

**Summary:**

PCC Good Practice Summary:

- All volunteers must have a named supervisor and receive an induction into the organisation and their role before or on the first day of their placement.
- Volunteers must be managed by trained staff and appropriate training and development opportunities should be made available.
- Volunteers must not be used as a substitute for paid employees.
- Volunteers will be required to comply with the Council's agreed policies and procedures.
- Volunteers out of pocket, incurred expenses will be reimbursed.

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<b>Last Review Date</b>	
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<b>Approval</b>	Governance & Audit & Standards Committee.
<b>Policy Owner</b>	Michael Lawther
<b>Policy Author</b>	Mandy Lindley
<b>Advice &amp; Guidance</b>	PCC volunteer good practice guide
<b>Location</b>	Policy Hub
<b>Related Documents</b>	PCC Volunteering Code of Good Practice.
<b>Applicability</b>	All volunteers recruited by PCC

## 1. Introduction

Volunteers are a key resource for Portsmouth City Council as they offer an opportunity for increased involvement and diversity within the organisation. There are many services within the council that involve volunteers from a variety of backgrounds and culture their expertise complementing the skills of paid staff. There is an increased awareness of the benefits of involving volunteers in council led projects and engaging with local people. Portsmouth City Council can offer a variety of volunteering opportunities within its services and through involving volunteers can be more effective in consulting and engaging directly with the needs of local communities.

### 1.1 Definition of Volunteering

Volunteering is defined as any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives. Central to this definition is the fact that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. This can include formal activity undertaken through public, private and voluntary organisations as well as informal community participation. (Volunteering England definition)

In instances where the participation of service users, carers and local people is actively sought, such as for consultation and partnership boards, those involved are regarded as involved person or participants, rather than volunteers. This is not covered by this policy.

## 2. PCC Good Practice Guide

2.1 This Good Practice Guide recognises the valuable contribution of our volunteers and provides consistent standards for volunteering opportunities with Portsmouth City Council, which reflect PCC's [Guiding Principles](#)

It has been produced to provide a framework for all staff working with volunteers to:

- Promote best practice across the authority
- Provide consistent terms of engagement for volunteers across all Council Directorates.
- Ensure our work with volunteers adds value to our service delivery.
- Ensure the safety of volunteers, and those they come into contact with in the course of their volunteering.
- Support volunteers in developing their skills and knowledge.

All staff working with volunteers are encouraged to follow this guide.

### Key Principles

- Each individual Directorate area will coordinate the recruitment of the Volunteers it needs, according to corporate guidelines and best practice.
- Volunteers will not be used to replace the work of paid staff.
- Volunteers will be recruited to a specific role and consulted on a regular basis regarding their involvement.

## 2.2 Scope

This Best Practice Guide is designed to cover volunteers providing or supporting the delivery of Council services.

It does not cover: **work experience, corporate apprenticeships and student placements and internships.**

## 3. Recruitment of Volunteers

3.1 Anyone approaching PCC offering their services as a volunteer should be asked to complete an application form. If suitable, they should be informally interviewed and references taken up. All documents relating to the application process can be found in the good practice guide. If it is decided that the person is not suitable for the volunteering role they have applied for, they should be given an explanation why. They should also be advised of other opportunities, as appropriate

Volunteer roles can be advertised in a variety of ways. The Portsmouth City Council website has the [Portsmouth Together](#) online volunteering hub which has been developed to inspire and mobilise greater volunteering in Portsmouth and you can advertise your vacancies there.

The Voluntary Sector Team at the city council can give you further information about these resources (contact [voluntary.sector@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:voluntary.sector@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)).

## 4. Volunteer Role Descriptions and Agreements

Volunteer role descriptions and agreements can help both parties to clarify intentions and expectations, lowering the chance of a grievance arising in the first place.

There is helpful information about creating volunteer role descriptions in the good practice guide.

On a practical level, a written agreement can help ensure that practice does not breach the law. Volunteer contracts must be avoided; contracts can lead to false expectations of obligation on both sides. For this reason, the setting out of the volunteer relationship in terms of rights and obligations must be avoided. Instead, express your goals as intentions, hopes, or policies; this reflects the voluntary nature of the arrangement.

No training can be offered with the proviso that the volunteer must work a minimum amount of hours for the organisation. Volunteers can't be offered recompense such as training or a job offer in return for his or her time.

A generic volunteer agreement can be found in the good practice guide or at The National Council for Voluntary Organisations website

## 5. Safeguarding

5.1 Because some services within PCC work with children and vulnerable people, volunteers who are based in these areas may require a Disclosure and Barring Service check (formerly Criminal Records Bureau check) as well as references. Potential volunteers' should be informed from the outset that you may be requiring this information; however convictions should not necessarily prevent someone from volunteering.

**5.2 The Council has a statutory duty to ensure the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults. The Council's Safeguarding Policies apply to volunteers who engage with children, young people and vulnerable adults in their volunteering role and should be covered within the initial induction and further training provided wherever appropriate.**

### 5.3 Vulnerable Clients

Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policies must be adhered to in all vulnerable client cases. Disclosure and Barring Service Checks must be obtained by all, including volunteers, working or volunteering with or around vulnerable clients where the role involves a regulated activity. These measures must be taken to protect our clients. However DBS checks only give information regarding those with an existing record and measures must be taken to monitor volunteers' relationship with the clients throughout their involvement in any project. References are an essential tool when assessing potential volunteers' suitability as it gives current and qualitative feedback. The [Safeguarding Adults Policy](#) applies to all volunteers.

### 5.4 Working with Children

Under the Protection of Children Act 1999 and the Care Standards Act 2000, there is legislation around obtaining DBS checks. Training must be given in Child Protection and any other necessary information given before commencing any work with children.

PCC have a responsibility under the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 for safeguarding children and promoting the welfare of children and young people. Please see the [Local Safeguarding Children Board's Procedures](#)

### 5.5 Young Volunteers

When involving under-16s you will need to carry out a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check on the main person who will come into close contact and develop a relationship of trust with a volunteer at any given time (typically the volunteer supervisor).

If a young person aged 16-25 comes into contact with vulnerable people while they are volunteering, you may need to carry out a DBS check if the role involves a regulated activity- see the section on DBS checks for more information.

## 6. Induction and Training

6.1 Induction and Training are key elements to the success of any programme. Volunteers must feel welcome and accepted at all times. Their needs must be addressed in consideration of the resources available. Volunteers should be provided with all the information, equipment and skills they need to carry out their role. A number of resources to help you with the induction and training of volunteers can be found in the good practice guide.

6.2 Training and support must be offered appropriate to the nature of the role. The induction programme must be reviewed regularly following feedback from participating volunteers. A trial period may be set, if the volunteer or supervisor is unsure of the volunteer's suitability for the role. The programme must consider encompassing all types of volunteers and be flexible in its approach.

## 7. Supervision and Support

7.1 Support should be made widely available to all volunteers appropriate to the nature of their volunteer role. When a new volunteer joins the organisation there should be a structured one to one session with an appropriate person who will outline the role, brief the volunteer on Portsmouth City Council corporate responsibility and what expectation we have of them. There should be regular opportunities for volunteers to have monitoring sessions where their needs can be assessed. This is good practice as it ensures the service is running effectively and that the volunteers are supported correctly.

7.2 Every volunteer must have a named supervisor to serve as their main point of contact during their placement. The supervisor will be responsible for arranging any training, resources or equipment needed to fulfil agreed tasks, providing advice, guidance and opportunities for volunteers to feedback and ensuring **out of pocket expenses** are paid promptly.

7.3 The relevant service will support all volunteers and will have regular meetings with them to discuss any problems or issues that may arise. Up-to-date records must be kept of any meetings; information and current volunteer numbers, so this information is easily accessible and that PCC are promoting best practice and efficient HR processes. These elements should be incorporated in all business plans.

## 8. Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures

8.1 The relationship between PCC and its volunteers is entirely voluntary and does not imply any contract. However, it is important that PCC is able to maintain its agreed standards of service to its clients and it is also important that volunteers should enjoy making their contribution to the service.

8.2 Problems or dissatisfaction with a volunteer's work.

Volunteers should have regular review meetings with their supervisors, which should include discussion of any areas of dissatisfaction. If there are concerns about the

performance or conduct of a volunteer, the supervisor should arrange a supervision session to find out if there is an underlying problem or to offer further training and advice. If the volunteer's work still does not meet with PCC standards then the volunteer must be asked to leave the service.

8.3 If a volunteer's behaviour is inappropriate or equivalent to gross misconduct, their volunteer activity will be terminated immediately and relevant authorities informed if there is any illegal activity.

8.4 At all times the volunteer will be able to freely state their case and can have a friend to accompany them at all times in the process.

8.5 Complaints, or if a volunteer is unhappy.

Volunteers should be given the opportunity to discuss any issues of concern in the first instance with their supervisor, through regular meetings. An action plan should be devised to resolve the grievance. If this is not appropriate or the volunteer is not happy with how the matter is handled, they should take their complaint/concern to their volunteer coordinator and a second action plan can be drawn up. If, after this, the grievance remains unresolved, it would be inappropriate for the person to continue to be a volunteer.

At all times the volunteer will be able to freely state their case and can have a friend to accompany them at all times in the process.

## **9. PCC Volunteers Data Protection and confidentiality**

9.1 The most basic information held about a volunteer - name, address and telephone number - must comply with the Data Protection Act and should be dealt with accordingly. Volunteers should be supplied with information to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities under both the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts.

9.2 Volunteers have the same confidentiality rights and protection of any paid employee, and will be treated with the same respect and professionalism as any staff member.

## **10. Young People as Volunteers**

There are no legal restrictions around volunteers and age. The issues, more often, are around what roles are suitable and the practicalities surrounding this. It is recommended that you discuss other commitments young people may have, such as school and employment pressures when considering the amount of volunteers time they will volunteer.

Both the young person and their parent or guardian should fully understand what the voluntary work entails.

## **11. Volunteers from Abroad**

11.1 There are no restrictions on volunteer work for nationals of European Union countries.

People who are from outside of the European Economic Area are not allowed to take up work, paid or unpaid, without a work permit. However concessions have been made by the Home Office to allow people from outside of the European Economic Area to volunteer for a charity if they meet certain criteria (visa and entry clearance are still essential).

11.2 Following a campaign by Refugee Action that was supported by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, the Home Office revised its guidance on 28 October 2013 to make clear that asylum seekers can volunteer for public sector bodies as well as voluntary organisations, and that it is lawful for refused asylum seekers to volunteer.

11.3 Asylum seekers have been able to volunteer for registered charities, other voluntary organisations or organisations that raise funds for them, but this has now been extended to include volunteering for public sector bodies. The rules are the same as for voluntary sector volunteering: the volunteer must receive no payment other than reimbursement for genuine expenditure on fares or meals during volunteering; there must be no arrangements between the organisation and individual that would create a contractually binding obligation on the volunteer; the volunteer must provide a service for the organisation; and the volunteering must not be for a role that would normally be filled by a paid worker.

In relation to refused asylum seekers, previous Home Office guidance stated it was unlawful for them to volunteer, now the Home Office has said that volunteering by refused asylum seekers is lawful, but that the government does not support their volunteering, it expects them to return to their home country, and volunteering will not delay their removal from the UK.

You can find more information on the [Volunteering England website](#).

## **12. Equality and Diversity**

Portsmouth City Council is firmly committed to diversity in all areas of its work. PCC believe that there is much to learn and profit from diverse cultures and perspectives, and that diversity will make our organisation more effective in meeting the needs of all our stakeholders. PCC are committed to developing and maintaining an organisation in which differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are fostered and valued, and where those with diverse backgrounds and experiences are able to participate and contribute.

## **13. Equal Opportunities**

Portsmouth City Council is committed as an authority to offering equal opportunity to volunteers from different backgrounds to build on establishing a diverse cohort of volunteers. PCC will strive to welcome and involve people from differing backgrounds, ages, cultures, genders and outlooks so that as an organisation we can adapt new ideas and fresh approaches.



## 14. Expenses and Resources

14.1 Refunding volunteer costs is a legitimate cost associated with any volunteer programme or project. Portsmouth City Council will reimburse any out of pocket expenses that the volunteer has paid themselves to make sure that volunteering is accessible to all, regardless of income. It is important that volunteers are paid actual out-of-pocket expenses only, in reference to National Minimum Wage Act legislation, and in line with Government recommendations (<https://www.gov.uk/volunteering/pay-and-expenses>). The legal implications of not doing this may result in backdating minimum wage pay, fines associated with willfully neglecting to pay the minimum wage and falsification of records and similar obstructions. If anything other than out-of-pocket expenses is paid then this would also have tax and national insurance implications.

### 14.2 Payment of Expenses

Expenses must be approved by a supervisor prior to any claim being made. Records must be kept of any reimbursements made and should include the necessary receipts to justify the need to claim. Portsmouth City Council reserves the right to refuse an incomplete claim or defer until resolution.

All records supporting expenses claims, such as receipts, claim forms and insurance policies, will be subject to examination from time to time by internal audit. All claims must be submitted using the **PCC Volunteering Expenses Form**, which includes information about current subsistence and mileage rates and the maximum sums that can be claimed.

Subsistence may be claimed if volunteers are attending an event, conference, meeting or training course during the course of their volunteering where the venue is over 5 hours from home. Meals and childcare expenses should only be paid if the volunteer has contributed an excess of 8 hours continuous work.

### 14.3 Car users and mileage

Volunteers who are required to drive should not be encouraged to use their own vehicle unless necessary as insurance and expenses issues will need to be considered. For journeys of over 60 miles a PCC hire car should normally be used.

Insurance cover is the responsibility of each car user. Volunteers are responsible for contacting their insurer to ensure that they are covered by their vehicle insurance, and the Volunteer Manager must have sight of confirmation in writing from the insurance company before the vehicle can be used. There should never be an increase in premium by insurers due to their volunteering activities if using their own vehicle.

Mileage can only be claimed in respect of journeys actually incurred: no claim can be made for estimated mileage. As a general rule, the mileage to be claimed will be that actually incurred on the approved journey, provided that the most reasonable route was taken.



Mileage for use of a vehicle for volunteering activity is based on the allowance rates currently in operation for vehicle type and size as set out by the HMRC and in line with PCC mileage rates. Volunteers must keep proper mileage records and in most cases the volunteers should notify their supervisor of the impending journey.

The driving at work policy applies equally to volunteers and staff who carry out any journey in a motor vehicle regardless of if they claim mileage allowance or not. The simple question to ask yourself is 'is that journey in a motor vehicle being undertaken as a result of the persons work or association with PCC' (paid or not).

#### **14.4 Honorarium Payments**

Honorarium payments should be avoided. An honorarium is usually a one-off payment. If the honorarium is any way expected, hinted at or regularly given it may be regarded as a payment for services, affecting the legal status of volunteers, and as taxable income.

#### **15 Insurance Liability**

Volunteers who are recruited by PCC are covered by the council's insurance policy

#### **16. Health and Safety**

Portsmouth City Council has a duty of care to avoid exposing any volunteer to risk to their health and safety. Volunteers must be made aware of health and safety arrangements as part of their initial training. This includes their duty to take reasonable care for their health and safety and that of others who may be affected by what they do, or neglect to do. Where applicable, adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and suitable safe equipment should be provided together with appropriate instruction.

#### **17. Copyright**

Copyright issues surrounding volunteers can be unclear: however in all cases a volunteer should be asked to transfer rights to the organisation or agree a license where the organisation can use the work within agreed limits. This will ensure that any work produced can be used after a volunteer leaves the organisation.

### **Appendix 1 - PCC Volunteer Good Practice Guide.**

<https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/intranet/hr/hr-support-and-advice/working-with-volunteers.aspx>