

Brighton & Hove City Council
Volunteering Policy
2016-2020



**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

Context

The Volunteer Strategy ‘The Power of Volunteering’ recognises the invaluable contribution that volunteering makes to our city. Volunteers contribute to building stronger, more resilient communities through a vast range of activities. They bring added value through their skills and life experiences and they improve the environment of the city in which we live and work.

The Brighton & Hove City Council Volunteering Policy toolkit and booklet support the principles within the wider strategy. We aim to create a consistent approach to volunteering and a significant change in the contribution that volunteers make to the council’s objectives.

It will support and promote volunteering across all directorates and contribute to the Corporate Plan principle: *“A city that people take pride in, where citizens, communities and businesses can get involved and take action to address things that matter to them.”*

Introduction

Brighton & Hove City Council recognises the important role volunteers play in volunteering alongside our staff supporting services and activities in the City. By expanding volunteering within our services we have an opportunity to promote wellbeing and social value, support prevention, and redesign services to be more inclusive, collaborative and accountable to their communities and service users.

Having volunteers within our services also helps to address some of the current challenges that are not just financial, but also demographic, cultural and technological. We acknowledge the valuable contribution that volunteers make to improving and boosting our services, to special events, and especially when there are pieces of work where we do not have the sufficient resources to take forward.

For many people, volunteering is a good way to try out different roles, to share and gain skills and experience, to build confidence, and to meet new people. For some it can also be extremely beneficial in developing skills for future employment.

This policy is based on discussions with staff, community and voluntary sector organisations, and unions and has reviewed good practice across our own services and other local authorities.

It is important that all staff understand both the good practice and legal implications of volunteer involvement in order to ensure that volunteering remains a positive experience for all. The policy is designed to reflect the current law as it relates to volunteers. It describes the relationship between the Council and those people who choose to volunteer their time and skills on an unpaid basis, without entering into a legally binding contract.

Why does Brighton & Hove City Council involve volunteers?

- Volunteers have valuable time, skills and experience that they can use to support communities and the city.
- Working with volunteers allows the council to expand and enhance its services and better understand the needs of communities.
- Volunteering offers people the opportunity to gain experience, confidence and practical skills, the opportunity to 'try something new' as well as improving mental and physical health and to meet a wide range of people.
- Volunteering often enables people to engage with, influence and contribute to the role and responsibility of the local authority.

Key Principles

In applying this policy we will:

- Recognise and reward the invaluable contribution of volunteers to Brighton & Hove
- Encourage voluntary participation by people from all sections of the community across all sectors and business
- Foster teamwork between volunteers and staff, and help volunteers and staff grow in their respective roles
- Ensure a positive volunteering experience for all those involved
- Ensure the involvement of volunteers should complement and supplement the work of paid staff not replace the work of paid staff¹.

Brighton and Hove City Council's commitment to volunteers

1. **Choice** - Volunteering is undertaken as a matter of free choice. Volunteers are not obliged to undertake tasks they are not comfortable with.
2. **Inclusion** - Volunteering opportunities will be diverse and wide ranging to support and encourage participation from all residents and communities. Volunteering will have simple and consistent processes.
3. **Support and development** - Volunteers have a role description and are properly introduced to their role and provided with ongoing support and training appropriate to their individual needs, abilities and skills.
4. **Safety** - The safety and wellbeing of all volunteers is paramount and appropriate insurance is in place. Volunteers are aware of how to raise concerns and how they will be handled.
5. **Reimbursement** - Where agreed and relevant, volunteers will have reimbursement for their receipted out of pocket expenses incurred whilst carrying out their role.
6. **Reward** - Volunteers receive appropriate reward and recognition for their efforts and often hear the words ... thank you.

¹The policy supports the charter principles between Volunteering England and the TUC [Trades Union Congress - A Charter for Strengthening Relations Between Paid Staff and Volunteers](#).

Who does it apply to and when?

A volunteer is a person who donates their time, skills and experience to carry out agreed roles within Brighton and Hove City Council without financial reward. This policy applies only to volunteers who are acting on an unpaid, receipted expenses-only, basis.

We recognise that:

- there is a wide variety of voluntary roles, varying in formality, location and time commitment and;
- voluntary roles may be carried out by individuals and/or large groups of volunteers
- Volunteers may come from other organisations

We also recognise that:

- There are different types of work placements and people on work placements may be subject to working agreements, but if they are unpaid they will also be entitled to the provisions of this policy and its associated procedures.
- All unpaid volunteers including large groups of volunteers from other organisations
- It applies in situations where a member of the public is looking for a volunteering opportunity with Brighton & Hove City Council
- A volunteer is not an employee of Brighton & Hove City Council and there is no legally binding contractual relationship between the council and the volunteer

When does it apply?

This policy does not apply to people employed by the Council either directly or through an agency on any contractual basis, whether permanent, temporary, short-or long-term.

The volunteering relationship

This policy works clearly to the following nature of engagement that underpin the volunteering relationship:

1. A volunteer is not an employee of Brighton & Hove City Council and there is no legally binding contractual relationship between the council and the volunteer

While volunteers must be treated fairly and in accordance with the expectations which have been agreed at the outset, they are not legally bound to work for the authority and are not subject to the obligations imposed on employees and workers.

In line with the commitment the council will always strive to:

- Match the time, skills and experience of volunteers to a suitable volunteering opportunity.
- Ensure each volunteer receives appropriate training, support and tools to perform their role where appropriate, including assessing for and providing reasonable adjustments.
- Resolve any complaints raised by a volunteer in a timely fashion.
- Foster a friendly and supportive atmosphere for volunteers and make volunteering a positive experience
- Reimburse reasonable expenses incurred. These expenses must be agreed in advance with the contact person and are payable against a valid receipt

Each volunteer will be nominated a named person who will:

- Agree expectations with the volunteer.
- Arrange a personal induction plan and any additional training or checks needed.
- Share all the relevant council policies, including those relating to confidentiality, safeguarding and the Code of Conduct for Volunteers and support the volunteer to understand and apply them.
- Make sure that there are no barriers which would make it difficult for a volunteer to undertake the agreed activity. This should be done before volunteers start
- Support volunteers to positively represent the council at all times.
- Make sure volunteers understand the council's accident and incident reporting procedure.
- Agree any out of pocket expenses at the start of the relationship and make sure these are paid promptly.
- Offer ongoing support, guidance and advice where needed

The Volunteering relationship

All volunteers will be asked to sign up to the requests below:

- Ensure you have a clear understanding of the volunteering role and responsibilities
- Treat the people you work with (other volunteers, staff and service users) respectfully and fairly.
- Be honest about the level of your volunteering commitment, it may be better to start small and build up to more.
- Attend induction & other training to ensure you are safe and informed
- Understand and apply relevant council & volunteer policies
- Treat any information obtained while volunteering as confidential and don't disclose it to any third party.
- Represent the council positively/appropriately at all times

- Try to be reliable as people may be depending on you.
- If you cannot make a volunteer session or wish to stop volunteering give as much notice as possible so alternative arrangements can be made.
- Adhere to the council's health and safety policy and raise any concerns with the named worker immediately.
- Report any accidents or incidents, whether it concerns yourself or another person.
- Attend meetings with the contact person when you are able to do so.
- Ask for help if there is anything you are unsure about
- Notify the contact person of any health issues that impact on your volunteering role so that reasonable adjustments may be considered.
- Understand arrangements for volunteer driving roles on behalf of the council if relevant to the role
- Agree any out of pocket expenses prior to any activities with the contact person in order that reimburses may be made in an appropriate timeframe.

Finding a volunteer opportunity

- Available volunteering opportunities will be advertised on the Council website and the Volunteer Centre. All volunteering opportunities will have a **named person** to contact [Link to web page](#)
- Volunteering opportunities may also be advertised through local Children's Centre, Libraries or Community Centres. The council does not guarantee to provide volunteering opportunities and reserves its right to withdraw a volunteering opportunity at any time, including during a volunteer placement, where it considers that doing so is necessary for safeguarding purposes or for any other reason.

Equality and diversity

- Brighton and Hove Council promotes the development of diverse and wide ranging volunteering opportunities that encourages participation from all residents and communities, bringing a number of benefits to volunteers, council staff and services.
- Brighton & Hove Council values inclusiveness and fairness in all its work, including offering volunteering opportunities, and is committed to equality and diversity. We welcome volunteers of every age, race/ethnicity, nationality, religion & belief, gender identity, disability, class, sexual orientation, with or without medical conditions or caring commitments.
- If any volunteer for the council experiences discrimination, harassment, bullying or abuse of any kind, it will be investigated fully and immediately once reported and all appropriate action taken.'

- Brighton & Hove Council is committed to the accessible Volunteering Pledge

References and other checks

- In order to ensure everyone is safe, where the volunteering opportunity involves contact with children or vulnerable adults, an enhanced disclosure and barring service (DBS) check **may** be required.
- A volunteer will be asked to provide the name or names of a referee(s) who have agreed to provide a reference on behalf of the volunteer.
- In order to support volunteers, the council may need to understand any impairment or health condition in order to assess how to make reasonable adjustments.
- All references and checks considered necessary must be completed before the volunteer may start any induction or training or volunteering activity

Induction and training

- The council will provide all volunteers with an introduction to the organisation as well as an induction and any specific training needed for the volunteering opportunity.

Ongoing support

- Each volunteer will be supported by a **named person**
- The council acknowledges the importance of volunteers and will provide appropriate supervision and support during the course of the volunteering opportunity.

Health and safety

- The council is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all volunteers and has a health and safety policy in place.
- Volunteers will be made aware of this policy during their induction and must be supported to understand and be familiar with it before undertaking any volunteering activity.
- Volunteers must report any accidents, incidents or other dangerous circumstances immediately using the appropriate process.

Insurance

- Volunteers are covered by the council's insurance cover when undertaking voluntary activities which have been approved and authorised by us. Further information can be provided upon request.

Complaints

- Should a volunteer wish to make a complaint this should be made to their **named worker** who will investigate the complaint or escalate it to their manager if necessary and appropriate.
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Benefits and tax

- Volunteers who are in receipt of jobseeker's allowance (JSA) may be entitled to undertake voluntary work provided that they meet the conditions for eligibility for JSA, namely being available for work and actively seeking work.
- Volunteering does not usually affect entitlement to social security however staff need to advise any prospective volunteers to check with the DWP, Jobcentre Plus or a Citizen's Advice Bureau.

Other policies

- All volunteers must be supported by their **named worker** to access, understand and implement any other relevant council policies or guidance.

Legislation

- This policy has been reviewed by Brighton & Hove Council legal service team to ensure compliance with our statutory duties.

Additional information

- The information booklet [For people thinking about volunteering with Brighton & Hove City Council information booklet](#) should be read in conjunction with this policy.