

Volunteer Handbook and Code of Conduct

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Welcome

Welcome to Denbighshire County Council, we greatly appreciate your assistance in volunteering with us.

Please note that this guidance should not be seen as legally binding, nor is it intended to create a contractual relationship with our volunteers.

When you start with Denbighshire County Council, you'll be given a named point of contact (your Volunteer Supervisor), so if you need to know anything that isn't covered in this guide, please do not hesitate to ask them.

Induction

There are a few things that need to be carried out before you can start your activity with us.

If your activity requires a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check you will need to complete the relevant paperwork and receive clearance before you can commence your activity. Your Volunteer Supervisor will make it clear if you require DBS clearance for your activity. This clearance is usually only required in certain circumstances and with particular groups (such as frequent contact with children or vulnerable adults).

We will need to confirm your identity and your Right to Work in the UK; this is regardless of whether or not you are undergoing a DBS check. You should show your Volunteer Supervisor an original document, such as a passport.

For some roles, we may need to request a reference. Your Volunteer Supervisor will let you know if this is needed. You may be asked to provide details of one referee or two referees. Where a DBS check is needed, we will ask for two referees. This is usually a previous employer or voluntary body, but it can be anybody in a position of trust such as a school teacher or professional.

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Your Volunteer Supervisor will then carry out an induction with you. This will ensure you're aware of site specific issues such as health and safety, where the toilets are, and where you can get a cup of tea! You will also be supported to complete any required training.

Training

Where there is a need for training to enable you to carry out your activity, we will endeavour to provide this. We are only able to offer training directly relevant to your volunteering role and not as a reward or reimbursement for your activity. All our training is given freely and there is no requirement for you to stay with us for a specific length of time after receiving this training, although we hope you will stay with us for as long as you are able. If you believe you have specific training need, please speak to your Volunteer Supervisor.

All volunteers are able to access the online e-learning modules we have available for staff. These are not mandatory for your role, but if you would like to access these, please contact Human Resources on 01824 706200 or hrdirect@denbighshire.gov.uk for a login account to be created for you.

Insurance

You will be covered under the Council's insurance policies as you are carrying out work for and under the guidance of the Council.

If driving is a part of the role or if motoring expenses are to be claimed, your Volunteer Supervisor will ask to check your driving documents prior to the task commencing. This could include:

- 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

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- Evidence of current Road Tax

Expenses

As a volunteer, you will not receive any remuneration for the activity you carry out. However, you 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. Your Volunteer Supervisor will provide you with details on what you are eligible to claim for, and will provide a claim form in this instance, which you should complete and send back to your Volunteer Supervisor along with your bank details so that the Council can make BACS payments. If you also require a remittance advice then please also provide an email address so that an email with a copy of the remittance advice can be sent.

Supervision

You will always have a named 'Volunteer Supervisor' who will be your first point of contact whilst carrying out your activity. Your Supervisor will oversee any activity you carry out, as well as being on hand to deal with any queries or issues you may encounter during your time with us.

Your Volunteer Supervisor will arrange regular 'one-to-one' sessions with you. This is an informal opportunity to discuss your activity, pick up any latest news and make any suggestions and provide feedback.

You can refuse demands made of you if you consider them unrealistic, beyond the scope of your role or if you feel you do not have the appropriate skills to carry them out.

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Attendance

As a volunteer, there is no obligation to attend your activity. However, your activity is very important to us and to our residents/citizens and we will discuss with you at Induction the amount of time you are able to provide us with on a regular basis. If you are unable to attend for any reason, please try to let your Volunteer Supervisor know as soon as possible.

Ending your activity

If you wish to end your volunteering activity with us, you can do so at any time. However, we would ask that you let us know as soon as possible of your intention to leave. This will make it easier for us to recruit a new volunteer if required.

Your volunteering activity may be considered as a time-limited project. In other words, it will be made clear if we expect your activity to finish by a particular date. If this is the case, you will be alerted to this by your Volunteer Supervisor during your Induction.

When you finish your activity with us, you will be asked to return any items or equipment we have given you to carry out the activity, and we request that you do this as soon as possible.

Volunteers who are leaving Denbighshire County Council will be sent a link for feedback on the volunteering experience. This will be a short, confidential online survey that can be done on a smart phone. We will also be able to provide a reference if requested by a new employer or voluntary body.

Working Denbighshire

Some of our volunteers seek this activity in order to develop their employability skills or knowledge in an area they are looking to work in. If you live in the Denbighshire County and are either unemployed, or employed on a low income, you may be able to receive

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support from Working Denbighshire, who may be able to provide training and support with gaining long term employment.

Guidance on conduct

When carrying out your activity with us, we would ask you to behave appropriately. The Council has specific policies and procedures relating to paid employees that sets out their expected standard of behaviour and conduct. Although these policies and procedures may not always apply to you, it is important that you are aware of them and in principle act in a similar fashion. Your Volunteer Supervisor will be able to provide more information. The following points highlight some of the key issues relevant to you.

Gifts and Boundaries

It is important to maintain boundaries when your volunteering activity brings you into contact with members of the public, residents, customers etc. As you get to know someone, you may start to develop a personal relationship or friendship that continues outside the remit of your volunteering activity. This could potentially place you in a vulnerable position, and so in order to protect yourself, we advise all volunteers to speak to your Volunteer Supervisor about any relationships that are forming where you feel this is outside your remit as a volunteer. We do not wish to prevent a friendship forming, however we do want to ensure you are not placed in a vulnerable situation and so discussing this with your Supervisor will help to ensure you are safe.

As part of maintaining boundaries, we advise that volunteers do not accept any gifts from others, in order to maintain a clear distinction between your volunteering activity, and a friendship.

If you feel uncomfortable at any time in what a customer/resident/member of the public is asking of you, or if you have received an unexpected gift and are unsure of what to do, please discuss this with your Volunteer Supervisor straight away.

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Political issues and awareness for volunteers

The Council is a political body. We are led by the decisions of our elected councillors, who represent the electoral divisions in which we all live. As a consequence, we must all be seen to be as neutral and non-partisan as we can be during our activities with the Council.

Therefore, you must not use your volunteering activity to further any political aims; to try to influence the Council's decision-making process, particularly in relation to your own activity or role (other than in an official consultation process); or use your position to influence elected members.

The reputation of the Council is also important to maintain. We must be as transparent as we can be, therefore please do not accept gifts from members of the public for your activities.

Health and safety

Please remember that your safety is our number one priority, and our employees take their duty of care towards you seriously and act to ensure you are not in a position of danger. Your Supervisor will provide you with a Health and Safety briefing as well as any required PPE prior to undertaking any activities.

Please be sure to dress appropriately for your activity, this includes the use of any protective equipment (PPE) you may have been issued with.

Equality and diversity

Denbighshire County Council welcomes people from all sections of the community regardless of race, gender, disability, age, nationality, sexual orientation or religious belief. Please be respectful to all our service users, employees, and other volunteers. There is an expectation that all our volunteers will adhere to the Council's equality practices, ensuring

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that their own conduct when carrying out volunteering tasks does not discriminate against others or breach equality legislation.

Use of information technology

The majority of volunteers will not require access to any of the Council's computer systems. However, if IT access is required as a part of your role, this will be made clear during your induction. You are more than welcome to make use of the public IT facilities in our libraries and other areas.

Alcohol & drugs

Denbighshire County Council has a zero tolerance approach to drugs and alcohol. Our Alcohol and Substance Misuse policy is applicable to you as a volunteer. As an overview, this prohibits consuming alcohol during volunteering activities, as well as directly before you are due to start. You must not be under the influence of alcohol whilst undertaking activities. All our HR and staffing policies can be found on the website.

Confidentiality & media

During the course of your activity you may become aware of confidential matters relating to employees, other volunteers or members of the public. We ask that you respect the confidentiality of all information and do not disclose this information to third parties. This also includes sharing confidential information on personal social media accounts, please be mindful to protect the information of others, and do not disclose any confidential information relating to either the council, other staff/volunteers, or members of the public.

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Smoking

Smoking is prohibited in all our buildings and vehicles, as well as during the undertaking of duties/activities. Please do not smoke (including the use of e-cigarettes and 'vaping') whilst you are undertaking your volunteering activity, and whilst on Denbighshire premises.

Safeguarding

We have a duty to protect the most vulnerable in our community and to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all who use our services. If, in the course of your activity, you become concerned about the wellbeing of any service user, you should alert your Volunteer Supervisor or another employee immediately.

All employees within the Council are trained to deal with these situations and will be able to help. Please do not try and resolve any situation yourself as, even with the best of intentions, you may make yourself vulnerable to allegations of impropriety.

Some of our volunteers who come into regular contact with vulnerable service users (such as children and vulnerable adults) will be asked to undertake a DBS check. If your activity requires a DBS check, you will be informed by your Volunteer Supervisor at the earliest opportunity.

For roles requiring a DBS check, we will not be able to start your volunteering activity until this certificate is received.

Complaints

Complaints by and regarding volunteers are very rare. However, from time to time problems can occur and it is only wise that we have a system on how to deal with them. It is in all of our interests to resolve complaints as quickly and fairly as possible.

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If you have an informal complaint, please speak with your Volunteer Supervisor in the first instance. Both of you should try and agree a plan and timescale for resolving the complaint. If you are uncomfortable in speaking with your Volunteer Supervisor, then you should request to speak to their line manager.

If you wish to raise a formal complaint, you can do so via the Councils complaints procedure, details of which are on the website at www.denbighshire.gov.uk

If a complaint is made about you, your Volunteer Supervisor may call you into an informal meeting and your Volunteers Supervisors Line Manager may also be present.

During this meeting you will likely discuss any resolution that may be possible and a timescale for implementing any changes. The issue will usually be resolved at this point and no further action will need to be taken. However, occasionally, additional action may need to be taken that could include training or moving to a different activity. In some circumstances it may be necessary to ask you to stop your activity, e.g. if frequent 'no shows' mean we cannot rely on you.

In the extremely unlikely event of a serious incident such as physical violence or discriminatory behaviour you will be asked to stop your activity immediately. Your Volunteer Supervisor will explain why this has happened and point out why your behaviour was unreasonable. In this instance you may be asked to leave with immediate effect.

Conclusion

We all hope that your time spent volunteering with us will be enjoyable. Our volunteers tell us that they take many positives from their activities and we hope you will as well. Your time is very much valued by all of us at the Council and we thank you for being a part of our services. Please enjoy your experience and do not hesitate to contact your Volunteer Supervisor for support.