

## **An Introduction to North Ayrshire Council's Volunteering Policy**

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# **An Introduction to North Ayrshire Council's Volunteering Policy**

## **1.1 Background**

This preface presents the background to North Ayrshire Council's Volunteering Policy, preparation for which began in January 2001 with the establishment of a Corporate Working Group. In the intervening months the Group has undertaken considerable research and consultation and made every endeavour to ensure that the Policy which follows has not been produced in isolation. Full account has been taken of Government advice and direction as well as the guidance provided by national and local volunteer agencies and the policy has been produced to reflect the aims of the Council's own plans and strategies. Discussions have been held with volunteers and as a result the Group has been informed and impressed by the evidence of a strong tradition of volunteering within Council Services themselves and throughout North Ayrshire generally and struck by the remarkable contributions which volunteers make to other peoples lives with no thought of reward. All of these factors have been influential in setting the tone and content of the policy. They have in addition coloured the Group's decision to produce a comprehensive Schedule of Procedures and Guidance Notes "Managing Volunteers" to facilitate and accelerate comprehensive implementation of the Policy throughout Council Services and serve as an example of good practice to other agencies in North Ayrshire and hopefully beyond.

This introduction provides an opportunity to explain the context within which the policy was initially conceived and then progressed by the Corporate Working Group, to present a comprehensive record of the process followed in its production and to outline proposals for future monitoring and reporting in relation to its implementation. It will therefore highlight the strength of the government's commitment to volunteering and the expectations which this places on local authorities and provide an initial appreciation of volunteering activity within Council Services and beyond. Additionally it will demonstrate that a volunteering policy will not only benefit the Council, its services and service users, but also volunteers themselves and the wider community.

## **1.2 Consultation and Research**

As indicated at the outset, consultation has been a crucial element in the production of this Policy. It was conducted extensively over a 12 month period by a variety of means and throughout the exercise everyone involved reacted in a very positive manner to what was proposed and gave their utmost co-operation. Its contribution to the Policy and the proposals for its implementation cannot be under-estimated.

The consultation involved

- Extensive and comprehensive liaison throughout 2001 to date in meetings of the Corporate Working Group;
- A full audit of Council services in the second half of 2001 to assess the profile of volunteering within the Council;
- 7 separate focus groups involving volunteers and their supervisors with all participants being asked to complete follow up questionnaires (December 2001-January 2002);
- close liaison with the Volunteer Centre whose manager is a member of the Working Group and who has provided valuable ongoing advice and expertise as well as liaising with the Ayrshire and Arran National Health Services on their volunteering proposals during development of this policy;
- discussion with officers of Volunteer Development Scotland (VDS) the National Centre for Volunteering who provided guidance, especially in the initial stages of the policy preparation;

As to the future, services and volunteers themselves and now Trade Unions will continue to be important in the ongoing consultation process which will be required in the impending stages of implementation, monitoring and review of the Policy. Liaison with the local and national volunteering agencies will also continue to be a valuable element in our ongoing consultation.

It is also important at this stage to emphasise the extensive research undertaken by the Group through its study of Government publications, VDS booklets and articles, as well as numerous policies produced by other local authorities and the NHS.

### **1.3 The Government's Commitment to Volunteering**

In 1995 the Scottish Office took a major step in raising the profile and standard of volunteering through their publication of SO Circular 15/95. This provided guidance to the new unitary authorities on preparing volunteering policies and introduced the useful and most popularly quoted definition of volunteering as being:-

“the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society, the community, the environment and individuals outwith one’s immediate family. It is undertaken freely, by choice, and without concern for financial gain.

In 1999 the UK Government then launched the Active Community Initiative "to promote the value of community involvement and encourage more people to become involved as volunteers and in community action" and "to support public, private and voluntary agencies so that they recognise the important contribution that active communities make towards planning, policy making and service delivery". Most significantly in 2000, the Scottish Executive demonstrated their determination to support and encourage such activity in their adoption of the Active Communities Strategy whose foreword by the then Deputy Minister for Communities confirmed:-

"We have this commitment because we believe that volunteering and community action have an important part to play in promoting active citizenship. If we can promote the concept of active citizens, contributing to their local community as well as to the wider society, then we will secure better Government policies and more responsive public services because people have had an active role in fashioning them.

Scottish Ministers are committed to tackling the problems of poverty, disadvantage, and social exclusion that exist in Scotland today. If we are to succeed, it will be because ordinary Scots take up the challenge. Involvement through individual acts of volunteering or through collective community action can help make this happen".

This Strategy which stamped a national identity on volunteering in Scotland has four specific aims, viz:-

- to bring about more positive attitudes at all levels towards volunteering,
- to put volunteering at the heart of policy and practice,
- to broaden the range of people involved, and
- to increase the number of people involved.

In order to ensure progress in these areas a National Forum was also established to monitor and review the actions being taken by local authorities and others within the public, voluntary and private sectors. In specific terms local authorities are expected to support, fund and assist in the development of volunteering and community organisations, to incorporate the principles of the Active Community Strategy into key areas of their activity, to promote volunteering and community action through their schools and to demonstrate their support for volunteering and community action in corporate and strategic plans. This work is either in place or ongoing as evidenced by the following examples:-

- volunteering and community action are key elements in the Council's Corporate Plan "Towards and Beyond 2000" and the North Ayrshire Community Plan 2000-2010;
- the Council provides significant financial support to community organisations through grant funding;
- the Council provides support to the community and voluntary sector both financially and in terms of in-kind assistance, e.g. Arran Council for Voluntary Service, the Council for Voluntary Service in North Ayrshire and the Volunteer Centre in North Ayrshire, and to volunteer involving organisations such as North Ayrshire Citizens Advice Service;
- the Council's drive to build in the concept of active citizenship throughout the curriculum within North Ayrshire's schools.

These areas of activity clearly demonstrate the Council's commitment to addressing the aims of the Active Communities Strategy and the production and implementation of a North Ayrshire Council Volunteering Policy will do much to underpin these efforts.

#### **1.4 The Profile of Volunteering in North Ayrshire**

As a result of the work carried out by the Corporate Working Group we are able to present the first comprehensive profile of volunteering within North Ayrshire Council and the first attempt to assess its impact. The extensive audit completed last autumn showed that almost 1000 volunteers were engaged throughout Council services at that time, with 42% operating as and when required and the remaining 52% contributing 537 hours per week. A full summary of the audit findings demonstrates the full extent of the involvement of volunteers within Council services.

The series of focus groups conducted last December and January with a cross section of volunteers and supervisors from a variety of services provided an invaluable insight into their experiences. Without exception the volunteers were quick to praise the services in which they were located and constructive in their suggestions as to the things which would make their experience more rewarding and enjoyable. On a personal level individuals recognised the opportunity which volunteering presented for personal growth and in some cases acknowledged that the training which they had undergone had enhanced their employment prospects. Volunteer supervisors in turn praised volunteers for enhancing their services and spoke of their contribution as providing something quite different within services which they believed could not be provided by the local authority.

The provision of a policy will allow the Council to acknowledge the value of the significant contribution being made by their volunteers and to confirm their ongoing commitment to volunteering within services and beyond. It also allows the Council to set out the principles which it will strive to uphold in its engagement of volunteers and in its promotion, support and development of volunteering generally.

Whilst it has been possible to gauge the extent of volunteering activity within our own services, there are no figures available to indicate how many people volunteer within North Ayrshire. It would be possible to extrapolate statistics from national totals but this would be of limited value. What is formally known, however, is that in less than 2 years almost 450 people have registered with the Volunteer Centre in North Ayrshire alone as actively looking to volunteer. The Centre in turn has referred many of these individuals to agencies requesting volunteers. Additionally two Councils for Voluntary Service operate in Arran and North Ayrshire. Their core service is to provide information, advice and support to local groups to help them manage their organisations and activities. Between them they have registered in excess of 200 community/volunteer involving organisations and they have in addition formed a Communities Linking Partnership to ensure "that a truly comprehensive service is delivered to all the distinct communities within North Ayrshire. All told, it is reckoned that there are over 2,000 voluntary and community groups operating in North Ayrshire.

The Council's policy will ultimately impact on the work of these agencies and the volunteers and the volunteering organisations whose interests they represent.

## **1.5 The Provision which the Policy will Make**

In addition to providing a formal declaration of Council support for volunteering and a recognition of its value, the policy will be of benefit to services, their volunteers and to the wider voluntary sector by establishing guidelines which seek to:-

- outline the principles on which volunteers are engaged by the authority;
- achieve consistency across all services;
- define the roles, rights and responsibilities of both North Ayrshire Council and its volunteers;
- provide a code of practice governing the relationship of North Ayrshire Council with its volunteers and to give structure and identity to this relationship;
- reflect the purpose, values and standards and strategies of North Ayrshire Council in its involvement of volunteers;
- articulate the expectations of both North Ayrshire Council and its volunteers;
- identify how North Ayrshire Council will fulfil each of its roles and responsibilities for the support and development of volunteering in its area; and

- provide a model of good practice.

## **1.6 Implementing the Policy**

While some Council services do already comply with certain aspects of the policy others have not yet reached that stage. Accordingly it is acknowledged that implementation will present more of a challenge for some services than others. It is also accepted that it will take some time to address the requirements of the policy in full. Services will nonetheless be expected to engage their volunteers within a framework of good practice and the policy lays down seven minimum expectations which all services must strive to achieve in relation to their selection, engagement and support of volunteers.

To facilitate access to the Policy and the guidance manual they will be available electronically, and to increase understanding of their implications training will be offered to appropriate staff.

## **1.7 Monitoring Arrangements**

The Officers Working Group will continue to meet (twice a year seems sufficient) to monitor and review progress on the implementation of the policy and to provide updates to the Council as and when required. At three yearly intervals, commencing in 2005 (at a date to be agreed with Services), the Group will commission a further volunteering audit and focus group discussions with volunteers and supervisors. This work will be carried out by the Chief Executive who will then report to Council with evidence of the progress which has been made against the baseline information gathered in 2001.

# COMPOSITION OF THE VOLUNTEERING POLICY OFFICERS' WORKING GROUP

David Addison	Finance
Colin Bruce	Community Education
Andrew Fraser	Legal and Regulatory Services
Vicki Gouldthorpe	Social Services
Shona King	Corporate and Democratic Support
Angela Little	Corporate and Democratic Support
Ainsley Main	Personnel
Gordon McNeil	Social Services
Alex Pettigrew	Community Education
Jan Ward	Educational Services
Brenda Walker	Volunteer Centre

## Volunteering Audit undertaken during Summer/Autumn 2001

		Total		Schools		All Others	
<b>Total Number of Returns</b>		<b>107</b>		<b>57 (53%)</b>		<b>50 (47%)</b>	
Do you engage volunteers	Yes	69	(64.5%)	46	(67%)	23	(33%)
	No	38	(35.5%)	10	(26%)	28	(74%)

<b>Total number of volunteers</b>	<b>903</b>		<b>462 (51%)</b>	<b>441 (49%)</b>
Male	216	(24%)	65 (30%)	151 (70%)
Female	687	(76%)	397 (58%)	290 (42%)
Under 25	68	(8%)	23 (34%)	45 (66%)
25 – 40	435	(48%)	335 (77%)	100 (23%)
41 – 50	198	(22%)	67 (34%)	131 (66%)
51+	202	(22%)	37 (18%)	165 (82%)

<b>Hours Worked</b>	<b>537 per week</b>	152	(28%)	385	(72%)
Number of hours worked	36 responses	(52%)			
Work hours as required	33 responses	(48%)			
Average hours worked	7.8 per week				

<b>Expenses</b>		<b>£84,899 per year</b>					
Are expenses paid	Yes	17	(25%)	5	(29%)	12	(71%)
	No	52	(75%)	41	(79%)	11	(21%)
Set Amount		6	(35%)	2	(33%)	4	(67%)
Out of Pocket		8	(47%)	1	(12%)	7	(88%)
(3 responses did not specify)							
Budget for expenses	Yes	8	(47%)	2	(25%)	6	(75%)
	No	9	(53%)	3	(33%)	6	(67%)

<b>Training and Supervision</b>							
Induction training provided	Yes	46	(67%)	33	(72%)	13	(28%)
	No	23	(33%)	13	(56%)	10	(44%)
Ongoing training provided	Yes	33	(48%)	22	(67%)	11	(33%)
	No	36	(52%)	24	(67%)	12	(33%)

Are volunteers supervised	Yes	60	(87%)	45	(75%)	15	(25%)
	No	9	(13%)	1	(11%)	8	(89%)

**Notes from Community Education Volunteering Focus Group held on  
Friday 18 January 2002**

<b>Reasons for volunteering</b>	<p>Personal interest – child at playgroup/wanted to understand difficulties of young people.</p> <p>Wanted to become involved in community activities</p>
<b>Recruitment</b>	<p>Through involvement of child/young person in group</p> <p>Indirectly by attending community meeting and finding out about other activities in the local area.</p>
<b>Benefits from volunteering</b>	<p>Gained self confidence</p> <p>Learned new skills</p> <p>Gained new friends/contacts</p>
<b>Improvements to Current Situation</b>	<p>Opportunities to network with other volunteers and organisations</p> <p>Better access to information on funding</p>
<b>Support</b>	<p>Good support provided by officers of the Council in relation to completing applications for funding, providing contacts, and training.</p>

**Volunteers who register with the Volunteer Centre receive the newsletter which provides information on volunteering issues including funding opportunities for groups and individuals. A recruitment day will be held during Volunteer Week in June which provides volunteers with a valuable networking opportunity, only those volunteers registered with the Centre can be invited to attend.**

**Notes from Mixed Volunteers Focus Group held on  
Tuesday 11 November 2001 at 2.30 p.m.**

<p><b>Reasons for volunteering</b></p>	<p>Wanted to get back into the 'big wide world' after raising children.</p> <p>Wanted to give something back to the community – felt had something to offer</p>
<p><b>Recruitment</b></p>	<p>Approached Volunteer Centre directly who matched interests/skills and experiences with a volunteering vacancy</p> <p>Indirectly via an area of work which involved the Ayrshire Educational Business Partnership who are operating a Mentoring Scheme in schools</p>
<p><b>Training/supervision</b></p>	<p>One full day induction provided and regular mentoring meetings held</p> <p>No training or supervision provided via the library – also no networking between other volunteers involved in the same project</p>
<p><b>Improvements to Current Situation</b></p>	<p>Supervision and networking between volunteers would reduce the feeling of working in isolation</p> <p>Clarification on the issue of time off from work to undertake volunteering required</p> <p>ID would have been useful when out and about undertaking volunteering activities</p> <p>Seeing or being advised of the outcome of the project undertaken</p> <p>Guidelines or policy would have been useful</p>

**Notes from School Volunteering Focus Group held on  
Monday 10 November 2001 at 10.30 a.m.**

<b>Reasons for volunteering</b>	<p>Child at school – vested interest</p> <p>Want to help school provide additional activities</p> <p>Allows you to see what is happening within the school</p>
<b>Recruitment</b>	<p>Via school newsletter</p> <p>Directly by teacher</p> <p>Already involved in other school activity and approached directly by Head Teacher</p>
<b>Benefits from volunteering</b>	<p>Bridges the gap between parents and teachers</p> <p>Allows greater understanding of issues dealt with by the school as a whole and teachers within the classroom setting</p> <p>Good experience for future employment – without the responsibility of work</p> <p>Keeps you involved in the community when not working</p> <p>Learning new skills - computing</p> <p>No child care required – work school hours</p>
<b>Improvements to Current Situation</b>	<p>Regular meetings of volunteers with staff involvement to share experiences and to be kept abreast of new developments</p> <p>More information on what is expected of volunteers</p> <p>Task descriptions</p> <p>Sharing of tasks so no one volunteers feels obligated to be involved in specialised area (e.g. cycling proficiency) – or activity does not happen if volunteer absent</p>
<b>Others</b>	<p>Health and Safety – transporting of children in volunteers cars (guidance/clarification required)</p>

## Notes from Social Services Volunteering Focus Group held on Wednesday morning 23 January 2002

<p><b>Reasons for volunteering</b></p>	<p>Time on hands due to children being at school all day.</p> <p>Undertaking further education and seeking practical experience.</p> <p>Retired Social Worker for the blind and keen to remain involved in that area</p> <p>Paid off and wanted to do something to fill the day</p>
<p><b>Recruitment</b></p>	<p>Historical – lunch club moved into Social Services building</p> <p>Had a formal interview and induction of 2 hours for 4 weeks</p> <p>Already known – moved from being an employee to a volunteer</p> <p>Interviewed by Social Services and placed at Kiln Court</p>
<p><b>Benefits from volunteering</b></p>	<p>Fills your day and you meet new people</p> <p>Learn new skills and you see a benefit from your involvement</p> <p>Ensures the continuation of work already undertaken</p> <p>Pleasure from seeing people appreciate your visits and time spent with them</p>
<p><b>Improvements to Current Situation</b></p>	<p>ID badge</p> <p>Formalised budget for groups e.g. Old People's Welfare Committee</p>

**Notes from Social Services Volunteering Focus Group held on  
Wednesday afternoon 23 January 2002**

<b>Reasons for volunteering</b>	Wanted to fill the day  Always encouraged by parents to help others, part of upbringing
<b>Recruitment</b>	Sought advice from an agency and ended up being involved  Attended a meeting and became involved in the Kids and Carers Scheme
<b>Benefits from volunteering</b>	When you help others you help yourself  Helping children and their families develop and flourish
<b>Improvements to Current Situation</b>	Training – first aid would be useful when caring for children with medical conditions

## Notes from Supervisors Focus Group held on

Monday 10 November 2001 at 2.30 p.m.

<b>Workload</b>	Time requires to be committed to plan and manage volunteers. Line managers do not always appreciate this time needs to be set aside in order to maximise the potential of volunteers.
<b>Training</b>	Training should be provided to recognise the value of volunteers.  H & S training provided for lunch club volunteers, however they do not want to do things in a new way
<b>Supervision</b>	Should be provided on a pro rata basis dependent on the hours worked.
<b>Funding</b>	Funding for volunteer expenses should be taken into account in budgets.
<b>Expenses</b>	Should be paid as standard to volunteers who incur expenditures in relation to volunteering.
<b>Benefits of Policy</b>	Would detail SCRO checks, H & S training, hygiene regulations etc. and make volunteers/supervisors aware of standards and boundaries.

## VOLUNTEERING POLICY

### RESEARCH MATERIAL

<b>Name of Publication</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Date</b>
The Motivations and Barriers to Volunteering	Joseph Rowntree Foundation	August 1990
National Survey of Volunteering	Joseph Rowntree Foundation	December 1991
The Payment of Volunteers	Joseph Rowntree Foundation	June 1994
"Make a Difference: An Outline Volunteering Strategy for the UK"	Volunteering Unit	6 June 1995
"Guidance on Volunteering"	Scottish Office Circular 15/95	11 August 1995
Local Authority Policy for Volunteering	Volunteer Development Scotland	1997
The National Survey of Volunteering	Institute for Volunteering Research	1997
Guidelines on Volunteers' Expenses	Volunteer Development Scotland	1998
"The Scottish Compact"	Scottish Office	October 1998
Ayrshire & Arran Health Board Volunteering Policy	AAHB	November 1998
Dumfries & Galloway Council Volunteering Policy	Dumfries & Galloway Council	December 1998
"The Scottish Compact: Good Practice Guides"	Scottish Executive	2000
"North Ayrshire Community Plan 2000-2010"	North Ayrshire Council	2000
"Supporting Active Communities in Scotland" (Draft Strategy)	Scottish Executive	2000
Ayrshire & Arran Primary Care NHS Trust Volunteering Policy	Ayrshire & Arran Primary Care NHS Trust	February 2000
Guidance on Council's Volunteering Policy Statements	COSLA/Volunteer Development Scotland	March 2000

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East Ayrshire Council Volunteering Policy	East Ayrshire Council	April 2000
Supporting Active Communities in Scotland" (Response)	Scottish Executive	June 2000
North Ayrshire Volunteers Annual Report 1999/2000	North Ayrshire Volunteers	September 2000
Volunteer Development Factsheets 1-6	Volunteer Development Scotland	January 2001
"At One with Volunteers"	Scottish Executive/VDS/COSLA (Conference)	15 January 2001
Volunteering in Scotland	Scottish Executive	2001
"NAC Corporate Plan 2001- 2004"	North Ayrshire Council	March 2001
Engaging Volunteers: A Good Practice Guide	ACDU/Volunteer Development Scotland	2002
Get it Right from the Start	Abbey National Community Partnership	2002
"Toolkit for the Safe Recruitment of Staff"	North Ayrshire Council	2002
Volunteer Information Pack	Volunteer Centre in North Ayrshire	2002
Dumfries & Galloway Volunteering Audit	Dumfries & Galloway	March 2002
Volunteers counted as Employees under Minimum Wage Law	Volunteer Development Scotland (Newsletter)	March 2002
West Dunbartonshire Council Volunteering Policy	West Dunbartonshire Council	
Falkirk Council Volunteering Policy	Falkirk Council	
Volunteering and Welfare Benefits	Volunteer Development Scotland	

Insuring Volunteers	Volunteer Development Scotland	
Risks of Creating a Contract of Employment with Volunteers	James Sinclair Taylor (National Association of Volunteer Bureaux Information Paper)	
"Active Communities and the ACDU"	Volunteer Development Scotland	
"Protecting the Vulnerable by Safer Recruitment" introducing Disclosure Scotland	Scottish Executive/ Scottish Criminal Records Office	

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## NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

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### Agenda Item 5

Corporate Policy Committee

18 June 2002

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**Subject:** North Ayrshire Council's Volunteering Policy

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**Purpose** To introduce a Council Volunteering Policy together with proposals to facilitate its implementation throughout Council Services

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**Recommendation** That the Committee (i) adopt the Volunteering Policy; (ii) approve arrangements for its implementation and review; and (iii) authorise ongoing discussions with Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board's Volunteering Development Group to assess and report on the possibility of a Pan-Ayrshire Volunteering Policy at a later stage.

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#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The terms of Scottish Office Circular 15/95, the Scottish Executive's Active Communities Strategy (2000) and the dedicated funding provided to SIP areas in 2001/2002 all provide evidence of the Government's growing commitment to promoting active citizenship and their conviction that volunteering and community action have a vital role to play in this. Through their Strategy the Scottish Executive aims to encourage more positive attitudes towards these activities, to locate them at the heart of policy and practice and to broaden the range and number of people involved in them. To assist in bringing this about the Scottish Executive has urged all Local Authorities and Health Services to produce Volunteering Policies and many have done so
- 1.2 This report presents a policy for North Ayrshire Council, framed by a Corporate Working Group and accompanied by a Guidance Manual to assist services in introducing arrangements or building on existing practices in their engagement of volunteers. Although somewhat later than others in its production, this Policy has only been produced after considerable research and extensive consultation. Additionally, the Working Group believed that a Guidance Manual was an essential element in getting the Policy to "work" and this took some time to prepare. These comprehensive preparations which began in January 2001 have paved the way to better ensure that the Policy is implemented and have already done much to raise the profile, knowledge and recognition of volunteering within our services. The Policy document is enclosed as an appendix to this report.

## **2. Current Position**

- 2.1 The National Centre for Volunteering has recently produced figures indicating that 22 million adults in the UK are involved in formal volunteering each year providing some 90 million hours of voluntary effort per week and an estimated economic value in the region of £40 billion per year. Moreover their research revealed that 80% of respondents believed that volunteers offer something "quite different" which the state cannot provide. This fact has been borne out by the Working Group's own research findings, particularly in their discussions with volunteers and their supervisors.
- 2.2 Although a direct breakdown of these UK statistics is not available for Scotland the Household survey undertaken by the Scottish Executive in 1999 did show that 27% of all adults were taking part in volunteering activity on a regular basis and in 2000 at the launch of the Active Communities Strategy the figure of 600,000 volunteers regularly engaged in volunteering provided a baseline against which the Scottish Executive will monitor the Strategy's success at national level.
- 2.3 There are no figures to indicate how many people volunteer throughout North Ayrshire and whilst a figure could be extrapolated from national totals this would be of very limited value. What is known formally is that in its last 18 months of operation the Volunteer Centre in Saltcoats alone has officially registered over 400 people as actively looking for a volunteering activity and has referred many of these individuals to agencies looking for volunteers. Additionally, Arran Council for Voluntary Service and CVS North Ayrshire have between them registered over 200 community organisations as members and provide them with information, advice and support in managing their organisations and activities. It is also obvious that many individuals throughout North Ayrshire regularly give of their time to support a multiplicity of sports/leisure clubs, uniformed organisations, advice centres, community organisations, etc. etc. all of which are instrumental in enhancing peoples' lives.
- 2.4 Within North Ayrshire Council itself an Audit was undertaken between July and October last year to assess the profile of volunteering within North Ayrshire Council as part of the Policy preparation. This research "uncovered" a total of almost 1000 volunteers engaged throughout Council services and the full findings of the Audit have already been made available to members and chief officers as have the outcome of subsequent focus group discussions with volunteers and their supervisors.
- 2.5 The Policy which the report presents seeks to recognise this valuable contribution made by volunteers in Council services particularly and in North Ayrshire generally, to demonstrate the Council's commitment to support volunteering and volunteers, and most specifically to set out the principles which it will strive to uphold in its engagement of volunteers and in its promotion, support and development of volunteering throughout North Ayrshire.

### **3. Proposals**

3.1 Once the Policy is approved the following Action Plan will be set in motion to produce and publish the Policy and its associated documents and to prepare for its implementation:-

#### **(a) The Period 18 - 28 June 2002**

A comprehensive document will be published to provide a record of the process used in producing the Policy and to serve as an example of good practice. This will comprise:-

- the Background to the Policy;
- the Policy itself;
- the Findings of the Working Group's Research and Consultation;
- the Guidance Manual which will be entitled "Managing Volunteers".

This compendium will then be circulated to members, schools, Directors and Heads of Service as a reference document and thereafter further copies will be provided to outside agencies on request.

It is also proposed to make the Policy and Guidance Manual available on Navigate and on the Council's website.

#### **(b) July, August & September 2002**

In these weeks services will have the opportunity to fully digest the Policy and Manual prior to its launch and implementation, provide feedback on it, and receive corresponding support from the Corporate Working Group.

#### **(c) Latter half of September 2002**

A launch/implementation date will be organised to ensure maximum publicity.

#### **(d) November 2002**

Training will be provided for those officers managing/supervising volunteers and its content will have been informed by the feedback from services.

#### **(e) Ongoing elements - 2005**

(i) The Corporate Working Group will continue to meet (twice a year seems sufficient) to:-

- monitor/review the Policy;
- provide ongoing support to services;
- report to Corporate Policy Committee at appropriate stages; and
- prepare for a second audit and further focus group discussions in early 2005 (and at 3 yearly intervals thereafter subject to review) using the 2001 findings as a baseline against which to measure progress.

(ii) Discussions will continue with the Ayrshire NHS Volunteer Development Group to determine the benefit of a Pan-Ayrshire Policy at a future date but certainly no earlier than 2005.

Progress on these proposals will demonstrate the Council's commitment to volunteers and volunteering and provide formal recognition of the valuable role played by volunteers within NAC's own services and beyond.

#### **4. Implications**

- 4.1 The implementation of the Policy has implications for services in terms of staffing resources needed to establish/build on arrangements to engage and support volunteers and in terms of the costs involved in meeting volunteers' out of pocket expenses, insurance cover and disclosure checks primarily. Services will however be supported by the Guidance Manual and the offer of ongoing support. Those services who currently make no provision in relation to out of pocket expenses specifically would require to take steps to provide for this in the next financial year and it is intended that services would cover costs in those cases where disclosure checks are required for volunteers as they do for employees.
- 4.2 The Council will now be able to demonstrate their adherence to the Scottish Executive's call to authorities to produce and implement a volunteering policy and in so doing clearly prepare to meet the objectives set within the Active Communities Strategy and address key elements with the Council's own Corporate Plan "Realising Our Potential" and the North Ayrshire Community Plan in relation to volunteering and community action. Moreover by instituting formal monitoring and 3 yearly reviews the Council will be able to further develop/amend the Policy on an ongoing basis in the light of practical and other considerations and thereby determine its success.
- 4.3 In addition, the Council will be able to demonstrate Good Practice in their engagement of volunteers.

#### **5. Consultation**

- 5.1 The Corporate Working Group responsible for the production of the Policy and the associated documents, comprises officers from Educational and Social Services where the majority of volunteers are engaged, and further representation is provided by officers drawn from Legal, Personnel and Financial Services and the Corporate and Democratic Support Team.
- 5.2 Extensive consultation was undertaken throughout the preparation of the Policy. This is evidenced by the Volunteering Audit conducted within all Council services, the focus group discussions with volunteers and supervisors (all of whom also completed questionnaires), and close liaison with the Volunteer Centre who also pursued discussions with Ayrshire and Arran Health Board and Trusts during its development. At the outset the Working Group held preliminary discussions with Volunteer Development Scotland whose guidance notes on preparing a Volunteering Policy produced in conjunction with COSLA, was used to frame the Policy and whose good practice publications have been influential in framing the Guidance Manual.
- 5.3 All services and UNISON have been fully consulted on the Policy and no adverse comments have been made.

#### **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 The Scottish Executive expects all local authorities to have a Volunteering Policy. This report presents such a Policy which is not only based on extensive research and consultation but also establishes arrangements to facilitate its implementation and ensure its ongoing review. Its proposals also allow ongoing discussion with the NHS and adjoining authorities in Ayrshire to consider the benefits of ultimately producing a Pan-Ayrshire Volunteering Policy.

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