

Handbook for Managers of Volunteers

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Introduction

Volunteers have played an important part in the delivery of the Council's services for many years and are greatly valued. Today volunteers fill a variety of roles across Denbighshire including for example those within our library or heritage sites, Denbighshire Archives and in the Countryside. This handbook explains how you can engage volunteers to support our services, what you should do to manage volunteers effectively, and where you can go for support.

Often, those who would benefit most for volunteering face the biggest barriers. Evidence suggests that the following individuals are more likely to gain positive outcomes from volunteering:

- those who are in later years of life
- from lower socio-economic groups
- unemployed
- living with chronic physical health conditions
- those with lower levels of wellbeing
- those experiencing big life transitions such as retirement or bereavement

We must be sure to make any volunteering opportunities accessible for all, and to seek to encourage those particularly from the above groups to participate. Volunteering can bring a new sense of purpose, identity and sense of belonging.

Please note that Volunteering and Work Experience have differences, predominantly the reason behind seeking either volunteering or work experience, and so Managers supporting work experience or work placement requests are advised to read the Work Experience Guidance.

Managing Staff Who Volunteer

Our own employees may wish to volunteer, either with another section of the Council, or with an external charity or body, and should gain management approval before committing. Please ensure you discuss this with your staff member, to be satisfied that the

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volunteering work does not create a conflict of interest, and to be aware of the time commitments this entails. Staff are able to be granted 5 days paid Volunteering Leave per year, but should also endeavour to carry out volunteering activities within their own time where possible. Please see the Time Off Work Policy for more details on Volunteer Leave.

Volunteering leave is granted in line with business needs, and there are certain areas you should discuss with your staff member before they carry out and commit to undertaking volunteering:

- What will they be doing? Some volunteering may be unrelated to the employees paid work, but some might be specifically in order to utilise their professional skills. Both are supported, providing they do not cause a conflict of interest to their jobs with the Council.
- What is the time commitment? Will the employee be undertaking this in the evenings, weekends, their lunch breaks etc. or will they require time off work? Are there training sessions they will need to complete? Agree how much will be in the employees own time, and how much flexibility you are able to grant them in line with business needs and policies.
- Discuss business needs i.e. if the employee is due to volunteer tomorrow but another member of staff becomes ill and needs covering, will they be able to still volunteer? What is the expectation from the charity/body they are volunteering with? Where possible, volunteering should be supported, but a discussion to explore all options in the event of urgent business needs should be held.
- What will they gain from volunteering? Is there a way you can also support their experience or development as well?

We aim to support staff volunteering however there may be times where we are unable to approve an employee undertaking a volunteering activity due to a conflict of interest, or due to business needs such as the required time away from work. Where this is the case, please discuss this with your employee, explaining the reasons clearly. Employees who are unhappy with this decision may refer the matter to their manager's manager for reconsideration, and their decision will be final.

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Volunteers approaching you

You may be approached by a volunteer enquiring about volunteering opportunities or to express an interest, without you having advertised an opportunity. Should this happen, you should consider whether you have a volunteering opportunity you could offer the individual.

If you do not have an opportunity, and are unable to accommodate this, then please let them know by thanking them for their interest, explaining you do not have an opportunity for volunteering at present, and directing them to DVSC who coordinate all volunteering activities within Denbighshire and who may therefore be able to support them in finding suitable volunteering opportunities.

If you are able to accommodate a volunteering request or opportunity, then please read through this guidance, from **Volunteer Selection** onwards. You will need to gather sufficient information from the volunteer to be able to support them in their tasks, and we recommend that you do this by asking them to complete a Volunteer Information Form. It is for you as the manager to arrange for the volunteer to start, and only need to contact HR during this process should you need a DBS check carried out, or for advice.

Developing Ideas for Volunteering

To develop your ideas for volunteering, you first need to draw up a Volunteer Role Description. You should liaise with an appropriate manager at this stage to ensure they are happy with your site/team/project taking on new volunteers, particularly as there may be some expenses payable. Ultimately the decision to engage with any new volunteers should be taken by the relevant manager.

Advertising

The opportunity should be advertised on the Volunteering pages of the Denbighshire County Council website. Each service will be required to submit a web request form to the

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Webteam, allowing for 10 working days for upload of the opportunity. Translations of the advert will be the responsibility of the provider service. Managers may also wish to advertise their opportunity via the DVSC, and should contact DVSC via engagement@dvsc.co.uk to discuss.

Volunteer Selection

It is encouraged that prospective volunteer's complete the Volunteer Information Form, however, where you feel you have gathered enough information from another source (i.e. a face to face discussion or through a volunteer open day) you may not need to ask the volunteer to complete this.

However, please feel free to use the form if you feel this is the most appropriate way for your Service to gather the required information.

Where you have received multiple expressions of interest for a volunteering role, or the role involves working with children or vulnerable adults, you should speak to each volunteer to find out more information. This will be an informal discussion where you can determine their reasons for seeking this volunteering opportunity and will help you to make an informed decision about suitability. This would include asking their reasons and motivation for wanting to volunteer.

As part of this discussion, you should make it clear to the potential volunteer the tasks that you wish them to carry out, as well as agree with them their availability. You need to consider before this discussion, whether or not you have a minimum time requirement for the proposed activity.

Where you consider volunteers to be unsuitable for your volunteering activity, it is best practice to inform them of this, and to signpost them back to DVSC and other relevant voluntary organisations as appropriate.

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Safer recruitment checks

All volunteers will be asked to provide evidence of Right to Work in the UK, and managers will be responsible for checking this document, and storing a copy on their personal folder. A copy of what evidence is suitable is attached to this Handbook.

Some volunteering opportunities will require the volunteer to have an enhanced DBS check i.e. where the role involves working with children or vulnerable adults. In these instances, the manager is responsible for obtaining two references. References should be from a current/last employer or, for those volunteers who are retired, self-employed, unemployed or a student, character references. Please send the volunteers contact details to HR for an enhanced DBS check to be undertaken.

For some roles, references will not be required, however it is the manager's decision whether this is needed. Many volunteers choose to take part in an activity they have no prior experience of e.g. a retired Accountant working in Digital Archives. Managers should consider the nature of the tasks being done, who they may be in contact with either face to face or remotely, and what information a reference will provide, when deciding if the role requires a reference. Please see the below examples as a guide:

- A volunteer will be undertaking dry-stone walling, and will be working within a group under supervision. There is no contact with children or vulnerable adults. The manager decides no references are needed.
- A volunteer will be helping to organise our digital Archives and may have access to some confidential information. The role does not require a DBS, but due to the potential for confidentiality, the manager decides to obtain one reference from their last employer.
- A volunteer will be visiting a school twice a week to help children with their reading. The role therefore requires an enhanced DBS check, and the manager will obtain two references.

Please note it is the manager's responsibility to obtain a reference, and a template is attached to this Handbook.

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Where the role involves manual work a health check may be required. Please ask HR to send out a Health Surveillance, as you would for an employee undertaking this activity.

DBS checks

It is important to assess whether or not a volunteer requires a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. Please read the Council's DBS Policy and Safeguarding Policy for further guidance.

The requirement for a DBS check should be included in the Volunteer Role Description. The requirement is dependent on the actual activity being carried out, and you should reassure volunteers that undertaking a check does not imply any criminality on their part.

In general any volunteer who provides care, instruction or teaching for the same child/group of children 4 times a month or is working in a regulated setting would need a DBS check. Volunteers who provide any kind of personal care (including dealing with financial affairs) for an adult only once (regardless of their 'vulnerability') would also require a DBS check.

All volunteers should have a Volunteer Role Description attached to their activity. The Volunteer Supervisor is responsible for drawing up the Role Description and assessing whether or not a volunteer role requires a DBS check. Volunteers should not commence their activity until a DBS check has been received.

Volunteer Supervisors should ensure they regularly review the Council's Safeguarding policies and procedures. This will ensure that current safeguarding best practice is adhered to.

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Prior to the Volunteer starting

Prior to the volunteer's first day, the Volunteer Supervisor should ensure that all employee's and other volunteers are aware of the fact that a new volunteer is joining the team, and clearly explain what activities they are expected to carry out.

Managers should review their current Risk Assessments and Work Procedures and see if these are still applicable and to determine if any additional measures are required. Where there are any additional measures identified, managers are advised to record those additional measures on their current risk assessment.

In addition to the above, you should consider the following before volunteers commence their tasks.

- Resources and equipment e.g. PPE, specific clothing required for the function, computer etc.
- Who will be their colleagues, arrangements for the first day – meeting with the volunteer, set aside time to give directions to the individual.
- What useful information and documents need to be given to the volunteer e.g. any processes, Health and Safety Policy etc.
- Ensure that they are aware of the responsibility that they have in safeguarding children and adults, and that they are aware of who the Designated Safeguarding Officers.
- Health and Safety – what information / guidelines are relevant to the volunteer?
- Will the employee be expected to undertake any Lone Working, and if so, what Risk Assessment an ongoing support is in place for this?
- Who will be responsible for providing ongoing support during the whole volunteering activity and for allocating tasks?

Induction

The first day for a new volunteer may be as daunting as it is for a new employee, therefore you should make the volunteer feel welcome and comfortable. You should make sure a full

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site/team induction is carried out. Please ensure you introduce the volunteer to employees/other volunteers and make them feel part of the team. Please also ensure that you inform the volunteer that they can refuse demands made of them if they consider them unrealistic, beyond the scope of their role or if they feel they do not have the appropriate skills to carry them out.

You may decide to provide an ID badge for the volunteer, especially if they will have contact with external people. If you would like an ID badge creating and do not have resources to do this within your own Service/building, please send the details to HR for an ID badge to be printed.

Volunteers will be given access to Denbighshire County Council's online e-Learning modules. These are not mandatory, although there may be some you would like them to undertake depending on the role e.g. the Safeguarding module for roles involving the public. Please ask the volunteer to let Human Resources know (01824 706200 or hrdirect@denbighshire.gov.uk) if they'd like access to these modules, and the HR team will provide login details.

Volunteer Personal Folder

You should also maintain a personal folder for each volunteer. The induction is an ideal time to begin work on this folder. The folder should contain their contact details, plus details of an emergency contact. The folder should also contain a copy of the Volunteer Role Description, correspondence from referees as well as notes from any supervision sessions you undertake.

Day to Day Supervision of Volunteers

All volunteers will receive appropriate support and supervision in their activity. The level of supervision will match the nature of the role and the experience of the volunteer. All volunteers will have a nominated Volunteer Supervisor, someone they can have regular access to if problems arise or when help or support is needed.

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Once an induction has taken place, and the volunteer has commenced their activity, be sure to:

- Conduct regular, informal, 'supervision' sessions with your volunteers
- Offer relevant training
- Deal with any issues/complaints promptly

It is also best practice to agree in advance with the volunteer, any times when they will not be available, so that you can consider any continuity of service requirements. Remember, volunteers do not need to adhere to the Council's Annual Leave policy. However, volunteers should inform you if they are going to be unavailable for their task for any length of time. If you become overly concerned about the irregular attendance of a volunteer, then please arrange to discuss this with them, and try and agree a solution. If the volunteer is unable to guarantee their regular attendance, then you may wish to consider terminating their involvement with the service.

The contribution of volunteers is invaluable to the provision of our services, and therefore it is imperative that we show our thanks on a regular basis. Remember, they provide their time and efforts free of charge, and it can often be easy to overlook their role. Simply saying 'Thank You' can make a big difference to a volunteer and can help with volunteer retention.

Duty of Care

The Council carries a duty of care to all DCC volunteers and staff, as well as any service users/citizens in receipt of our services. Therefore, where a Council Service engages with an external body and asks them to provide volunteering support on the Council's behalf, the Manager has a responsibility to ensure that the tasks will still be carried out in a safe manner. This includes ensuring the appropriate safeguarding checks are in place (reference, DBS), risk assessments are carried out accordingly, PPE provided where appropriate, and any relevant training or induction is supplied. It is best practice to also ensure there is ongoing support available to the volunteer throughout their activities. This is for the safety of both the volunteer and any service users/citizens, as well as creating a

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positive volunteering experience. It may be determined that the Council is best placed to provide these checks, in which case the external body may 'pass over' the details of the volunteer for the Council to manage.

Dealing with Complaints and Volunteer Problems

Although the majority of volunteers find their experience rewarding, there may be occasions when problems occur. Most issues can be resolved quickly through an informal discussion with the volunteer. However, sometimes a more formal approach is needed. If you find yourself in this position, you should consider carefully how the situation can be resolved. For example, you may find it necessary to consider ending the activity. If in doubt, seek advice from your line manager.

Complaints about Volunteers

The complaint may arise for a number of reasons, and could be made by a service user, another volunteer or an employee. If a complaint is made against a volunteer you should endeavour to investigate the causes of the complaint as promptly as possible. It may be possible to resolve the issue informally through discussion with the volunteer. Try to agree what changes need to be made, and a timescale for when you would expect the changes to be in place.

If it is not possible to resolve the issue via an informal discussion, you should invite the volunteer to a formal meeting to discuss the issues with you and your line manager. This meeting should attempt to resolve any concerns. If this still fails to resolve the issue, then you may need to consider bringing the activity to an end.

Please also remember that volunteers are not paid employees, therefore the Council's code of conduct does not apply and you should not attempt to follow the Council's disciplinary or grievance procedures.

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Complaints by Volunteers

Volunteers may themselves have a complaint, for example about other volunteers, employee, service users/customers, or general complaints about the task they are carrying out. Volunteers should feel able to make a complaint, and you should reassure them that everything they say will be treated in confidence, and will have no impact on the continuation of their activity.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve issues as soon as possible. An informal discussion or meeting may well resolve any concerns that exist. You should always try to resolve complaints at as low a level as possible. Volunteers may feel the need to take notes during any meetings, and this is perfectly normal so you should feel free to take notes yourself.

Whatever the complaint, it should be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Complaints procedure and not the Council's Grievance Procedure for employees.

Equality and diversity

The Council has a responsibility to look after volunteers' wellbeing, and it is important for volunteer morale, that volunteers feel that they are treated fairly; therefore, exercising good practice is a clear way to ensure that we are fulfilling our duties as an organisation.

When producing a role description, or recruiting to a volunteer role, it is important that you make it clear that you do not intend to create a contractual relationship with a volunteer. However, as a matter of respect and dignity, volunteers deserve to be treated fairly and inclusively wherever reasonable.

Volunteers should be provided with a copy of the Council's Handbook and Code of Conduct for Volunteers during their induction. This handbook outlines the standards expected in terms of conduct and behaviour.

Please be aware that whilst volunteers are not employees, they will be engaged in delivering a service on the Council's behalf. Therefore, their actions will impact on the Council and we will be held legally responsible if a volunteer behaves unlawfully or

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inappropriately whilst carrying out volunteering activities. This is true, even if you are not aware of the conduct and you did not approve it. Volunteers are expected to act in accordance with equality legislation and to ensure they do not discriminate against service users, employees or other volunteers.

Insurance

Volunteers are covered under the Council's insurance policies as the volunteer is carrying out work for and under the guidance of the Council.

You must complete all relevant health and safety checks prior to allowing volunteers to undertake their tasks. This may include carrying out risk assessments and providing training; such as manual handling to mitigate any risk.

If driving is a part of the volunteer role or if motoring expenses are to be claimed you should ensure that you have checked the driving documents of the volunteer prior to the task commencing. Check for:

- Valid MOT certificate
- Current insurance. Volunteers should inform their insurance company that they will be driving in a voluntary role. Some insurers may see this as 'Business' and require a change in premium
- Evidence of current Road Tax

Expenses

Volunteers are not employee's and therefore receive NO remuneration for the activity they carry out. However, volunteers should not be 'out of pocket' for carrying out activities for the Council. The Council will pay reasonable out of pocket expenses for anybody who chooses to volunteer with us, such as mileage if required to drive. Any pre agreed expenses can be paid via the "Non Denbighshire Staff Claim Form", which you can get from Customer Services or Payroll. This form needs to be completed, authorised and

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emailed over to APEnquiries@denbighshire.gov.uk. Volunteers should provide bank details at the time of making the claim so that we are able to make BACS payments. If a volunteers also requires a remittance advice then they would also need to provide an email address so that an email of the copy of the remittance advice can be sent to them.

You should discuss any necessity to claim expenses during the initial discussion with the volunteer.

Volunteers claiming benefits

Unemployed volunteers are entitled to volunteer for the Council whilst claiming benefits. Unemployed volunteers claiming Job Seekers Allowance or Universal Credit have the following obligations:

- Continue to actively seek employment
- Attend interviews with 48 hours' notice
- Start work within one week

Unemployed volunteers claiming benefits are able to seek support and information from DWP about volunteering whilst claiming. If a volunteer is claiming incapacity benefit, it is their responsibility to ensure they are not breaking any rules by volunteering.

Working Denbighshire

Some volunteers may seek the opportunity to volunteer in order to develop employability skills, to start their career journey. Volunteers who live in the Denbighshire County and are either unemployed, or employed on a low income, should be signposted to Working Denbighshire, who may be able to provide support with training and gaining long term employment.

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Information Governance

Volunteers are obliged to comply with the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts. Volunteer Supervisors should alert volunteers to their responsibilities during induction ensuring that volunteers fully understand this and/or undertake appropriate training where required.

Moving On

As with employees there are numerous reasons why a volunteer may cease their involvement with the Council. They may choose to leave or indeed you may choose to end their activity.

If a volunteer chooses to leave they are not obliged to provide you with any period of notice. You should ask volunteers to let you know as soon as they are able to of their decision to leave; and maintaining a good relationship with your volunteers will help with this. Before the volunteer leaves, it is good practice to hold a meeting with them to discuss how their activity progressed, and whether they have any suggestions to help us improve our engagement with volunteers in the future.

Alternatively, you may decide to end your involvement with the volunteer. There are two main reasons why you may want to do this:

- The activity has a specific end date.
- The volunteer is no longer suitable for the role.

If the activity has a specific end date or is drawing to an end you should let the volunteer know as soon as possible, and assist them in trying to find a new activity. If you are unable to identify any other suitable activities, please signpost the volunteer to DVSC (Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council). Please be sure to thank the volunteer for the contribution they have made to the service.

If you consider that the volunteer is no longer suitable for the activity, there is no obligation to provide any notice to the volunteer, particularly if there is a code of conduct issue.

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However, it is best practice to give the volunteer at least 5 days' notice of the termination of their activity. Again, you should ensure that the relationship ends on a positive note, by thanking the volunteer for the contribution they have made.

It is the manager's responsibility to ensure that any resources provided to the volunteer during their time with us, are recovered at the end of the volunteering relationship. This could include ID badges, mobile telephones, PPE etc. It is good practice to convene an exit meeting, to thank the volunteer for their time, ask for feedback on their volunteering experience, and to recover any outstanding items.

Volunteers who are leaving the organisation who have made a regular commitment to it should be offered a reference and/or statement of their achievements. Also, ensure that their services are properly appreciated.

We encourage managers to seek feedback from volunteers, to ensure we are providing a meaningful experience, and identify any areas we could improve in. A short Survey Monkey questionnaire has been developed to gather feedback easily and quickly. A copy of the link is here, please simply copy and paste into any messages you send regarding this: [\[insert link text\]](#)

Services will have their own arrangements with their volunteers, and managers may choose to send this link via email, text, WhatsApp etc. HR will collate the feedback received and can provide this data on a monthly basis.