



Volunteering Code of Practice

Introduction

The Volunteering Code of Practice forms part of the Sandwell Compact which sets out the agreed framework for the relationship between the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in Sandwell and their statutory partners. Whilst the Compact is not a legally binding document it is a statement of intent and aspiration.

Fundamental Principles of Volunteering

Choice

Volunteering must be a choice, freely made by each individual. Any encouragement to become involved in volunteering should not result in any form of coercion or compulsion. Freedom to volunteer implies freedom to not become involved.

Diversity

The people of Sandwell bring varying qualities and experience to volunteering. Diversity is recognised, respected and valued. Volunteering should be open to all, no matter what their background, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender or disability. Volunteering can help individual volunteers to overcome social exclusion and a diverse volunteering base also makes services more accessible and relevant to our diverse communities.

Mutual Benefit

Volunteering should be a reciprocal, mutual relationship. Although a person is not paid for their efforts, they often feel a sense of achievement. Volunteers gain useful skills, experience and contacts, sociability and fun, and feel part of the organisation and wider community. In return volunteers bring a wealth of skills, time and energy to volunteer-involving organisations, their services and activities.

Undertakings

Volunteering is most successful when:

All partners:

- work together to develop, implement, share and disseminate good practice in volunteering
- work together to identify and remove barriers to volunteering and community involvement
- actively seek to enhance public perceptions of volunteering through greater publicity, particularly of volunteers' achievements
- recognise that volunteering is of value to the community, and encourage partnership working between organisations to improve and expand the variety of volunteering opportunities offered, minimise duplication of services and maximise value for money
- promote volunteering as an activity that complements the role of paid staff
- promote volunteering as an economic activity which builds skills, experience, employability and social cohesion
- develop relevant policies and procedures in relation to recruitment, selection, induction and retention of volunteers to ensure a fair transparent and consistent approach
- provide volunteers with the appropriate support, supervision, appraisal, training and guidance to enable them to perform the volunteering roles
- recognise that effective volunteer management requires investment and commitment
- ensure that the work of all staff that recruit, induct, and manage volunteers is recognised and they receive the appropriate training and support
- recognise that organisations have a duty of care towards volunteers and should conduct regular risk assessments and adopt policies which protect volunteers in respect of health and safety, equal opportunities, and public liabilities insurance
- have clear and consistent practices regarding the reimbursement of volunteer expenses (i.e. reimburse actual out-of-pocket expenses against receipts and maintain appropriate records)
- recognise that, as part of the reciprocal relationship, volunteers should be given thanks and recognition for their contribution, and opportunities to have their voices heard in the organisation
- ensure that the nature and extent of volunteering is acknowledged in annual reports and other public information
- support media and communication strategies which ensure that volunteer contributions to raising the quality of life in Sandwell are promoted both internally and externally

- support activities which motivate people to volunteer
- consider ways of encouraging diversity in the volunteers active in their organisation
- recognise the importance of a range of volunteering opportunities – formal and informal, short and long-term – to develop a more inclusive offer and encourage greater resident participation in civic life

The Statutory Sector:

- recognises the financial implications of volunteer involvement in funding arrangements
- supports the volunteer brokerage role

The VCS:

- values the important role volunteers play as trustees and committee members and recognises the need for appropriate training and support to enable them to carry out their tasks
- includes the cost of volunteer involvement in organisational and project budgets
- remains open to including and involving volunteers to deliver activities and achieve their mission

Volunteer brokerage organisations:

- assist potential volunteers to find volunteering opportunities that fit their needs, interests and abilities by working in partnership with other agencies
- provide specialist knowledge, information and expertise on volunteering, including best practice guidance
- encourage resident participation in community activities and raise the profile of volunteering and resident involvement within the borough

Compact refresh date: September 2019. Review date: 2022