



THE MORAY COUNCIL VOLUNTEERING POLICY

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Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to clarify and simplify the approach to involving volunteers in the work of the Moray Council and to clearly set out the procedures and guidance required in achieving best practice. It is designed to make volunteering a simple and transparent process for those wishing to enter into any volunteering agreement through sensible application of the policy and its guidelines.

The Council supports the four strands of the Scottish Government's Volunteering Strategy, which are, "*focusing on Project Scotland and young people*"; "*dismantling the barriers to volunteering*"; "*closing the opportunity gap*" and "*improving the volunteering experience*".

The statutory partners within the *Moray Community Planning Partnership* and the voluntary sector in Moray have prepared a compact voluntary agreement setting out how they will work together and have committed themselves to the promotion of volunteering by:

- considering the possible impact of their decisions on volunteers
- supporting the public and voluntary sector to adhere to the necessary legislation and regulations which may impact on volunteering
- eliminating barriers (including funding barriers) to volunteering
- recognising the value of volunteering in all areas of work
- gathering and evaluating better data on volunteering

This is Moray Council's first volunteering policy and the Council wants to demonstrate its commitment, to ensure that its own volunteers are given a rewarding experience and that the wider community gains from high standards of practice by those volunteers operating under the auspices of the Moray Council.

This policy sets out a corporate framework for Council services when engaging with, and managing volunteers and encouraging volunteering. It takes account of existing incentives such as *The Moray Community Plan*; *Voluntary Sector Compact*; *the Moray Council Consultation and Engagement Strategy* and *the Scottish Executive's Volunteering Strategy*.

The Scottish Executive define volunteering in their strategy as:

“the giving of time and energy through a third party, which can bring measurable benefits to the volunteer, individual beneficiaries, groups and organisations, communities, the environment and society at large. It is a choice undertaken of one's own free will, and is not motivated primarily for financial gain or for a wage or salary”

The policy which follows has been developed in line with current best practice and takes into account the monitoring and evaluation processes which need to be established in order to form clear principles and guidelines for those who manage volunteers.

MORAY COUNCIL VOLUNTEERING POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

"The Council supports and promotes volunteering within the work of all departments. Volunteers are valued as a key community resource in helping to strengthen citizenship involvement and in turn, improve the quality of life for everyone in Moray"

AIMS

The overall aim of the volunteering policy is to develop and promote best practice in the involvement and support of volunteers in the work of the Moray Council. This policy statement aims to:

- encourage the development of volunteering in all areas of the Council
- recognise and promote the importance of volunteering to the work of the Council
- ensure support, training and supervision for Council volunteers
- identify the standards to which Council staff and volunteers are expected to adhere
- provide guidance and best practice to Council staff in working with volunteers and ensure the application of the *Council's equal opportunities policy* to volunteering
- ensure that volunteering with the Council is an enjoyable and rewarding experience

OBJECTIVES

The Moray Council will achieve its aims by ensuring that:

- there is a clear statement of the Council's commitment to and expectations of its volunteers
- there is a consistency of approach to volunteering across all Council services
- volunteers are covered by all relevant Council policies, child protection, adult protection, health and safety, equal opportunities
- the importance, effectiveness and enjoyment of volunteering is actively promoted throughout the Council
- services will provide relevant information alongside a volunteer handbook
- employees are encouraged and supported to become volunteers

PRINCIPLES

The Moray Council:

- recognises that voluntary work brings benefits to volunteers themselves, to service users and to employees
- will ensure that volunteers in the Council are properly integrated into the organisational structure and that appropriate mechanisms are in place for them to contribute to the work of the Council
- recognises that volunteering makes a unique and valuable contribution to policy objectives and service provision
- recognises that employees will play a part in identifying ways in which the work of the Council can be extended by the involvement of volunteers
- will not introduce volunteers to replace Council employees
- acknowledges the need to identify and make appropriate resources available to support volunteers working in the Council
- recognises that volunteers require satisfying work and personal development and will seek to help volunteers meet these needs, as well as providing the training for them to do their work effectively as set within the objectives of the Council and its services
- will only reimburse expenses incurred by volunteers who abide by the Council's expenses claims process
- recognises that the management of volunteers requires designated responsibilities within specific posts
- will endeavour, when contracting or establishing a service level agreement with other organisations that use volunteers, to ensure that the role and commitments of volunteers are clear within the contract or service level agreement
- all contractors or those organisations subject to a service level agreement will retain full responsibility for their volunteers, their management and their actions
- will recognise and reward Council volunteer achievement
- is committed to offering the opportunity to enhance existing life skills and to develop new ones through volunteering

SCOPE OF THE POLICY

The volunteering policy applies to all Moray Council staff; volunteers and elected members.

Policy monitoring and review

The Moray Council is committed to ongoing monitoring and review of this policy and will carry out a formal review every 3 years, with the first review to take place in 2010.

A gradual improvement in the support of volunteers will be sought through the implementation of this policy.

Community Engagement

Working through local community planning structures, the Moray Council will actively engage with the public and service user groups, in order to raise awareness of this policy and seek their views, opinions and support.

Equalities

The Moray Council will commit to actively encourage volunteering amongst those people and groups, who are more likely to be excluded from volunteering because of low income, race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion or philosophical belief. We will try not to exclude anyone from volunteering where possible and will work to remove the barriers to volunteering.

The rights of volunteers:

- to know what is expected of them
- to have clearly specified lines of support and supervision
- to be shown appreciation
- to have safe working conditions
- to be insured
- to know what their rights and responsibilities are if something goes wrong
- to have access to appropriate training
- to experience personal development through participation
- to confidentiality
- not to be bullied in any way
- not to experience discrimination

Volunteers are expected to:

- carry out their tasks in a way that corresponds to the aims, values and policies of the Council
- operate within agreed guidelines and remits relating to their task
- follow health and safety regulations and instructions
- adhere to the *Child Protection Policy*
- adhere to the Council's statements on *Equal Opportunities*
- respect confidentiality and adhere to any policies and procedures associated with information sharing protocols that the Council may have entered into
- attend training and support sessions where required
- be reliable
- be honest

THE MORAY COUNCIL BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERING

Introduction

The guidelines set out below are for staff to ensure good practice when working with volunteers who carry out work within the Moray Council. The guidelines deal with the practical aspects of involvement and should support Council departments in their work with volunteers. More detailed information, including references to documents and policies are provided in the *volunteers handbook*. There will be times when volunteers are sought for ad-hoc events and full application of the policy and guidelines may not be appropriate.

Promotion, placement and selection

- volunteering with the Council should be promoted widely, to make it accessible to all sections of the community
- individual volunteering opportunities should be publicised as appropriate and should draw attention to the benefits and experience to be gained from participation in volunteering
- volunteering opportunities may be advertised through appropriate avenues such as the Council's vacancies bulletin, *Volunteer Centre Moray*, *Community Planning Partners*, and other local notice boards, specifying the tasks and time commitment expected of the volunteer
- advertisements will state clearly if the volunteer post requires a *disclosure check*, and what level is required
- the Council will respond to applicants within ten days of receipt of any application from a prospective volunteer
- volunteering opportunities will as far as possible be open and accessible to all sections of the community
- The Council's *Equal Opportunities Policy* will be applied when selecting volunteers
- a volunteer handbook will be made available in printed and electronic format where appropriate
- the Council will respond as quickly as possible to enquiries from potential volunteers
- placements will match the volunteer's availability, skills, talents and interests with the Council's needs
- where appropriate (not applicable for one off or occasional volunteering unless thought necessary) prospective volunteers should go through a selection process which may include an application (not necessarily written), a selection interview, references taken where appropriate and a written notification of the outcome
- where appropriate, the volunteer will comply with the requirements for *Disclosure Scotland* checks, *The Moray Council Child Protection Policy* and other safeguards put in place by the Council for the protection of vulnerable adults and children
- volunteers will not be permitted to take up a post until all the necessary checks are complete

Volunteer agreement procedure with overview flowcharts

- a volunteer agreement will be drawn up and signed by both the volunteer and a Council representative with a copy given to the volunteer
- the agreement will:
 - outline the tasks to be undertaken; identify the line management arrangements
 - list the relevant policies, guidelines and identify expenses and insurance arrangements - although not a legal document or employment contract, it will form the basis of regular support
- the volunteer will perform the tasks outlined in the volunteer agreement in a manner appropriate of a representative of the Moray Council
- volunteer tasks will be clearly identified and should be described in terms of time, commitment, necessary skills and actual duties
- the volunteer can re-negotiate the terms of the volunteer agreement on application to their named Council representative
- any expenses likely to be incurred by the volunteer whilst carrying out their agreed duties will be discussed and procedures for claiming agreed and recorded in the volunteer agreement
- volunteers will be placed in accordance with the principles of fairness, consistency and openness in accordance with the Council's *Equal Opportunities Policy* and should aim to reflect the diversity in society
- once placed, the Council will expect volunteers to comply with existing policies and procedures
- either party has the right to discontinue a volunteering arrangement, however, an exchange of views as to why a volunteering arrangement is terminated is considered desirable and a record should be made

Induction and training

- the Council will offer all volunteers suitable and adequate induction training within an agreed timescale
- the Council will provide an induction period and a review session to assess the progress of the placement and to resolve any problems at an early stage
- Council volunteers will have access to relevant training opportunities and are encouraged to participate in a programme of personal and skills development training as provided by the Moray Council to its staff
- Council employees with responsibility for the placement and support of volunteers will be provided with training in the management of volunteers

Support and supervision

- each volunteer will have a named Council representative that can provide information, encouragement and support on a regular basis
- any issues or problems should be discussed between the named contact and the volunteer
- the Council will provide, within the available resources, financial, personnel and other resources for the adequate management of volunteers
- the content of the supervision should be educational, supportive and on a task management basis

The volunteer's voice

- procedures are to be set in place to enable the views of volunteers to be represented

Insurance

- all appointed volunteers will be covered by the Council's public liability insurance when working on agreed tasks and in approved premises
- volunteers will be given information on other legislation or policies as is relevant

Expenses

- volunteer expenses should be funded by whichever departmental budget the volunteer work is related to

Health and safety

- council employees should be aware that their legal responsibilities and obligations under health and safety legislation extend to volunteers
- volunteers will receive a basic health and safety briefing as part of their induction, which should include emergency procedures, machinery operation, and use of hazardous materials and manual handling techniques where appropriate
- tasks undertaken by volunteers should be subject to risk assessment and appropriate safe systems of work put into operation
- volunteers have personal responsibility for following health and safety regulations and instructions and to comply with *working time* regulations

Equal opportunities

- the Council's volunteering policy will adhere to Moray Council's *Equal Opportunities Policies*

Relationship with paid employees

- volunteers will not normally be asked to take on tasks undertaken by Council employees, or to operate in ways which facilitate a decrease in paid employment
- volunteers will not be utilised in times of industrial action to do the work of paid employees although they may continue with their regular tasks without being asked to undertake additional duties
- as far as possible, volunteers will have responsibility for carrying out particular tasks which 'add value' to existing services

- the Council will ensure that employees at all levels are clear about the role of volunteers, and that good relationships are fostered between employees and volunteers

Problems

- the Moray Council has a grievance policy to help deal with grievances that volunteers may have and have the right to discuss any concerns they have with their named Council representative at any time
- in accordance with the disciplinary policy, matters that cannot be dealt with by the named contact person should be referred to the line manager concerned or another line manager

Confidentiality

- volunteers should regard all information they have access to or are given as a result of their volunteering as being confidential unless advised otherwise
- no information should be released to a third party without first seeking the agreement of their supervisor where an information sharing protocol has been entered into by the Council
- volunteers should not disclose personal details (home address, telephone number etc) to clients but should use their business address when an address has to be given
- the Council will fulfil its duty to safeguard the information contained within application forms and records
- volunteers have the right to access their own records, including personal training records and application forms which can be arranged by giving the personnel department 24 hours notice

Absence

- volunteers are asked to inform their supervisors if they will not be available due to illness, holidays or for any other reason
- it is helpful if volunteers can give the Council as much notice as possible so that cover may be arranged
- the Council respects that there may be occasions when volunteers may wish to take a break for a period of time and are asked to give as much notice as possible

Endings

- all volunteer placements are subject to regular review, looking at the quality of the experience
- volunteers with the Moray Council will have the right to request a reference
- volunteers will be supported to move onto other options