

THE VOLUNTEERING POLICY

This policy recognises the contribution which volunteers make in complementing the work of Council employees within North Ayrshire Council and provides a framework of good practice for engaging volunteers within its services.

For the purposes of this policy a North Ayrshire Council Volunteer is defined as a volunteer who enhances a Council service and who reports to, receives support from and communicates any problems to a Council employee in the course of their engagement.

1. RECOGNITION AND COMMITMENT

- 1.1.1. North Ayrshire Council is proud of North Ayrshire's "volunteer force" and acknowledges the valuable role it plays in enhancing Council services and adding to the quality of people's lives within North Ayrshire and its communities generally.
- 1.1.2 North Ayrshire Council recognises the essential contribution of volunteers in meeting the Council's priorities in relation to Social Justice, Social Inclusion, Community Participation, Lifelong Learning, the linking of schools to communities, and certain aspects in relation to criminal justice.
- 1.1.3 North Ayrshire Council is committed in its support of volunteering and volunteers and will continue to demonstrate this commitment by providing funding and other forms of "in-kind" assistance either through its own services or through local volunteering agencies.
- 1.1.4 North Ayrshire Council will provide and promote a model of Good Practice in its engagement and management of volunteers.
- 1.1.5 North Ayrshire Council will ensure that the policy is subject to review, responsive to the impact of new and ongoing issues and issues of practical application, and supports existing and future policies of the Council.
- 1.1.6 North Ayrshire Council will require services to demonstrate that their arrangements to implement the terms of this policy have been guided by the "Managing Volunteers - Procedure and Guidance Notes".

1.2 PROMOTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES

1.2.1 General

It is acknowledged that volunteers are engaged within services of North Ayrshire Council in many different activities and to varying degrees and that they enhance the services provided by the Council to its customers. All services are urged to consider ways in which volunteers can be engaged in tasks, which compliment the work of our employees.

1.2.2 The Relationship between Volunteers and Council Employees

Volunteers will not be used as a substitute for Council employees and will not be asked to undertake tasks which could result in a reduction in the number of Council employees.

Volunteers will not provide cover for employees for any reason but will enhance the service and undertake activities which would not normally otherwise be provided by employees.

Services will have a responsibility to encourage good relations between their employees and their volunteers and be sure that each is clear as to their respective roles.

1.2.3 Attracting Volunteers

Where services actively seek to attract volunteers, such opportunities will be advertised in an appropriate and accessible manner so as to encourage suitable applications from people from all walks of life.

1.2.4 Selecting and Engaging Volunteers

The selection of volunteers will be in accordance with North Ayrshire Council's Equal Opportunities Policy and will according to the varying needs of services and legislative requirements involve the following methods of engagement: -

- ◆ Completion of an application form;
- ◆ Attendance at a selection interview;
- ◆ The production of references;
- ◆ Application for an appropriate disclosure check where necessary.

Where a volunteer responds to an advertisement or independently offers to provide their services they will be considered by the Council within six weeks and kept advised of progress where delays occur.

Where a placement cannot be found within a service for a volunteer their request will be entered on a reserve list and they will also be advised to contact the Volunteer Centre in Saltcoats. Their name will remain on the list for 1 year OR until a placement is found by either agency, whichever is the sooner.

Volunteers will, wherever possible, be given placements which in the view of North Ayrshire Council, reasonably match their individual skills and experience.

Volunteers who are successfully engaged within North Ayrshire Council will receive a description of their main tasks and details of their duties.

1.2.5 Supporting and Supervising Volunteers

North Ayrshire Council will require services to support and supervise volunteers by: -

- ◆ providing a welcome and introduction on their first day and a suitable and adequate induction on an agreed day thereafter;
- ◆ arranging access to a named point of contact to allow discussion and the provision of information, encouragement, support and recognition;
- ◆ providing appropriate identification;
- ◆ offering initial training and the revision of training on an ongoing basis which recognises their role and acknowledges their previous experience;
- ◆ ensuring that duties undertaken by volunteers are reasonable and not excessive;
- ◆ facilitating a suitable forum, at least annually, for volunteers within each service to get together to share their experiences;
- ◆ valuing and recognising the contribution of volunteers on an ongoing basis.

1.2.6 Volunteers' Expenses

The Council will reimburse reasonable out of pocket expenses.

1.2.7 Volunteers' Insurance

The Council will provide adequate public liability insurance.

1.2.8 Adherence to Statutory Requirements

The Council will fulfil its obligations in relation to Health and Safety Legislation and all other statutory requirements.

1.3 THE COUNCIL AND ITS VOLUNTEERS: COMMITMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

1.3.1 The Council will endeavour to fulfil the commitments made within this policy and as a minimum it will expect services to strive to incorporate the seven undernoted expectations into their procedures in respect of the selection, engagement and support of volunteers:-

- ◆ to have a Recruitment and Selection procedure which includes interviewing prospective volunteers, the taking up of references, and the taking up of disclosure checks as appropriate;
- ◆ to provide induction training appropriate to the tasks and duties to be undertaken by volunteers. Such training should always include health and safety and confidentiality issues;
- ◆ to ensure that volunteers have a named individual to refer to for support;
- ◆ to ensure that volunteers have a clear task description;
- ◆ to have appropriate insurance in place;
- ◆ to provide reasonable out of pocket expenses;
- ◆ to provide appropriate ongoing training.

The Council expects that volunteers in turn will:-

- ◆ act in an honest and reliable way;

- ◆ uphold the Council's values and aims;
- ◆ respect the need for confidentiality;
- ◆ work within the law, agreed policies and guidelines, remits and Codes of Practice;
- ◆ foster a positive attitude to, and relationship with, service users, employees of the Council and other volunteers; and
- ◆ carry out their duties and tasks effectively in a safe and sensitive manner to the satisfaction of the Council

1.3.2 Both the Council and the volunteer have the right to terminate the engagement at any time.

1.4 FUNDING OF SERVICES INVOLVING VOLUNTEERS

1.4.1 The Council in funding or purchasing services provided by service providers will expect them to adopt the general ethos of this policy. Whilst the Council recognises and respects the autonomy of such organisations it will expect them to engage their volunteers within a framework of good practice and as a minimum to strive to incorporate those seven expectations prescribed for Council services into their own procedures in respect of the selection, engagement and support of volunteers.

1.5 EMPLOYER SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING

1.5.1 North Ayrshire Council in endeavouring to encourage employer supported volunteering within its workforce will increase employee awareness and stimulate interest in volunteering opportunities by:-

- ◆ using available mechanisms such as the vacancy list and the Staff Newsletter and staff notice boards to publicise such opportunities; and
- ◆ pursuing the preparation of an Employer Supported Volunteering Policy for North Ayrshire Council.

1.6 MONITORING

The Council will arrange to: -

- ◆ monitor and review implementation of the policy on an ongoing basis;
- ◆ organise audits and focus groups on a 3 yearly basis, to gauge the success of the policy;
- ◆ receive reports at relevant stages identifying areas of further development and potential change within the policy.