.

Please note:

The addition of 'business use' does not normally incur extra charges but each case needs to be treated individually as there may be some insurance companies that do charge a fee. Services need to be prepared to cover these costs of as part of the running costs of delivering their volunteer scheme.

1.6 Funding and reimbursements

Before setting up a new volunteer scheme, services need to ensure that they have sufficient funding and resources available to support the scheme. Resources to consider include officer time to co-ordinate the volunteer(s), ongoing running costs of the scheme, e.g., any equipment, promotional materials, training, reimbursements or motor vehicle business insurance.

Although volunteers are not paid for their time given, they should be reimbursed for any reasonable expenses they incur as a result of volunteering for the Council. These should be genuine out of pocket expenses that cover things like travel or car parking when required, however, services should seek to match volunteers to a local area to keep travel costs to a minimum. We ask that volunteers provide their own food and drink.

Mileage reimbursements for volunteers is a rate of 33p per mile and should be claimed in accordance with the Council's Car User Policy.

As far as possible, ask for and keep receipts from each volunteer. Volunteers are required to complete a Volunteer Expenses Claim Form and submit to their volunteer manager for payment.

Reimbursements can be made in the following ways:

- For one off claims – through Petty Cash

- For regular claims by an individual volunteer – electronically via Agresso. Volunteers will need to be set up with a supplier ID and claims can be made by completing payment vouchers. Once processed volunteers will receive payments direct to their bank accounts.

Please note:

It is important that volunteers do not benefit financially from their voluntary role. Managers must not offer any payment, reward or benefit in kind (e.g. money, discounts, vouchers, tokens or gifts of appreciable value) or make any promises of a contract or paid work in the future, as this will result in the volunteer accruing employment rights. In addition, any payments or rewards offered (other than reimbursements as stated above) could be liable for taxation and affect any state benefits being claimed by the volunteer.

1.7 Risk assessments

Managers will need to create a risk assessment for volunteer roles. Volunteers will need to be given a copy of the associated risk assessment prior to starting their role and as part of their induction.

You should provide the same level of protection to volunteers where they carry out similar activities and are exposed to the same level of risk as employees.

Good health and safety management is not a barrier to volunteering. It should help enable volunteering roles to be carried out safely and effectively. Risk assessment is not about eliminating all risk or generating a lot of paperwork, it is about taking practical steps to protect people from real harm.

Risk assessments should be sensible and proportionate to the level of risk involved in the activity. A sensible approach means focusing on significant risks with potential to cause real harm and suffering. Visit the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) volunteering pages for further information on completing risk assessments for volunteers.

1.8 Training and development

Managers should consider what support and training they will offer to their volunteers and arrange for an account to be set up on OLLIE by logging a call via the IDT Self Service desk. Volunteers can then complete their mandatory OLLIE training modules along with any other training required for their role which should be decided by the service area.

1.9 Putting together your role description

Once you are clear on all the above you will need to put together an appropriate role description so it is clear what will be required of individuals whilst volunteering for the Council.

Section 2: Advertising and Recruiting

2.1 Advertising your role

We recognise the value of having a group of volunteers that reflects the rich diversity of our community in Telford and Wrekin. To achieve this, it is important to ensure that processes, including advertising and recruitment, positively support and encourage volunteers from all walks of life to apply for opportunities.

The latest local demographic data for the borough is accessible from the Council's Telford and Wrekin Insight webpage.

All advertising should state that we are committed to equality and diversity and adverts should be written in plain English, using language that is inclusive and clear. All recruitment information should be accurate, relevant, and up to date to allow potential applicants to make informed decisions about their suitability and desire to submit an application. As per the Equality Act 2010 we have a responsibility to ensure that we are fair and accessible to all. This includes people who share one, or more of the 9 protected characteristics. It is best practice for services to monitor relevant information about their volunteers.

Unlike the Council's recruitment process, volunteers do not need to apply via WM Jobs or submit a personal statement. Instead, services should provide a suitable application form for potential volunteers to complete. **The Volunteer Registration Form template gives a minimum standard of information that must be collected by each Council volunteer scheme**. This includes basic monitoring information to help us to understand and improve diversity and inclusion and address under-representation across the Council volunteer demographic, and a section on reference details (if required for the role). Service areas should only amend the sections in the form where it is indicated that editing may be required but can add sections to suit the needs of the service.

Where possible application forms should be made available online as well as having paper-based forms available if required. If requested, managers should also make time to discuss opportunities with potential volunteers prior to them submitting an application.

We recommend advertising your volunteer role on Volunteer Telford. Please complete our online form to submit details of the opportunity for publication on the website. For help and support with this form, contact get.involved@telford.gov.uk. Advertising on social media platforms and/or in professional journals, where appropriate, should also be arranged directly by the recruiting service area.

The Community Services Team can also help promote opportunities via the [Volunteer Telford Facebook page](). Please email [get.involved@telford.gov.uk.]()

2.2 Informal meetings

Having considered the appropriate level of references and DBS checks required (see Section 1), services should arrange an informal meeting with applicants to make a final decision on whether they are suitable for the position.

The responsible officer should give prospective volunteers a clear understanding of what will be expected of them, ask them about their reasons for applying and determine their suitability for the position. **Guidance Note 3** provides further information about conducting informal meetings with volunteers.

When recruiting volunteers to work with children or vulnerable adults, ascertain their motivation for working with the vulnerable client group and assess their ability to form and maintain appropriate relationships and personal boundaries with the clients. Explain any background checks that will need to be completed prior to starting the role.

If during the discussion you have any concerns or suspicions about an applicant based on what has been said or where evidence has been provided (where you think they could pose a risk to members of the community or the activity they have volunteered for), then further checks will need to be carried out before proceeding any further. Remember that volunteers act on the Council's behalf, and we have a duty to safeguard them and any members of the public they may engage with.

Please note:

It is important to have a plan of action before meeting a volunteer (face to face or virtually) in case any suspicions arise during the appointment. If any concerning information comes to light during the discussion **do not continue with the recruitment process**. Your safety and wellbeing are extremely important so make your excuses and leave (have a plan of what to say beforehand or buddy up if it is appropriate to do so). Do not hand over any kit or paperwork to the volunteer and explain that you will get back to them as soon as you can.

2.3 Induction

All volunteers will need an introduction to their role. They should also be advised of what they can expect from the Council in return and the support available including a named person (i.e., the volunteer manager) they will remain in contact with and meet at mutually agreed times for regular guidance and support.

As part of this discussion, volunteers should be talked through the [Volunteer Handbook]() and relevant role-specific risk assessment to ensure they have fully understood these and have the opportunity to ask questions. Once they have read and understood this, they should sign the [Volunteer Agreement](). One copy of the agreement should be kept by the responsible officer, and another should be given to the volunteer along with the handbook and risk assessment.

Access to OLLIE should be provided so that volunteers can complete any mandatory OLLIE training courses relevant to their role.

As part of the induction process all volunteers should receive a 'welcome pack' folder, which includes a corporate welcome letter from the council, a copy of their role description, the risk assessment, Volunteer Handbook and a photo permission form (which is retained by the service). To request copies of the 'welcome pack' folders please contact the Community Services Team or email get.involved@telford.gov.uk.

Whilst there is no formal requirement, consideration should be given as to whether services want volunteers to wear ID badges whilst carrying out their role. Service areas will be responsible for organising and funding these.

Section 3: Managing Your Volunteers

3.1 Recording of volunteering information

Services have the responsibility of recording and storing their volunteer data safely and securely in line with Information Security Policy.

Volunteers should be provided with a privacy notice if we are collecting their personal data, this can be included within the application form or another similarly appropriate document. Only the minimum amount of personal data should be collected and consideration should be given to the following before any data is collected:

- Where this information will be stored

- Who will need access – only those who need to use the data should have access

- How long the data will be held for

Additional guidance on privacy notices can be found on the Information Governance intranet page.

3.2 Support and supervision

The type and amount of support offered will depend on the nature of the volunteering opportunity and the individual's needs. It is recommended that regular contact and supervision is arranged to support volunteers and encourage ongoing engagement.

It may be appropriate to offer opportunities for informal day-to-day support, for example by checking in with the volunteer at the end of each session and expressing thanks for their input.

If you have a group of volunteers, it is recommended to arrange regular shared supervision sessions for them. This provides an opportunity for them to meet and share ideas and contribute to the development of the role, provide experiences for peer support and feedback and offer some training or invite guest speakers.

Regular communication is also important – some ways to keep your volunteers informed could include:

- A regular newsletter

- Group emails

- Social media accounts – for volunteers to follow

- Chat groups – for volunteers to connect with one another and share experiences. See the Council's Social Media Policy. You can also complete a Social Media Account request form and email Corporate Communications to alert them to your request.

Volunteers should also be kept informed of any changes to their role or the people they are engaging with and consulted on how these changes may affect them.

A volunteer's support needs may change during their involvement with the service so responsible officers should regularly review and adapt the support they are providing. Responsible officers must also be prepared to give volunteers a reference based on their volunteer role as required.

3.3 Recognition and voice

Recognising the contribution of volunteers is very important. It shows that we recognise their input, makes them feel valued/appreciated and they are more likely to stay with us.

There are many ways we can do this:

- Provide references

- Say thank you (verbally or with greeting cards)

- Provide regular reviews and support (shared supervision for example)

- Keep volunteers up to date with changes in the organisation so they feel informed

- Provide clothing, badges etc. so volunteers are instantly recognisable and appreciated

- Arrange fun social/thank you events

- Offer training and personal development

- Nominate volunteers for local and national recognition awards

- Be as flexible and accommodating as you can of individual needs

- Highlight your volunteers in your communications – National Volunteers' Week is the most prominent time of the year to do this. This can be done in a variety of ways - on social media, in press releases, newsletters, reports and other publications (with their permission)

- Case studies (with their permission)

- Provide certificates

- Offer and pay reimbursements

- Share feedback from service users on the impact their volunteering is making to others

Gaining feedback from volunteers is another important way for them to feel valued and involved. You can do this in a variety of ways – during shared supervision sessions, in focus groups or via surveys for example. Feedback is extremely important, it will help you better understand what is working well, what may need improving and how your volunteers feel in terms of the support they are receiving from you. You can establish what volunteers are getting out of their volunteering role and the difference it is making, and it could also be an opportunity for volunteers to put forward ideas of their own which may help influence how you choose to do things in the future.

3.4 Managing concerns

If the responsible officer has any concerns about the conduct of the volunteer, these should be explored and addressed immediately. Advice should be sought from Human Resources on individual cases and may involve referral to a Vetting Panel if the volunteer is working with children or vulnerable groups and/or is working in the community.

If the outcome of the Vetting Panel determines that the volunteer cannot continue to work with children or vulnerable adults, they should be informed of this. Checks should be made as to whether the individual is volunteering in other areas of the authority.

Human Resources should also be notified in order that other agencies can be informed if necessary.

Please note: if a volunteer is asked to step down it is important that any Council equipment, ID badges, uniform etc. are returned. If it is safe to do so, make arrangements for these items to be returned as soon as possible. However, if the volunteer is deemed to pose a threat of either physical or verbal harm **do not make contact again**.

In these circumstances, please contact the Enforcement Team on enfo-asb@telford.gov.uk so that alternative arrangements can be made to reclaim Council property in a safe manner. If this has followed an incident this must be reported on the Councils incident reporting system. If you wish to seek advice on a Health and Safety concern regarding a volunteer, please contact the internal Health & Safety Team at HealthSafetyAdmin@telflord.gov.uk.

You may also need to submit information for the purposes of the Personal Safety and Precautions (PSP) register.

If there are concerns around a volunteer's conduct while using Council-run social media pages or chat groups, please refer to the Social Media Policy as mentioned in section 3.2 and familiarise yourself with the Councils terms and disclaimer. Further advice can also be sought from the Corporate Communications Team.

3.5 Reporting incidents

If a volunteer is involved or injured in an incident or near miss, they must report this to the responsible officer for information and consideration of further mitigations. Contact details of responsible officers must be shared with volunteers before they commence their role. Risk assessments may need to be updated to reflect changes or to record new hazards.

Responsible officers must also follow the Council's Health & Safety Policy and procedures around reporting incidents via My View. The system allows employees to record accidents, near misses and violent incidents. Further information can be found on the Health & Safety SharePoint pages.

Consideration must also be made to incidents that are required to be reported to the HSE under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013. Further guidance is available on the HSE website, including when to report incidents involving volunteers.

3.6 Complaints

In the unfortunate event that a volunteer needs to make a complaint, in the first instance they should talk to the responsible officer/volunteer manager who should investigate on the volunteer's behalf.

However, if a volunteer doesn't feel comfortable doing this (maybe because the issue is in relation to the volunteer manager) they should report it to the volunteer manager's line manager. The line manager should then investigate and if HR support is required, they should liaise with the HR helpdesk in the usual way. Where appropriate, and if more formal action should be taken, the normal HR processes would need to be followed.

If the volunteer does not know who the volunteer manager's line manager is they should email get.involved@telford.gov.uk to assist with this – as set out in the Volunteer Handbook.

The Council's Speak Up (Whistleblowing) policy also applies to volunteers and provides guidance on where and when to raise concerns.

3.7 Ending voluntary activity

A volunteer can decide not to volunteer at any point and does not have to resign from their position nor does the council need to give notice to the volunteer if his or her services are no longer required.

It is recommended that an exit interview is held to gather useful information that might assist volunteers in the future and promote continued improvement. As part of the exit interview, services should also provide volunteers with a 'leavers letter' to show appreciation for all they have done during their time as a Council volunteer.