

Volunteering Code of Practice



**‘Let’s do it smarter’
Worcestershire Compact**



INTRODUCTION

The Worcestershire Compact is a commitment to improve relationships between public and voluntary and community sector organisations, with a mutual objective of delivering high quality, good value services and support to the local community. The Compact has been signed up to by members of the Worcestershire Partnership.

This Code of Practice accompanies the general principles of partnership working as stated in the Worcestershire Compact. It is the responsibility of all partner agencies to develop and apply their own volunteering arrangements in accordance with these general principles of good practice.

However it should be recognised that the guidelines for those arrangements can only be applied in line with the size and available resources of each partner agency. For a number of organisations, particularly smaller community groups who are entirely run by volunteers some of the areas in this code will appear over bureaucratic. This does not mean that the principles don't apply, just that the application needs to be tackled in a different way.

Volunteer Centres and Volunteer Development Agencies will be able to offer support and guidance to groups seeking to work towards improving certain areas of their work with volunteers.

DEFINITION¹

Volunteering: 'Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, the environment, or individuals outside one's immediate family and friends. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain.'

¹ Taken from the 'Worcestershire Volunteering Strategy', June 2006

UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE²

Principle 1

Guidelines for recruitment and management of volunteers

When seeking to involve volunteers the following guidelines will be considered:

- Develop a Volunteer Policies and Induction Pack
- Ensure a tight recruitment process when volunteers will work with vulnerable adults, children and/or young people; i.e. take up references, interview (preferably) with two people and take up enhanced Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks
- Offer a start date without unnecessary delay
- Give a period of induction
- Treat personal information confidentially
- Give guidance on health and safety issues, adequate protection from risk and insurance arrangements
- Have an awareness of roles and work situations deemed inappropriate for volunteers
- Recognise time needs to be set aside for updating skills and/or training sessions
- Set time aside of staff to manage the volunteering role and offer individual support
- Consult with volunteers on organisational changes and the impact on their contribution
- Provide references when volunteers want to move on to another organisation

Principle 2

Guidelines for ensuring properly resourced volunteering activity

- When applying for funds, wherever possible, build in resources for recruitment, management, volunteer expenses and other costs to reduce barriers to volunteering and to value volunteers
- Offer adequate reimbursement of expenses and be clear about what can be reimbursed and at what level
- Create a culture of claiming expenses; it will include those who do need to claim and could encourage those who don't want to claim to donate back

² When applying any of the guidelines that might touch on the law, it is advisable to use the publication 'Volunteers and the Law' by Mark Restall, Volunteering England, June 2005 when in doubt. You can download this for free from www.volunteering.org.uk

- Recognise that volunteering is freely given but not cost free. Resources, development and promotion for volunteers may incur costs

Principle 3

Guidelines and tips for valuing the role of volunteers

1. Acknowledge

- Diversity in people; specific needs need specific approaches, be flexible, listen
- Their career paths; provide references, offer training, enforce short term placements, create short term opportunities, offer support to move on
- Experiences, to avoid unnecessary training, support and procedures
- Long term volunteers; by using them in training others, (peer-to-peer) support and induction
- Short term and one-off volunteers; by recognising their input and appreciate their efforts
- Paid staff might feel threatened in their job by volunteers and need reassuring
- Distinctiveness of volunteering; voluntary activity should never be a substitute for paid work
- That volunteering can help tackle social exclusion through individual improving their skills and employability, making a contribution to society. It can also bring people together from different backgrounds.

2. Include

- Work to put in place equalities schemes or other means to effectively remove unfair discrimination
- Review opportunities and adapt to individuals
- Be prepared to do things differently
- Ensure there is enough to do

3. Promote

- Use a variety of marketing tools,
- Target different groups in different ways
- Use Volunteer Centres
- Approach others to learn from their approach in volunteer recruitment
- Make the opportunity attractive and different from work
- Champion volunteers and volunteering
- Make visible the value of volunteers' contributions, for example in publications
- Demonstrate that the contribution of volunteers is recognised as having more than economic value

4. Back up

Develop formal volunteer procedures in line with the size and resources available, for example:

- Volunteer Handbook / Charter
- Volunteer Role description
- Expectation questionnaire
- Volunteering Policy and other organisational policies (Health & Safety, Child Protection, Equal Opportunities, etc)
- Volunteer Agreement³, setting out 'expectations' (as opposed to 'commitments') on either side, but avoiding it becoming a contractual relationship
- Interview, induction, support structures, review progress, exit interview / questionnaire
- Negative CRB Procedures
- Research good practice in doing so
- Work towards recognized Quality Standards
- Keep good data on volunteering

5. Fund

- Provide realistic (travel) expenses
- Create a culture of claiming expenses to include those volunteers who do need to claim and encourage those who don't want to claim to donate back
- Attract funding to fund volunteer expenses and support

6. Inform

- Communicate with personal approach
- Adapt information provision to needs
- Provide newsletters, briefings, memos

7. Involve

- At committee level
- In decision making
- In team activities
- Consult and ask for feedback
- Value their opinion

³ Please refer to the publication 'Volunteers and the Law' when writing an agreement.

8. Protect

- Hand out a 'rights and responsibilities' leaflet
- Set clear boundaries
- Don't replace a paid post / tasks by a volunteer
- Be aware of your legal responsibilities
- Carry out CRB checks to protect volunteer and client
- Carry out risk assessment on placement, and if appropriate client

9. Support

- Via support meetings, social events, support calls
- Provide mentoring /supervision
- Identify training needs and offer training
- Provide transport if needed

10. Thank

- Tell volunteers how their volunteering has benefited the organisation or group/ individual they are volunteering for
- Formal via recognition scheme, certificates
- Informal via (birthday) cards, saying thank you and being a good host
- Celebrate volunteering via supporting national events

Principle 4

Guidelines to overcome barriers to volunteering

'Be flexible, supportive, understanding, considerate and willing to adapt'

Individual organisations

- Carry out a risk assessment of volunteer placement and when appropriate of client circumstances for a good match
- Recognise that volunteering should offer something that interests people, is worthwhile and gives a feeling of satisfaction or fulfilment
- Be proactive in promotion of volunteering – go out and talk to people – listen to what their barriers are and solutions to them
- Offer a sympathetic recruitment process; talk and listen to identify strengths and difficulties without assumptions

- Ensure that adequate and individual support is available, train and raise awareness amongst staff of different needs of volunteers and have a fall back position ready if a volunteer experiences a difficult period in their personal life
- Be prepared to do things differently to how you have always done it; i.e. investigate alternative ways of volunteering – adapted roles, home volunteering, out-of-hours volunteering
- Be prepared and informed to signpost a volunteer to an alternative opportunity outside the organisation if this is more beneficial to the volunteer
- Be prepared to offer high support levels and recognise unexpected side benefits from working with a diverse range of people
- Be flexible regarding time available (when possible), transport and building access
- Acknowledge the limitations of the organisation in the amount of volunteers it can properly manage

In partnership – by working together to achieve more

- Communicate, put 'addressing diversity' on the agenda and learn from each other
- Refer only those people to a volunteering opportunity or Volunteer Centre who are 'willing and ready' for volunteering, or check if a 'supported volunteer scheme' or specialist staff member is in place
- Challenge volunteer-involving organisations to offer volunteering opportunities that match volunteers' motivation and abilities and that are diverse and inclusive

Volunteer Centres

- Create a model of assessment for all organisations to use
- Ensure good and increased knowledge of organisations which have volunteer placements and share this knowledge when possible
- Work to link different / complimentary organisations to network, share and learn
- Aim to establish a good coverage of outreach work
- Address diversity through promotion, awareness raising, facilitation of discussion, and campaigning

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