

Recruiting and Managing Volunteers

Corporate Guidance

Amended for use by the
Outdoor Education Service

May 2013

Dorset County Council



1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to outline the relationship between Dorset County Council and its volunteers.

Volunteers have been an integral part of the County Council's services in various ways over many years, particularly in the areas of education, the environment and adult social care. Recent years have seen an increased focus on voluntary effort as some communities take on more responsibility for designing, developing and delivering local services.

Volunteering creates an opportunity for individuals to contribute to their local community, to be valued and recognised for their efforts and to learn new skills. Volunteers have a vital part to play in fostering a sense of local pride and involvement. In return, using volunteers enables the County Council to take advantage of the local knowledge and enthusiasm volunteers have for their community whilst continuing to provide and enhance services to local people.

2. The Aims of this document

This document provides a basic framework for the activities and expectations of both the County Council and its volunteers to ensure the relationship is positive for both parties. Like all guidelines, its overall aim is to ensure uniformity of process and good practice across all services.

The County Council supports the Government's Code of Good Practice on Volunteering, as set out in the County Council's Compact Agreement. Further information can be found on the Dorset for You website at <http://www.dorsetforyou.com>

3. Vision and Aims of Dorset County Council

The County Council's mission statement is "enabling communities in Dorset to thrive, now and in the future".

In order to deliver this vision, the County Council will:

- Help to build strong communities for all;
- Protect and enrich the health and well-being of Dorset's most vulnerable adults;
- Support and encourage Dorset's children and young people to reach their full potential and protect those who are most vulnerable;
- Safeguard and enhance Dorset's unique environment and support our local economy;
- Provide innovative and value for money services.

4. The relationship between volunteers and employees

Working in partnership with volunteers enables the County Council to make services and resources accessible and available to users in ways which could not be achieved without this support. Volunteers add value to County Council by improving the range of services available. Volunteers complement the paid workforce but are not a substitute for employees and should not be asked to undertake work which would otherwise be paid (by covering sickness absence or staff vacancies for example). The work of volunteers should focus on activities which enhance the services that are provided within public resources.

5. Recruitment and selection of volunteers

The County Council aims to recruit volunteers from all sections of the local community and with a range of skills, life experiences and knowledge. We welcome volunteers of all ages.

Before determining that particular activities can be performed by volunteers, the activity should be subject to an appropriate level of risk assessment. Different services will present different risks, and there may be some that the County Council is more comfortable with transferring delivery of than others, or for certain activities greater levels of control may be appropriate.

All prospective volunteers should be asked to:

1. Complete an expression of interest/application form
2. Take part in an informal interview to discuss reasons for wanting to volunteer, the skills and experience they can contribute and what they hope to achieve in return.
3. Read, agree the contents of this policy and sign it to confirm they've done so
4. Provide details for 2 referees
5. Complete a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, if required'
6. Be/become registered with the Independent Safeguarding Authority if working in a regulated activity (from July 2010) or controlled activity (from 2015)
7. Complete a 'Driver Risk Assessment Form - Volunteer Drivers', if the role involves 'on the job' driving
8. Agree an appropriate commitment
9. Confirm acceptance and agree a start date

The relevant Officer/Manager should assess the initial expression of interest/application form.

The County Council retains the right to reject any volunteers who are deemed inappropriate for the task, or to suggest alternative placements.

6. Training, induction, support and performance

Providing appropriate induction and training will help equip the volunteer with the tools they'll need to champion the County Council and deliver a high quality service. Volunteers should be given a role description outlining their role and areas of work to be undertaken, the skills and experience required to perform this role as well as training that is relevant and appropriate to the role. The Council owes the same duty of care to its volunteers as it does to its own employees.

All volunteers will be required to disclose criminal convictions, including spent convictions. This will not automatically disqualify an application. A DBS check is a standard requirement for all volunteers working directly with children and vulnerable people.

New volunteers should be invited to attend DCC's corporate induction and provided with an induction to the relevant directorate/service if appropriate.

Volunteers should have access to effective supervision and any necessary support mechanisms, which may include learning and development opportunities. The contact point within the Council should be made clear, in the event that any particular issues need to be declared or escalated. Where appropriate, group support meetings should be arranged.

Appraisals can be requested by either the volunteer or the relevant service in order to review the working arrangements, role description, job satisfaction, achievements and areas for further training and improvement. Performance monitoring arrangements should be established and reviewed that are deemed commensurate with the level of risk that the activities present (for instance, some activities may present higher levels of financial, health and safety or reputational risk).

7. Promoting diversity

The County Council is committed to ensuring that the recruitment and treatment of its volunteers is carried out without prejudice regarding gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, colour, nationality or other ethnic or national origin, age, disability, social class, religion or belief or criminal background. Volunteers must adhere to this commitment.

8. Expenses

Volunteers should be offered reimbursement of reasonable expenses (with receipts). Any expenses must be agreed with the volunteer's line manager in advance.

Consideration should be given to the payment of legitimate expenses, such as the cost of light refreshments, child care or care of dependents in the course of the volunteering.

9. Insurance

Individual volunteers will be indemnified against third party claims under the County Council's Public Liability Policy while volunteering for the County Council *if* the volunteers are considered to be 'under the supervision and control' of DCC and undertaking business that would otherwise be undertaken by Council staff.

The greater the level of supervision, the more likely it is that volunteers would be deemed to be covered by the Council's insurance arrangements in the event of a challenge. This means that all volunteers should:

- Have clear guidelines on what activities they are expected to undertake and the manner in which they should be undertaken.
- Be provided with appropriate and sufficient training in undertaking the relevant activities/tasks.
- Be provided with the relevant equipment and materials.
- Have a system of periodic monitoring in place, with relevant records of monitoring maintained.
- Be provided with relevant Health and Safety advice/training and equipment (i.e. personal protective equipment such as fluorescent jackets).
- Have a support officer or team in place that can assist them in terms of advice on issues/difficulties encountered.

All officers who manage volunteers are required to satisfy themselves that appropriate supervision and 'control' arrangements are in place.

The County Council's insurance arrangements indemnify individual volunteers. Where services are being provided by voluntary organisations or Parish and Town Councils, those organisations should maintain insurance cover to protect the volunteers.

Any significant change to service delivery that may result in a greater use of volunteers should be declared to the Insurance Team.

10. Health and safety

The County Council must not place volunteers in situations that will put their health and safety, or that of others, at risk. An introduction to Health and Safety should form part of the induction provided by the relevant service. Appropriate personal protective equipment for the identified role should be provided.

Volunteers must disclose any information which relates to their own health and safety, and take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others. Volunteer managers must ensure that volunteers do not undertake any activity which presents a risk to their health. Volunteers must not operate tools or equipment where they have not been trained in their use, or are professionally qualified to use it. Where specialist equipment is being used, evidence of relevant training/qualifications must be provided and a copy kept by the County Council officer.

A risk assessment for volunteer activities should be maintained that is commensurate with the level of risk involved in the activities undertaken.

11. Confidentiality

The County Council must regard all volunteers' personal data as confidential and should not share it with external agencies without prior consent. Equally, volunteers must treat any official or personal information gained during their work as a volunteer as confidential.

12. Grievances and complaints

Any problems arising from either side should be resolved through informal discussion. If the issues prove to be irreconcilable, either side has the option to terminate the arrangement.

Recipients of County Council services have the right to expect high standards of service delivery and professionalism in all their dealings with the Council. Volunteers may no longer be offered duties where conduct or performance falls below that required.

13. References for volunteers

A standard reference may be provided for a volunteer if required, to help with skills and employment. This would be conditional on a volunteer working to a satisfactory standard whilst volunteering for the County Council and is at the discretion of the volunteer manager.

14. Roles and expectations

It is important to set clear guidelines and expectations in order that the needs of the volunteer and the needs of the service are both met.

Volunteers for any County Council service should be encouraged to expect:

- A supportive, welcoming and positive environment that encourages them to get the most out of volunteering
- An induction training programme and opportunities to undertake appropriate training
- Relevant and up to date information and advice
- Adequate public liability insurance whilst undertaking voluntary work approved and authorised by us
- To be treated fairly regardless of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, colour, nationality or other ethnic or national origin, age, disability, social class, religion or belief or criminal background.
- A reference, in accordance with paragraph 13 above.

In return we should ask volunteers:

- To be a positive representative of the County Council
- To support and champion its aims and its values
- To adhere to their role, responsibilities and commitment, as agreed
- To follow any procedures and standards explained by their manager, including those relating to health and safety and equal opportunities/diversity;
- To escalate any issues of concern to the County Council.

