



Draft Swansea Council Volunteering Policy

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1. Introduction

This volunteering policy sets out the principles and practice by which we involve volunteers / host volunteering opportunities and is relevant to staff and volunteers within the organisation. It aims to create a common understanding and to clarify roles and responsibilities to ensure the highest standards are maintained consistently in relation to the management of volunteers within Swansea Council.

The volunteer handbook gives further details about the support and procedures in place for volunteers.

2. Our Commitments

We recognise volunteers as an integral part of Swansea Council. Their contribution supports our mission and strategic aims and complements the role of paid staff. We aim to encourage and support volunteer involvement so that volunteers' contributions are recognised as an integral part of the Council's activities across its services and to ensure that volunteering benefits the Council, our services, the community at large and the volunteers themselves.

Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that paid staff are clear about the role of volunteers and to foster good working relationships between paid staff and volunteers,

(in line with the [WCVA / TUC Charter for Volunteering and Workplace Relationships](#))
Volunteers will not be used to replace staff or undertake the core duties of staff under their statutory obligations.

We are committed to offering a flexible range of opportunities and encouraging a diversity of people to volunteer with us, including those from under-represented groups such as youth, disabled people, older people and people from ethnically diverse communities.

We recognise that there are costs associated with volunteer involvement and this policy seeks to ensure that services hosting volunteers plan and commit financial and staffing resources for the development and support of volunteers within their service.

We recognise that people have a right to participate in the life of their communities through volunteering and can contribute in many ways. We recognise our responsibility to organise volunteering efficiently and sensitively so that the valuable gift of the volunteer's time is best used to the mutual advantage of all concerned.

3. What is a Volunteer?

Volunteers are individuals who undertake activity on behalf of our organisation, unpaid and of their own free choice.

The [Welsh Government Volunteering Policy](#) (2015) defines volunteering as activity which:

- is undertaken freely, by choice
- is undertaken to be of public / community benefit
- is not undertaken for financial gain

Work experience placements and internships are not the same as volunteering.

Volunteers may be involved on a one-off, short term or on a longer term, regular basis. They may be involved:

- in the direct delivery of our services
- in community engagement to raise awareness
- in one-off events and promotional activities
- in our offices or in community venues

Volunteers are valued for:

- Bringing additional, diverse, new skills and perspectives to the organisation
- Enabling us to be more responsive and flexible in our approach
- Championing our cause within the wider community
- Enhancing the quality of our services and of client experience
- Promoting the wellbeing of users of services, staff, local communities, and themselves

4. Standards of Good Practice

Our management practice is informed by the Code of Practice for Organisations involving volunteers and [Investing in Volunteers](#) Quality Standard for volunteer management.

5. Code of Conduct

It is expected that all volunteers will adopt the Council's values in undertaking their volunteering role within Swansea Council.

<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/article/1103/Our-values-and-principles>

There are expected standards of behaviour that all volunteers will ascribe to, in the same way as paid employees.

The organisation expects volunteers to:

- be reliable and honest
- uphold the organisation's values, processes and policies, including safeguarding people from harm
- participate in all required training for their role, making the most of opportunities given, e.g. for training, mentoring etc.
- carry out tasks within agreed guidelines
- maintain confidentiality, as required, and
- contribute positively to the team, service, and aims of the organisation.

Similarly, volunteers can expect that the Council will demonstrate its own values whilst guiding and supporting them in their volunteering role, and demonstrating reciprocal behaviours, based on respect and understanding.

Volunteers can expect

- To have clear information about what is and is not expected of them
- To receive adequate support and training relevant to role
- To be treated with respect and in a non-discriminatory manner
- To have opportunities for personal development
- To be recognised and appreciated
- To be able to say 'no' to anything which they consider to be unrealistic or unreasonable
- To know what to do if something goes wrong

From an administrative perspective, volunteers can expect:

- To be insured and volunteer in a safe environment, and
- To be reimbursed agreed out-of-pocket expenses

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Whilst volunteering roles will vary across Council services, there are standard procedures which should be in place for every volunteer, regardless of the role they are undertaking.

These include:

1. Every volunteer should be assigned a designated person or person(s) within the host service to whom they can report, as specified, and where they can obtain support, advice and guidance for the duration of their volunteering.
2. Every volunteer should have a role description of the duties and responsibilities they will have in their volunteering role, as well as a breakdown of the specific tasks they will be expected to perform. Volunteers should be provided with the appropriate training to perform all aspects of their role to a competent standard, and should receive regular supervisions to ensure their performance is sufficient, and to identify any ongoing or additional training and development needs.
3. Every volunteer should be advised by their designated person(s) who the safeguarding contact is for their area. A list of safeguarding contacts, by area, can be found here: <https://staffnet.swansea.gov.uk/namedsafeguardingpersons>
4. The named person/s has responsibility for the development, management, and co-ordination of voluntary activity within the host team, including volunteering procedures and the welfare of volunteers.

The volunteer role is based on trust and mutual understanding. There is no enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, for the volunteer to attend or to undertake particular tasks for the organisation, or to provide continuing opportunities for voluntary involvement, provision of training or benefits.

There should be a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged – both of what the organisation expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of the organisation.

7. Confidentiality and Data Protection

Volunteers should be made aware of their responsibilities in relation to confidentiality and Data Protection, and should be given specific training around related policies, procedures and guidance that they are expected to follow in adherence to Data Protection.

Similarly, they should also receive guidance on the various ways in which confidentiality can be inadvertently compromised.

Further information on confidentiality and Data Protection can be found in the volunteering section on Staffnet: <https://staffnet.swansea.gov.uk/volunteers>

Volunteers should also read and sign:

- The [Volunteer Agreement](#), and
- [Non-Disclosure Agreement](#) if the volunteer is handling personal data

Guidance for volunteers should also include:

- The need for confidentiality in relation to people who use the services and whom they may interact with; as well as the use of social media and images. Volunteers should clearly understand the repercussions of breaching confidentiality.
- Ensuring that volunteers are not given access to any data which, through its loss or misuse, could cause serious harm to the Council. Therefore, in most cases, volunteers should not receive access to data, shared drives or email accounts without a sound business case for doing so.

In relation to their personal data, volunteers should be aware:

- How their records will be stored and accessed in a way that complies with current data protection legislation.
- That they have freedom to control their personal data and ensure that it is not processed without their consent, and
- If any personal data is collected on the volunteer, there is an obligation for them to know why the data needs to be gathered, and how it will be used.

8. Recruitment and Selection

Swansea Council is committed to a fair and transparent process of recruiting and selecting volunteers, in the same way as for paid employees.

We aim to make the process as easy and effective as possible, enabling potential volunteers to demonstrate their preferences and motivations for volunteering opportunities across the Council's services.

Information will be made available to those enquiring about volunteering, including written role descriptions which set out the nature and purpose of the volunteering role, key tasks, skills required, and benefits.

A risk assessment will be undertaken on all volunteer roles and identified risks and steps to mitigate risks will be shared with the volunteer.

The Council will observe the following guidelines in recruiting and selecting volunteers:

1. Equal opportunities principles will be adhered to, including:
 - Advertising and promoting volunteering opportunities in a range of ways that make them accessible to potential volunteers from a wide range of communities; and
 - Providing reasonable adjustments to the recruitment and selection process for volunteers with disabilities, who should inform the Council in advance of any specific requirements to be accommodated.

2. Generally, the recruitment process will comprise the completion of an application form, interview, and the taking of references, although there may be slight deviations from this format, proportionate to the extent of the opportunity.

For example, it is anticipated that recruitment for volunteers for 'one-off' events might be a more succinct process than for regular volunteering of a longer duration, albeit that the same high standards and core processes should be applied to both.

Similarly, for each event, the exact format should be shared with the volunteer in advance, to enable them to adequately prepare and to share any requirements for reasonable adjustments in accordance with the application / interview process.

3. A clear and concise role description will be provided for each volunteering opportunity. This will set out the nature, purpose, and key skills and tasks of each role.
4. A risk assessment will be undertaken for each volunteer role, which will be shared with the volunteer, as will any steps to reduce or mitigate potential risks to the volunteer.
5. For volunteering opportunities that involve care-giving, and / or sustained and direct contact with young people and / or adults in a regulated service, volunteers will be required to undertake a full DBS Disclosure Check, which will be arranged by the Council. DBS Disclosures are treated in the strictest confidence, and a criminal record is not necessarily an exclusion to volunteering. This will be fully discussed with the volunteer should such a situation arise.
6. The DBS [eligibility tool](#) can be used to determine the appropriate level of DBS check that is required for the volunteer.
7. Where applicants are not able to be placed in their preferred role, they will be provided with feedback and given the opportunity to discuss alternative volunteering roles, signposted to the local volunteer centre, or the [Volunteering Wales](#) website.

9. Induction and Training

All volunteers should have a robust induction to their role, team, service and / or function, and to Swansea Council.

However, the Council is also mindful that volunteers have important commitments outside of their volunteering role and will endeavour to offer flexible scheduling for induction and training that considers volunteers' other responsibilities.

Whilst volunteers may be undertaking different roles across the Council, it is expected that the basic premise of an induction will contain the following elements:

- Clarify the nature and purpose of the volunteering role, how it complements and supports the roles of paid employees, and how the role of the volunteer is distinct and valued as an entity
- Orientation to the premises, necessary equipment, e.g. PPE, and important policies, including Health and Safety, Equal Opportunities, Safeguarding, etc.
- Mandatory training to be completed with timescales, and other learning opportunities available within the Council to develop new and existing skills, and to enhance volunteers' personal development in line with their volunteering role
- Details of supervision and support
- Confirmation of time commitments and standards of service, including the process for giving reasonable notice of non-attendance, etc., and
- Payment of expenses

Safeguarding Training:

The Council has a specific responsibility to keep its paid employees, volunteers and the people in its communities who receive and use its services safe, and promote their welfare.

Volunteers should read, and confirm as read, the Safeguarding Factsheet, prior to the commencement of their placement. The Safeguarding Factsheet can be found [here](#) **(insert link)**

Volunteers should complete the required safeguarding training as soon as possible, and confirm that they are familiar with the application of the safeguarding policies and information in the environment in which they are volunteering.

10. Support and Supervision

Volunteers will be offered support and supervision as appropriate for their role and / or setting, and this will be discussed during induction. Arrangements may vary according to the volunteer and the role undertaken, and may include telephone support, group meetings or one to one reviews.

11. Volunteers' Voices and Recognition

Volunteers will be given the opportunity, where relevant, to share their views and opinions with the organisation via staff and volunteer team meetings, planning events, focus groups and/or volunteering surveys.

Formal recognition of the contribution of volunteers is expressed, for example, through annual reports, website articles, social media, and during Volunteers' Week, (June 1st – June 7th each year).

Any plans for recognition should be discussed with volunteers beforehand, to ensure they agree with any personal information being shared.

12. Dealing with Problems

Swansea Council aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively, and consistently. It seeks to ensure that volunteers' views are heard, noted, and acted upon promptly.

There may be occasions, for example, where the performance or conduct of a volunteer does not meet with the expected standards of behaviour, or where a volunteer wishes to raise a grievance, or has concerns about something they have witnessed.

We will attempt to deal with any problems informally, and at the earliest opportunity. All volunteers will have a named person to whom they can turn in the case of any difficulty. Where informal resolution is not possible, the organisation's [Complaints Policy](#) will be adhered to.

Volunteers will be made aware of the organisation's Complaints Policy and how to use it. They will also be made aware of how inappropriate behaviour by volunteers will be addressed by the organisation.

13. Expenses

Volunteers will be given clear information about what expenses can be claimed and how to make a claim. Volunteers will be reimbursed pre-approved out of pocket expenses and travel expenses incurred by their volunteering activities.

14. Moving On

When volunteers move on from volunteering with us, they will be asked to provide feedback on the volunteering experience by way of an exit questionnaire. They will also be given the opportunity to discuss their responses to the questionnaire more fully.

Volunteers who have remained with the organisation for at least three months will have the right to request a reference. Volunteers will also be supported to explore other volunteering opportunities or move on to other options.

15. Other Relevant Documents

The Volunteer Handbook includes detailed, useful information for volunteers including template forms.

Organisational policies relevant to volunteers include:

- Health and Safety
- Equal Opportunities
- Confidentiality
- Social Media
- Safeguarding
- Complaints
- Settling Differences.

Other Relevant Documents

This is a list of the documents that are required to support the volunteering process:

- **Flowchart Process of Volunteering**

- Volunteer Application Form
- Volunteer Recruitment Checklist
- Volunteer Role Description
- Volunteering Offer Letter
- Requesting a Reference Document
- Safeguarding Factsheet for Volunteers
- Volunteers' Documentation Checklist for their Personal File
- Expenses Form

16. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Date approved:

Date of next review:

Responsible Officer:

DRAFT