

Portsmouth City Council – Volunteering Good Practice Guide

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 cultures, who wish to gain experience or provide practical assistance across all service areas and directorates. 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

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)

Purpose and aim of the Good Practice Guide

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 services
- 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, and individual services will develop their own guidelines focussing on areas particularly relevant to their volunteers.

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Key Principles

- Each individual department or service will coordinate their own recruitment of Volunteers, according to specific guidelines.
- 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.

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.

This Best Practice Guide should be read in conjunction with the Portsmouth City Council Volunteer Policy

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Recruitment

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

The Portsmouth Together Team at the city council can give you further information about these resources - contact volunteer@portsmouth.gov.uk

You can also use corporate publications (Flagship, Link), journals, flyers, booklets, but any external media marketing needs to be done in consultation with and approved by Corporate Communications.

Application forms can be used to record relevant contact details of the volunteer and to consider their suitability for the role they would like to volunteer for. Keeping the applications simple and easy to read will ensure that people are not excluded. You can download our generic PCC application form which can be adapted to the needs of your own service:



3.Volunteering App
Form.doc

Potential volunteers should be interviewed in an informal capacity to ensure a wider understanding of their skills or aspirations so they can be placed in a role in which they will be happy and that will match their skills.

References should be obtained by the service and must be relevant to the volunteering carried out. The supervisor of individual projects should obtain references prior to appointing an applicant. In exceptional circumstances the need for a reference might be waived; this would be assessed on an individual basis. Once the volunteer has left the service records should not be kept for any longer than 2 years. There is more information about undertaking references here: .



4. References.docx

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Because some services within PCC work with children and vulnerable people, volunteers who are based in these may require a Disclosure and Barring Service check (formerly Criminal Records Bureau check) as well as references. It is fair to let people know from the outset that you will be requiring this information; however convictions should not necessarily prevent someone from volunteering. More information can be found in the following document:



5. DBS Checks.docx

If a candidate is not felt to be suitable for the role they are requesting to volunteer for, then the reasons must be explained to them. This situation must be handled with care and consideration for the person's feelings. The Equal Opportunities policy must be consulted when conducting a review feedback interview.

If paid staff 'volunteer' for PCC then the volunteer role should be substantially different from their paid role otherwise the working time directive and minimum wage legislation could be applied. The role and responsibilities must be clearly defined.

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 [here](#) and a sample role description template here:



7. Role description
template.doc

On a practical level, a written agreement can help ensure that practice does not breach the law or drift into dangerous territory - **but don't create volunteer 'contracts'**

Contracts can lead to false expectations of obligation on both sides. For this reason, you must avoid setting out the volunteer relationship in terms of rights and obligations. Instead, express your goals as intentions, hopes, or policies. This reflects the voluntary nature of the arrangement.

This means you cannot offer training with the provision that the volunteer must work a minimum amount of hours for the organisation. Nor can you promise to provide recompense such as training or a job offer for the volunteer in return for his or her time.

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We have developed a generic PCC Volunteer Agreement which you can alter and use:



8. Volunteer Agreement.doc

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations' website has a useful checklist to help you with volunteer agreements [here](#)

Safeguarding

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.

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.

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](#)

Young Volunteers

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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 volunteer at any given time (typically the volunteer supervisor).

Contrary to popular belief, it is not necessary to perform similar checks on the entire staff or volunteers who are unlikely to end up in a one-on-one situation with a young volunteer. Don't forget that recruitment, training and supervision can act as more effective safeguarding tools than DBS disclosures.

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 with them - see the section on DBS checks for more information.

Induction and Training

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.

We have a number of resources to help you with the induction and training of volunteers – these can be adapted to suit the needs of your particular service.

- A generic guide to volunteering for PCC – information and advice for volunteers (which can be printed out as an A5 booklet)



12 Guide to
Volunteering for PCC.c

- A code of practice for volunteers based in the Civic Offices



12.4 Code of practice
for volunteers based in

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. When inter-directorate working is a possibility to use resources to the best possible advantage then this practice should be encouraged.

Income Handling Policy

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All volunteers who handle cash in their volunteering role must be made aware of the PCC Income Handling Policy and Instructions for Volunteers. You should work through the policy with the volunteer and delete any paragraphs in the Policy that are not relevant to that specific role.

The volunteer must sign to acknowledge that they have received a copy of the Policy and signed copies must be retained by both the volunteer and the relevant manager.



13.0 Cash Handling
Instructions for Volunt

Supervision and Support

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.

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.

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.

Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures

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.

- **Problems or dissatisfaction with a volunteer's work**

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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.

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.

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.

- **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.

PCC Volunteers and Data Protection

Even if you only hold the most basic information about a volunteer - name, address and telephone number - you must still comply with the Data Protection Act in the way that you deal with this information.

You should also supply volunteers with information to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities under both the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts.

There is more information in this document:



14. Data protection
and volunteers.docx

Specific considerations to be aware of for:

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- **Volunteers receiving State Benefits**

Volunteering should not affect entitlement to any benefit as long as volunteers keep to some basic rules.

Any volunteer who is currently receiving Job Seekers Allowance will be allowed to volunteer as long as they remain available and actively seeking paid employment, alongside their volunteering. This therefore may affect the amount of hours that any one person can volunteer if they are in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance, as it must not prevent them from seeking paid employment or being available to work at once.

For more information go to <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/dwp1023.pdf>

- **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.

- **Volunteers from Abroad**

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).

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.

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

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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 said it was unlawful for them to volunteer, and Refugee Action has been aware of individuals being threatened with imprisonment and fines unless they stopped volunteering. 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](#).

Equality and Diversity

Portsmouth City Council is firmly committed to diversity in all areas of its work. PCC believe that we have 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. We will regularly evaluate and monitor our progress towards diversity.

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 volunteer 'workforce'. 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. For more information search for **Equality and Diversity** on Intralink

Expenses and Resources

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

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minimum wage pay, fines associated with wilfully 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.

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 when the volunteer is away from their normal volunteering base for more than 5 hours. Meals and childcare expenses should only be paid if the volunteer has contributed an excess of 8 hours continuous work at their volunteering base.

A procedure has been agreed for the payment of volunteer expenses and this form should be used. You should follow your service/department's normal process for having the expenses form authorised and signed; the volunteer can then take the form to Cashiers or to the appropriate payment team for the reimbursement of their expenses



17 Expenses Claim
Form.doc

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

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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).

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.

Insurance Liability

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

Health and Safety

As an organisation we have 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 (for more information about PCC Health and Safety Policies search for **Health and Safety** on Intralink). 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.

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.

Confidentiality

Volunteers should have the same rights and protection of any paid employee. They must be treated with the same respect and professionalism as any staff member.

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Data Protection and Corporate Policies on confidentiality must be clearly outlined to any volunteer. Personal information about volunteers, such as name, contact details and records of volunteering for the organisation, must be stored in line with the Data Protection Act.

Appendix 1.

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.
- 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.
- A safe, inclusive working environment must be provided for all volunteers, making reasonable adjustments to meet individual needs.
- Volunteers should be made aware of health and safety arrangements as part of their initial training.
- Risk assessments must be carried out for any activity involving the public, including volunteers, contractors and commissioned agencies.
- Appropriate training and development opportunities should be made available to volunteers.
- Information about volunteers must be stored in line with the Data Protection Act 1988

Volunteers' commitments:

- To accept the organisations and services aims, objectives and standards.
- To do what is reasonably requested of them in line with their volunteer role description, to the best of their ability and within the remit of the organisations policies and procedures.
- To treat all information obtained whilst volunteering in a confidential manner.
- To recognise the need to maintain a quality of service.
- To recognise that they need to act in an appropriate manner and be aware that they are representing the organisation and it's reputation.
- To honour any commitment made and notify the organisation in good time if they are unable to fulfil their commitment.

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- To be willing to participate in the necessary induction, training and support system appropriate to the volunteering undertaken.
- To share any suggestions for change in working practices.

Appendix 2: Checklist

Recruitment	Do you:	
	Have a written role description outlining responsibilities?	
	Have an application form which is simple and easily to read?	
	Interview potential volunteers?	
	Take up written references?	
	Identify whether you need to carry out a Disclosure & Barring Service check (formerly a CRB check) for volunteers working with children or vulnerable clients?	
Induction and Training	Do you:	
	Have an Induction programme, with all the information, equipment and skills volunteers need to carry out their role?	
	Issue all relevant copies of PCC corporate policies in relation to the volunteer role?	
	Brief the volunteer on Portsmouth City Council corporate responsibility and what expectation we have of them?	
	Brief the volunteer on PCC's Health and Safety policies and make the policies available?	
	Make the volunteers aware of Data Protection and Corporate policies on confidentiality?	
	Give training in Child Protection and any other necessary information before commencing any volunteering with children or vulnerable adults?	
	Have a trial period?	
	Review the induction programme regularly following feedback from participating volunteers?	
	Have processes in place to undertake Disclosure & Barring Service checks (formerly CRB checks) on a three year cycle?	
Supervision	Do you:	

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and support	Have a named supervisor who the volunteer can contact?	
	Have regular opportunities for volunteers to have monitoring sessions?	
Expenses	Do you pay out of pocket expenses?	
Volunteer Drivers	Do you ensure the volunteer has contacted their insurer to confirm they are covered by their vehicle Insurance?	