

The Staffordshire Compact

Volunteering Code of Practice



Staffordshire Strategic Partnership

Introduction

This code of practice sets out an agenda of undertakings for third sector and public organisations in Staffordshire on good practice for volunteering. In common with the National Code, the undertakings aim to promote volunteering; value and celebrate the contribution of volunteers; enable and support more people to volunteer; encourage better practice in the management of volunteers; and tackle the barriers to volunteering.

The Volunteering Code of Practice is to be viewed in conjunction with the Staffordshire Compact. This is code one of a number of codes which describe how the Compact will work in practice and is based on the National Code.

Definitions

Public organisations are made up of local authorities, police, fire and rescue and the health authority.

Third sector is made up of voluntary and community organisations which may involve and manage volunteers, and may provide infrastructure support for funding to volunteers and volunteering groups.

Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community. People may choose to volunteer for many different reasons and volunteering can take many different forms, from informal to formal activities.

Fundamental Principles to Volunteering

There are four fundamental principles to volunteering:

Choice

Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. Any encouragement to become involved in volunteering should not result in any form of coercion or compulsion. Freedom to volunteer implies freedom not to become involved.

Diversity

The people of Staffordshire bring varying qualities and experience to the third sector. Diversity is recognised, respected and valued. Volunteering should be open to all, no matter what their background, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender or disability. It is recognised that social exclusion barriers can be overcome by skills, experience, confidence and contacts gained whilst helping others. Ensuring a diverse volunteering base also makes our services more accessible and relevant to our diverse communities. (The **Equality & Diversity Code of Practice** outlines our broad, inclusive approach to equality and diversity).

Mutual Benefit

Volunteering should be a reciprocal, mutual relationship. Although a person is not paid for their efforts, they should feel a sense of worthwhile achievement. Volunteers gain useful skills, experience and contacts, sociability and fun, and are included in the organisation and the wider community. Volunteers should be complimentary to and not a replacement for paid staff.

Recognition

The value of volunteers to the organisation, community, the social economy and wider social objectives is fundamental to a fair relationship between the volunteers, public organisations and the third sector.

The Volunteering Code of Practice

Shared Values and Principles

All sectors commit to:

- Work together to develop, implement, share and disseminate good practice in volunteering, recognising that effective volunteer management requires investment and commitment.
- Work together, to encourage support and understanding between the sectors.
- Comply with all relevant legislation.
- Work together, to identify and remove barriers to volunteering and community involvement and actively seek to enhance public perceptions of volunteering through greater publicity, particularly volunteers' achievements.
- Recognise that volunteering is of value to the community, and encourage partnership working between organisations to improve and expand the variety of volunteering opportunities offered, minimise duplication of services and maximise value for money.

To achieve this, partner agencies are encouraged to draw upon the knowledge and expertise of local infrastructure organisations and of specialist volunteering bodies, for support and best practice guidance.

Public Organisations

In supporting this code, public organisations commit to:

- Maintain the good practice principles of this code in its grants, service level agreements, contracts, funding arrangements and all other associated

activities; striving to adopt policies which ensure realistic, sustainable and long-term resources to support the maintenance of an efficient and effective volunteering infrastructure throughout Staffordshire.

- Ensure fair, open and transparent processes for public organisations tenders and contracts for volunteering schemes or with third sector organisations.
- Recognise and support the key strategic role of volunteers on management committees and boards of trustees and promote volunteering as an economic activity which builds skills, experience, employability and social cohesion.
- Work with the third sector, through the Volunteer Centres, to address how detailed demographic information on volunteering and community activity can be collected for comparison with other surveys and research. Work with the third sector to analyse this demographic information and identify how any under-representation can be addressed.
- Support media and communication strategies which ensure that volunteer contributions to the work of the public sector and to raising the quality of life are promoted both internally and externally, and support activities which motivate people to volunteer.
- Abide by the principles set out under the Third Sector section of this code when directly involving volunteers in their work.

Third Sector

In supporting this code the third sector commit to:

- Develop relevant policies and procedures in relation to recruitment, selection, induction and retention of volunteers to ensure a fair, transparent and consistent approach. They should provide volunteers with the appropriate support, supervision, appraisal, training and guidance to enable them to perform their voluntary roles.
- Value the important role volunteers play as trustees and committee members and recognise the need for appropriate training and support to enable them to carry out their tasks. Recognise that good volunteer management is important and requires the allocation of appropriate resources. Ensure that the work of all staff that recruit, induct, and manage volunteers is recognised and they receive the appropriate training and support.
- Recognise that organisations have a duty of care towards volunteers and should conduct regular risk assessments and adopt policies which protect volunteers in respect of health and safety, equal opportunities, and public liabilities insurance. Adopt clear and consistent principles regarding the reimbursement of volunteer expenses (i.e. reimburse actual out-of-pocket expenses against receipts) and maintain appropriate records.
- Assist potential volunteers to find volunteering opportunities that fit their needs, interests and abilities by working in partnership with other agencies.

- Recognise that, as part of the reciprocal relationship, volunteers should be given thanks and recognition for their contribution. Ensure that the nature and extent of volunteering is acknowledged in annual reports and other public information.

Appendix 1 :

The following is a good practice checklist from the National Volunteering Compact Code.

You should note that these are basic summary points, with further guidance available from other sources. They apply to organisations where paid members of staff manage volunteers, not to community groups, however they can be adapted accordingly.

	✓	X
Prior to recruitment, be clear about why you want/need a volunteer		
In order to attract volunteers from groups that the organisation has previously failed to reach, it may be helpful to approach those groups/people directly to establish what would make volunteering with the organisation more appealing to them.		
Provide the volunteer with a clear role/task description, identifying anticipated requirement(s) of the organisation		
Provide the volunteer with an initial induction and training programme		
Provide the volunteer with appropriate line management		
Add volunteers to organisation charts. Encourage volunteers to participate in the organisation's wider decision making process.		
Monitor and acknowledge the contribution that volunteers make to the organisation, to the wider public, to funders and to other volunteers.		
Ask the volunteer what they seek from their placement and share with the volunteer what you want. Remember any placement should be by mutual consent.		
Always offer to reimburse out-of-pocket expenses. These normally include travel and lunch. Where a placement is away from home, this might also include accommodation and a subsistence allowance.		
Ensure that Equal Opportunities and/or diversity policies are in place and applied equally to volunteers. Examine the organisation's ways of working for anything that may pose a barrier for some members.		
Ensure that Health & Safety standards are in place and applied equally to all employees and volunteers. Insurance policies should be extended to cover volunteers.		
Provide opportunities for volunteers to acquire or develop new or existing skills and assist volunteers who want to gain accreditation towards recognised qualifications.		

Encourage and promote a diverse range of employees at all levels. This will help volunteers of different ethnic groups, ages, disabilities...etc. to feel welcome		
Volunteers should not be recruited to fill the place of paid staff. This could be perceived as exploitation of the volunteer and deprivation of someone else's livelihood.		
Ensure that the work and contribution of the volunteer adds quality and value to the organisations' aims and objectives.		