

## Employee Volunteering Scheme – How does it work?

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Scheme is designed to encourage and support those employees who wish, either on an individual basis or as a group, to make a real difference to people's lives within the City through volunteering. The scheme is open to those who are already volunteering independently as well as those who would like to start doing voluntary work.
- 1.2 Although the Scheme can be used as a way to help employees meet their personal development needs, this is not its primary purpose and so it is open to all contracted employees who have completed their probationary period and are not subject to review under the Disciplinary Procedure. School-based employees will only be able to participate if their Governing Body adopts the Policy.

### 2 What Volunteering is eligible under the Scheme

- 2.1 Volunteering can be undertaken with a registered charity, formally constituted voluntary or community organisation or public sector body (other than the council) e.g. NHS that is working within the City and provides direct benefits to residents within the Brighton & Hove area.
- 2.2 The community or voluntary organisations' memorandum and articles should support the council's corporate priorities and be in line with the council's policies on equality, human rights and community cohesion.
- 2.3 Volunteering associated with local campaigning activity or with politically associated organisations that could directly conflict with the aims of the council or the political neutrality of council staff is excluded.
- 2.4 Similarly volunteering that simply is solely for the personal benefit of the volunteer for example personal hobbies or any activity associated with membership of a professional body that constitutes continuous professional development is also not covered by this scheme.

### 3 Where to find out about volunteering activities

- 3.1 There are thousands of volunteering opportunities within the City. Activities include:
  - community care work
  - sport activities
  - environmental work and conservation projects
  - fundraising or other work for community projects or charities
  - giving advice
  - the administration of public events.

- 3.2 Employees can find out what is available locally by contacting the Brighton & Hove Volunteer Centre at [www.bh-impetus.org/volunteer\\_centre](http://www.bh-impetus.org/volunteer_centre) or telephone: (01273) 737888. There is also an on-line list of volunteering opportunities run by Community Base ([www.communitybase.org/volunteersearch](http://www.communitybase.org/volunteersearch)).

#### **4 Time allowed for volunteering**

- 4.1 The Scheme allows each employee to have a maximum of 15 hours paid leave per year (pro rata for part-time and temporary employees) to take part in either individual or group volunteering activities that are eligible under the Scheme.
- 4.2 Employees participating in the Scheme are expected to spend at least the same amount of time volunteering within the City in their own spare time. Employees who wish to spend more time volunteering than provided for by this Scheme may ask their managers to allow them to work more flexibly to enable them to do so.
- 4.3 The work time that is spent as a volunteer under this Scheme is in addition to any other time allowed off for special duties such as:
- Jury Service
  - School Governor
  - Magistrate
  - Retained fire-fighter
  - Trade Union activity
  - Territorial Army Reservist

#### **5 Before applying to take part in the Scheme**

- 5.1 As a first step, the employee should discuss the suitability of possible volunteering ideas and opportunities with their line manager before deciding on the activity they would like to take part in. Aspects that need to be discussed are:
- will the volunteering meet the individual's development needs?
  - is there a potential conflict of interest between the voluntary activity and the role they have with the council?
  - is the volunteering activity suitable for the individual taking into account matters such as health issues?

#### **6 Applying to take part in the Scheme**

- 6.1 Once the employee has identified a volunteering activity and made contact with the voluntary organisation, they must complete the Employee Volunteering Request Form (see Appendix 1) and give it to their line manager for consideration.
- 6.2 The employee should remember to leave enough time for the request to be considered before they give a commitment to the organisation to start volunteering.

- 6.3 A separate request form must be completed and submitted to the line manager for any new or additional volunteering activity.
- 6.4 Employees who are already volunteering independently will also need to complete a request form if they wish to take advantage of paid time off work under this Scheme.

## **7 Considering the request**

- 7.1 The line manager will consider the application and decide whether the volunteering activity can be supported.
- 7.2 Although participation in volunteering is encouraged by the council it is always at the discretion of the line manager who has the overall view of the needs of the service.
- 7.3 It is expected that managers will support their employees to volunteer unless there is a potential conflict of interest due to the nature of the volunteering or the planned release for volunteering would cause operational problems, especially where employees' duties would need to be covered whilst they are volunteering and direct costs incurred. Managers should ensure that requests are not considered in isolation to ensure a fair approach to all employees and thorough consideration of service implications. Where employees wish to do more volunteering in their own time, managers should consider whether they can facilitate this by agreeing more flexible working arrangements.
- 7.4 A blanket refusal to entertain time out for volunteering is not in the spirit of this policy and managers are strongly discouraged from adopting this approach.

## **8 Outcome of the request**

- 8.1 The employee will be notified of the outcome of their request in writing. If the request is agreed, it is the employee's responsibility to organise his or her own volunteering activity. This means that the employee must agree the dates and times of volunteering with their line manager in advance and in conjunction with the voluntary organisation/charity.
- 8.2 An employee whose request is turned down will be given the reasons for the refusal in writing. The individual may appeal against the decision to their Head of Service. The result of this appeal will be final.

## **9 When can volunteering leave be taken**

- 9.1 The volunteering leave can be taken as one block or alternatively spread throughout the year (minimum of 1 hour per week). Group or team volunteering leave will normally be taken in half or whole days.
- 9.2 Employees will receive their contractual pay during volunteering leave.

- 9.3 As with any other request for time off work, employees must agree time off to volunteer with their line manager in advance. Reasonable notice (usually at least 4 weeks) should be given to allow the manager to organise any necessary cover within their team.
- 9.4 Time off will be allowed subject to service needs. Managers may therefore postpone the time off to another date/time when the employee's absence can be better accommodated within the needs of the service.
- 9.5 Unused volunteering hours cannot be carried over to the following leave year.
- 9.6 Whilst the Scheme is based on trust, the council reserves the right to contact any organisation with which staff are volunteering.

## **10 Conditions associated with volunteering supported by this Scheme**

- 10.1 Employees who wish to participate in a volunteering activity in the community under this Scheme must adhere to the following conditions:
- obtain the agreement of their manager prior to volunteering
  - ensure they do not undertake voluntary activity that could bring the council into disrepute
  - ensure that the voluntary activity does not pose a potential conflict of interest with their work for the council e.g. acting as a treasurer for a charity that the individual has regular contact with in their council role
  - agree time off work to volunteer with their line manager in advance
  - ensure that they comply with the policies and procedures of the organisation they are volunteering with
  - ensure they do what is reasonably expected of them to the best of their ability when volunteering
  - ensure they respect confidentiality and do not disclose confidential or sensitive information that they may learn when volunteering
  - behave in an appropriate manner whilst volunteering as they will be acting as ambassadors for the council
  - honour their volunteering commitments and give the organisation they are working for as much notice as possible if they are unable to meet those commitments for whatever reason
  - ensure they keep a record of their "volunteer hours" and produce the record if required
  - notify their line manager in the normal way if they cannot carry out their voluntary activity due to sickness or some other reason. (Failure to do so will mean the employee's non-attendance at work will be treated as unauthorised absence and no payment will be made.)

## **11 Costs incurred in volunteering**

11.1 The council will not reimburse any costs, including travel, incurred by employees taking part in the Scheme. It may be that certain voluntary organisations are able to reimburse some personal costs, but this will need to be discussed directly between the volunteer and the organisation in which they will be volunteering.

## **12 Health and Safety**

12.1 The council has a responsibility to do everything reasonable to protect its employees from being harmed whilst volunteering. This means that to minimise any liability on the council, line managers need to ensure that, prior to any volunteering, their employees will be adequately trained, supported and supervised by the organisation they are volunteering with. They will also need to check that there are appropriate health and safety measures in place and carry out and record risk assessments before the individual starts volunteering.

12.2 To ensure their own safety, employees must make sure that the necessary risk assessments for the activities they will be undertaking are carried out and that any training, including any health and safety training, they may require takes place before they begin volunteering.

## **13 Insurance**

13.1 Employees will not be covered by the council's Public Liability and Employer's Liability insurance policies whilst they are volunteering for other organisations. This is because the council will have no control over the work that volunteers are doing.

13.2 Employees must therefore check to make sure that the organisation they propose to volunteer with has suitable liability cover in place to protect them either as volunteers through their Employers Liability Policy or as third parties through their Public Liability Policy.

## **14 Criminal Records Bureau /Independent Safeguarding checks**

14.1 Employees who wish to do voluntary work with certain groups such as children or vulnerable adults will need to have a CRB/Independent Safeguarding check.

14.2 The voluntary organisation with whom they will be volunteering will be responsible for undertaking this. Most organisations do not charge volunteers for carrying out the check but employees are advised to double check. The CRB/Independent Safeguarding check will need to be undertaken before the employee can start volunteering.

## **15 Use of council resources and equipment**

15.1 In preparing for a volunteering placement, it may be necessary for employees to use, within reason, some of the council's equipment e.g. telephones,

photocopiers but only where this does not conflict or interfere with the provision of the service. Managers should make sure that the volume of use is contained to avoid any accusations of misuse of public funds.

15.2 Employees are not allowed to use council equipment or resources whilst carrying out their volunteering activities.

## **16 Terminating the volunteering arrangement**

16.1 Either party has the right to terminate an arrangement to volunteer with prior notice. Should the council bring the volunteering arrangement to an end, the employee will be notified of the reason in writing.

16.2 Having said this, the council reserves the right to terminate the volunteering activity without prior notice if an employee fails to adhere to the conditions of the Scheme e.g. commits an act of misconduct whilst volunteering.

## **17 Evaluation of the Scheme**

17.1 It is vital to evaluate the outcomes of volunteering activities to ensure that our Scheme is being successful and worthwhile for the community and our employees.

17.2 Ideally, the time spent volunteering will:

- make a real difference to residents
- meet the objectives of the voluntary organisation
- meet the employee's learning objectives and expectations
- enable the individual to transfer the learning back into the workplace

17.3 Managers will review progress with their employees and evaluate the success of their volunteering projects through discussions in one-to-ones and in the PDP process.

17.4 In addition, the impact of the Scheme will be monitored using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Measures will include:

- participation rate
- nature of the volunteering
- number of employees volunteering for the first time
- number of volunteer hours worked
- number of employees doing additional volunteering in their own time
- equality profile of those participating in the scheme.

17.5 This data will be supplemented with qualitative feedback from volunteers and the organisations with whom they have worked on how successful the volunteering has been and how the scheme could be improved. An "Employee Volunteering Evaluation Form" is attached at Appendix 2.



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## Employee Volunteering Request Form

This form should be completed when making a request for time off under the council's Employee Volunteering Scheme. When you have completed this section please pass this form to your line manager so that he/she can consider your request.

### **PART 1: - To be completed by the employee**

Employee's name:	
Job Title:	
Name and address of Voluntary Organisation you wish to volunteer with:	
Please give details of the person who will be supervising you in the voluntary organisation  Name:  Contact number:	
Where will you be based when volunteering?	
Give details of the volunteering activity: <i>(Please attach any information you have relating to your proposed voluntary activity)</i>	
How will this volunteering activity benefit the organisation you want to volunteer with?	

How will you benefit from the volunteering activity? How will it meet your development needs?	
How will the council benefit from your volunteering activity?	
Please give details about how you intend to take your volunteering leave under this policy? e.g. 2 hours per month, 1 hour per week?	

I wish to apply for time off work to carry out voluntary activities with the above organisation.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**PART 2: - To be completed by the line manager**

Decision:	Request approved * / not approved * (*delete as appropriate)
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If the request is not approved, please give your reason(s) for the decision here:

\_\_\_\_\_

Line Manager's name:  
*(Please print)*

\_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

***When you have completed Part 2 please return a copy of this form to the employee.***





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## Employee Volunteering Evaluation Form

To help us evaluate the success of our Employee Volunteering Scheme, we would like you to give us some feedback on your volunteering activity by completing this form.

Please be honest in your feedback to help us improve the Scheme.

Employee name:

Name of Voluntary Organisation:

Name of Project/Activity:

Name of person supervising your volunteering activity:

Number of Hours worked (over X weeks):

What was/were the purpose(s) of the volunteering?

Have each of these been achieved? (To what extent, in each case?)

What skills or knowledge have you gained from the activity?

What would you do differently if you were to undertake this again?

Would you recommend others to get involved in the work you undertook? If so, why?

Were there any issues about equality that had to be addressed? How were these handled?
What (else) has your team, Directorate and the council gained from your volunteering?
Has your manager reviewed your volunteering activity with you as part of your PDP process?
Are there any changes to the Scheme you would like us to consider?
Are there any other comments you would like to make?