

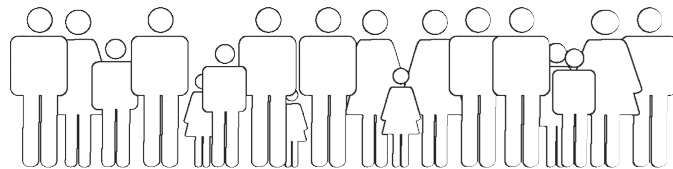
Bedfordshire and Luton

COMPACT

getting it right together

Code of Good Practice

Volunteering



**Developing a better working relationship between
statutory, voluntary and community organisations**

VOLUNTEERING – CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE

1. Aims

1.1 This Code of Good Practice sets out undertakings for both the statutory sector and the voluntary and community sector on volunteering. It aims to:

- raise the profile of volunteering and promote it as a community activity
- value the vast contribution that volunteers make to the local community
- acknowledge the variety of volunteering opportunities
- enable and support more people to get involved in volunteering
- recognise that local voluntary organisations and community groups can provide excellent training, support and development for volunteers to go into work, either paid or unpaid
- encourage better practice in the management of volunteers
- identify and remove the barriers to volunteering

1.2 Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community. It includes:

- helping to provide a service as a volunteer within a voluntary organisation, community group, international development organisation, the public sector or not-for-profit sector
- running an organisation or group as a trustee, board or committee member, serving as a non-executive member of a public body or participating in civic governance
- improving the quality of life for people in a neighbourhood or community of interest, providing a community service or campaigning for a public cause
- ensuring employer-supported community involvement

2. In supporting this code, the statutory sector undertakes to:

2.1 recognise that volunteering builds skills and experience, enhances employability and creates employment, promotes social inclusion, and contributes to the building of community networks and participation; high levels of volunteering are therefore indicators of healthy and active communities

2.1 Example

At Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire a volunteer was recruited to assist with the preparation of a 'Directory of Volunteering Opportunities'. The volunteer needed additional support and grew in confidence considerably, to the extent that they felt able to seek and obtain sustained part-time employment for the first time in 21 years. The volunteer was able to apply skills learnt on (previously undertaken) ICT courses, to increase their inter-personal and assertiveness skills.

2.2 increase staff awareness of volunteer contributions to organisational and social policy objectives

- 2.3 audit new policies, strategies, guidance and procedures for their impact on volunteers and volunteering and take appropriate action, and work to limit the barriers presented by existing policies and practices
- 2.4 ensure transparency of the advertising and bidding process for statutory sector tenders and contracts for volunteering schemes or with voluntary organisations
- 2.5 aim to adopt strategies that demonstrate a commitment to sustainable funding of local volunteer development agencies and seek to work with those already active, organised and effective, rather than set up new structures
- 2.6 encourage employer-supported volunteering schemes within their organisations
- 2.7 work, where applicable, to reduce conflict and confusion between volunteering and training for employment, especially for young people
- 2.8 act on the relevant undertakings for the voluntary and community sector, where directly involved in managing volunteers

3. In supporting this code, the voluntary and community sector undertakes to:

- 3.1 ensure that sufficient resources are budgeted to support volunteers
- 3.2 ensure that staff who recruit, induct and manage volunteers receive recognition for this role plus appropriate training and support
- 3.3 ensure policies are in place to give volunteers the same protection under health and safety, equal opportunities and public liability insurance as paid employees
- 3.4 provide regular supervision and peer support for volunteers
- 3.5 help to place volunteers to suit their needs, interests and abilities and help to find alternatives should these change
- 3.6 seek to widen volunteering opportunities and develop a diverse volunteer base
- 3.7 provide appropriate induction and ongoing training for volunteers, including opportunities for accreditation of volunteering skills

3.7 Example

The North Chilterns Trust relies heavily on a workforce of volunteers to participate in a wide range of environmental projects. Tom, a recent volunteer with just a keen interest initially, has been amazed at the free training offered to him! "I've learnt how to work with power tools, build fences, clear scrubland and the skills I've gained are going to be a great asset to me finding employment – what a boost for my CV! I also needed something to help build my confidence and so, not only am I getting out and about in the community, I'm now able to socialise with a large circle of like-minded people. Wish I'd thought of volunteering years ago!"

- 3.8 ensure that volunteers are thanked for their work and that their contribution is recognised and acknowledged
- 3.9 recognise trustees (including community group management committee members) as a specific group of volunteers and ensure they receive appropriate training and support
- 4. In supporting this code, both sectors undertake to:**
 - 4.1 commit to good practice in the promotion and development of volunteering
 - 4.2 agree that public funding should aim to create and maintain a modern, dynamic volunteering infrastructure based on good practice identified by the Volunteer Development Agency Quality System
 - 4.3 seek ways to work together to collect and share demographic information on, and improve the measure and quality of, volunteering
 - 4.4 take action to promote volunteering amongst local communities and support activity motivating more people to become involved
 - 4.5 support initiatives to provide accessible information about volunteering opportunities at local, regional, national and international level
 - 4.6 work to identify and dismantle barriers to volunteering and community involvement
 - 4.7 ensure that volunteers are not exploited, expected to undertake tasks that are not appropriate or recruited to fill the place of paid staff
 - 4.8 recognise the true costs of effective volunteer recruitment and management when budgeting for service provision, including volunteer support, training, equipment, office space, Criminal Record Bureau checking and the importance of reimbursing out-of-pocket expenses and care costs

4.8 Example

A good practice example of achieving good partnership working is the inter-authority 'Reimbursement of Out-of-Pocket Expenses to the Voluntary Sector Representatives Participating in the Bedfordshire Local Strategic Partnership and Other Planning Fora' scheme, coordinated until recently by Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC). This scheme recognises that voluntary sector representatives offer an expert client perspective and influence decisions on service improvements. Reimbursing volunteers for out-of-pocket expenses supports inclusive partnership work practices, enabling all to sit around the table regardless of personal or organisational financial status.

- 4.9 ensure that volunteers are brought into policy-making processes, internal decision-making and responses to government consultation, taking account of their interests and independent observations
- 4.10 acknowledge the nature and extent of volunteering in their annual and project reports