



<i>Reference number</i>	
<i>Approved by</i>	<b>Director Economy, Communities and Corporate</b>
<i>Date approved</i>	<b>November 2017</b>
<i>Version</i>	<b>1.1</b>
<i>Last revised</i>	<b>November 2017</b>
<i>Review date</i>	<b>November 2020</b>
<i>Category</i>	<b>Volunteering</b>
<i>Owner</i>	<b>Growth Division</b>
<i>Target audience</i>	<b>All employees</b>

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## **INVOLVING VOLUNTEERS IN THE DELIVERY OF COUNCIL SERVICES**

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## **1. POLICY**

1.1. Volunteering is vital to the wellbeing of Herefordshire:

- by helping local people benefit the area economically and socially;
- it actively broadens the experiences of individuals who volunteer;
- it brings communities together;
- it can be a powerful tool for change;
- it has a significant economic benefit to Herefordshire in terms of improved employability through increased skills and confidence, gained through volunteering; and
- monetary value of volunteering to Herefordshire's economy was calculated as £75 million per annum in 2012, the equivalent of 3,054 full time equivalent staff.

1.2. Herefordshire Council appreciates how significant a role volunteers play both in supporting council services being provided to our communities and the role of volunteering in promoting community wellbeing. The council offers a variety of volunteering opportunities across services. This policy sets out the terms around volunteer engagement in services with the council. It ensures that consistent standards are applied to volunteering opportunities within council services and aims to make the experience of volunteers a fulfilling one.

## **2. SCOPE**

2.1. This policy applies to volunteers who help the council by supporting the delivery of its services. It does not apply to the following: services delivered by agents of the council, including contractors, service delivery organisations and maintained schools, community groups co-ordinated in an emergency, nor to work experience, apprenticeships and student placements or friends groups, where separate arrangements will apply.

## **3. DEFINITIONS**

3.1. Volunteering is defined as an activity that involves spending time, without payment, doing something that aims to benefit individuals (other than close relatives), groups or the environment.

3.2. A volunteer is not an employee of Herefordshire Council and there is no binding contractual relationship between volunteers and the council. The involvement of volunteers should complement and supplement the work of paid staff.

## **4. RECRUITMENT AND ENGAGEMENT**

4.1. Herefordshire Council will aim to match the time, skills and experience of volunteers to suitable volunteering opportunities and ensure appropriate information, training and support is provided to help volunteers fulfil their role.

4.2. Recruitment - The engagement of volunteers will adhere to safe recruitment principles as established through the council's corporate recruitment and selection process. This includes:

- Completion of a volunteer registration form;
- A face-to-face informal interview;
- Appropriate checks such as references and health needs; and

- Where appropriate, an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check for all positions in regulated activity as currently defined by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (and as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012). The cost of this will be incurred by the service area that the individual is volunteering for.

- 4.3. Induction and training - All volunteers shall receive an induction into the organisation and training appropriate for their role.
- 4.4. Volunteering agreement - All volunteers will need to sign up to the council's volunteer agreement before actively volunteering for the council. The volunteering agreement sets out the council's commitment to providing quality volunteer placements and what we ask in return from our volunteers.

## **5. KEY ELEMENTS OF THE VOLUNTEERING ROLE**

- 5.1. Support and supervision - All volunteers will have a member of staff allocated as their supervisor, with responsibility for agreeing the scope of their role, providing an induction and appropriate ongoing support. These staff will ensure that volunteers are aware of and operate within the scope of relevant Council policies and procedures and resolve any issues that arise in the course of the volunteering relationship. The supervisor will support volunteers according to their individual needs.
- 5.2. Expenses - The Council will reimburse volunteers for previously approved out-of-pocket expenses, which are appropriately receipted and in accordance with the council's employee expenses policy.
- 5.3. Insurance - Volunteers supporting the delivery of Herefordshire Council services are classed and covered as an employee for insurance purposes only, having the same cover for public liability and personal injury, provided the volunteers work to the same standard as council staff and are managed by the council with direction, training and control. Volunteer drivers must comply with the council's driving at work policy. Written permission to drive must be retained by the Herefordshire Council manager, with a signed copy given to volunteer.
- 5.4. Health and safety - Herefordshire Council has a responsibility for the health and safety of volunteers. Supervisors will provide adequate facilities, equipment and resources to enable volunteers to fulfil their role. Volunteers will follow the council's health and safety policies and procedures and have a duty to take care of themselves and others who might be affected by their actions. Volunteers will not act outside of their authorised volunteer role, without prior agreement. Volunteers will be provided with relevant ID and Personal Protective Equipment, if appropriate, and any other suitable safety equipment, together with appropriate instruction. Equipment and ID must be returned at the end of a placement.
- 5.5. Record keeping and confidentiality - Volunteers will be made aware of the Data Protection Act and guidelines to ensure adequate handling of any confidential information they come into contact with through their volunteering. Volunteer records will be kept in line with Data Protection requirements.
- 5.6. Involvement and recognition - Volunteer feedback will be encouraged to be involved in decision-making processes on issues that affect them or the areas they are operating in. Volunteers will be offered the Herefordshire 'Volunteer Passport' to

record their volunteering and have it validated by their supervisor. Volunteers will be recognised and celebrated, as appropriate, through local awards and events.

## **6. DEALING WITH PROBLEMS**

- 6.1. Herefordshire Council will act in the best interest of the service, our customers and Herefordshire residents at all times. If there are concerns about the behaviour of a volunteer, the volunteer will be advised of the concerns and have an opportunity to respond to them. As volunteers are not employees, they are unable to use the council's Grievance Policy and Procedure. A separate volunteer grievance procedure will be followed.
- 6.2. Non-compliance with this policy by volunteers may result in the cancellation of their volunteering agreement. Non-compliance with this policy by staff employees working with volunteers, may result in sanctions under the council's disciplinary procedures.

## **7. SAFEGUARDING**

- 7.1. Everybody has the right to be safe, no matter who they are or what their circumstances. Safeguarding is about protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults from abuse or neglect. The council's safeguarding policy applies to all volunteering opportunities where the volunteer engages with children, young people and vulnerable adults. This will be covered in the initial induction and further training will be provided wherever appropriate.

## **8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

- 8.1. Herefordshire Council has an Equality Policy which applies to all paid employees, elected members, and volunteers. It sets out our responsibilities as an employer and as a service provider. It details our commitment to reflect the needs of our diverse population and workforce in everything that we do.
- 8.2. We will monitor the "protected characteristics" of our volunteers at induction. This is to ensure that we are making our volunteer opportunities available to everyone, irrespective of their "protected characteristics", and are not unfairly or unwittingly discriminating against any particular groups or individuals.
- 8.3. Herefordshire Council will seek to encourage volunteers from all ages over 14 years. Any volunteer application from an under 18 year old, must have the consent of a parent or guardian. There are special laws to protect the employment rights of young workers (Young people over school leaving age and under 18). These concern health and safety, what jobs they can do, when they can work, and how many hours they can work. They apply to young people volunteering as well as working.

## **9. COMMUNICATION**

- 9.1. All employees and volunteers will have access to this policy via the Herefordshire Council website, along with volunteering opportunities and supporting information.

## **10. EVALUATION AND REVIEW**

- 10.1. The provisions of this policy will be subject to regular review and as required by changes in legislation and guidance. Monitoring, information and guidance in relation to implementation of the policy is available through the Growth Division.