



VOLUNTEER POLICY

March 2024

Version 6

ACCESS FOR ALL

Ashfield District Council (ADC) believes that equality is one of the key values of the organisation and must be embedded within all of the services we provide. The Authority will treat everyone as individuals with the same attention, courtesy and respect to ensure that people feel valued and respected and have equality of opportunity regardless of:

- Marital or civil partnership status
- Gender
- Gender reassignment / gender identity
- Religious belief
- Race (including colour, nationality or ethnic origins)
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Maternity and paternity
- Care Leavers

The Authority is legally required to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations within and between communities to build good community relations.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy can be downloaded from our website: www.ashfield.gov.uk (search for Equalities).

If you need help understanding any of this document:

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CORPORATE VOLUNTEER POLICY

The Policy provides a framework for volunteers across the Authority in a common, consistent, equitable and sustainable way whilst demonstrating the commitment that the Council has to the range of volunteer contributions made to Council services.

During January to December 2023, **323** Ashfield residents were volunteering regularly and on an ad-hoc basis for 1039 hours per week with the Council. Using the National Living Wage (2023/24) as a guide, this gave Council services added value of £519,901.

Volunteer roles greatly enhance the quality of life for Ashfield residents and include improving the environment, assisting with events and health and wellbeing related activities.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council recognises the vital contribution volunteers make to improving quality of life in communities across the District. In many respects volunteers are key drivers in helping bind communities together and therefore the Council needs to play its part in supporting and nurturing the current and the next generation of volunteers.
- 1.2 The Council is committed to increasing opportunities for local people to volunteer and a number of areas of activity within the Council particularly lend themselves to volunteering.
- 1.3 This Policy identifies how the Council will recruit and manage volunteers placed within the organisation.
- 1.4 The Policy's development is clearly linked to Community / Health and Environmental Volunteers whilst working alongside other partners, College / School placement schemes, both internal and external to the Council and with local businesses.

2.0 WHO ARE VOLUNTEERS?

- 2.1 **VOLUNTEERS** are people who, unpaid and of their own free will, contribute their time, energy and skills to benefit their community.
 - It is something an individual chooses to do.
 - There is no duress or coercion.
 - Their time is freely given.
 - There is no payment or expectation of payment.
 - Every individual has the right to volunteer.
 - Volunteering can be associated with a charitable or voluntary body. It can also include involvement with statutory agencies, self-help, events, sports clubs and informal community groups.
 - Volunteering includes action that effects social changes.
 - Volunteering should not be confused with Work Experience. Work experience is typically a short placement of one or two weeks, where a pupil / student will shadow an employee and get a feel for the work environment. This is usually during term time and is a separate process

managed by the Council's Human Resources Section. Whereas Volunteering is best for those who want to use their spare time to give something back to the community.

- Schools and Higher Education students often get involved in community activity such as organising / taking part in a litter pick. These will be risk assessed by those establishments alongside the Council process. All students will remain the responsibility of and must be supervised by their educational establishment at all times whilst volunteering.
- Children and young people are often introduced to volunteering by friends and / or family to encourage community involvement. If they want to get involved in any volunteering activity, they must remain under the direct supervision of the adult(s) responsible for their care.
- Anyone under the age of 18 must be supervised by appointed responsible adult(s) at all times whilst volunteering.

2.2

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING?

Learning New Skills and Developing Confidence - Many volunteers encounter a variety of new challenges when they give their time in their communities. Sharing new experiences with new people, they can learn new skills that can give them confidence to face challenges in other areas of their lives.

Matching Skills to People's Abilities and Strengths - Identifying appropriate volunteering opportunities will help with improved or enhanced self-confidence and better skills, greater self-esteem and social wellbeing.

Meeting New People - Joining together to bring about a change or improve the community is a great way to bond with others and become part of a network that may stay in touch long after the task is done. These networks strengthen communities and increase their capacity to support each other and tackle local issues. It might also help to meet people from a diverse range of backgrounds – people that are not usually part of daily life – increasing tolerance and respect.

Having Fun - Helping others can be fun. Not every volunteer experience is the same, but by finding an opportunity that matches interests, there is a good chance of having fun whilst contributing time.

Improving Health - Volunteering can improve health. Volunteering may give:

- a heightened sense of wellbeing and a stronger immune system
- an improvement in insomnia
- speedier recovery from surgery
- older and younger people a particular focus e.g. volunteering in sport / events includes all ages and abilities
- social responsibility to become involved in international events such as the Olympics.

Boosting Career Options - Many employers may prefer to employ a candidate with volunteering experience over one without as they believe that volunteering can enhance an individual's skills. Some employers believe that the experience gained through volunteering can be more valuable than that gained in paid employment.

Further education providers and schools are keen to strengthen student portfolios and CVs by signposting to volunteer opportunities.

Enhancing Local Services – volunteering activities often provide services, facilities and physical improvements that benefit the wider community and would otherwise not be provided. They can also add value to existing services and investments by helping to achieve additional benefits. Engaging volunteers can also help to ensure that services and projects are meeting local needs, by involving people in their delivery.

Improving Neighbourhood Perceptions – volunteering can make people feel better about the area that they live in. These benefits are not restricted to volunteers themselves – simply observing or being aware of local volunteering activities can make people feel more positive about their neighbourhood.

3.0 SCOPE

This Policy applies to all ADC services wishing to offer volunteer placements within their areas of operation and provides a framework to govern all services and schemes being delivered directly by the Council or in partnership.

For clarification and examples of regular and ad-hoc volunteers, please refer to the Council's Regular and Ad-hoc Volunteering Flowchart at Appendix 1. This excludes litter picking volunteers.

Regular volunteers will be guided through the ADC Regular Volunteer Registration Process shown at Appendix 2.

The Council supports local businesses and partners to get involved through 'Corporate Volunteer Opportunities - Give and Gain'.

The Council will recognise volunteer contributions and will publicise this on an ongoing basis to demonstrate the value that volunteers provide to local services and the community.

4.0 HOW VOLUNTEERING ADDRESSES THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Volunteering supports the following corporate priorities:

- Health and Happiness
- Homes and Housing
- Economic Growth and Place
- Cleaner and Greener
- Safer and Stronger

5.0 SELECTION AND PLACEMENT OF VOLUNTEERS

Our Guiding Principles when selecting and placing volunteers are:

- 5.1 Volunteers are not substitutes for paid employees in accordance with the Volunteering England / TUC Charter at

Volunteer Charter

- 5.2 Services provided by volunteers should enhance and not replace those provided by paid employees.
- 5.3 Volunteers should not perform tasks or provide services that are the legal responsibility of someone else.
- 5.4 Volunteers will be placed as far as possible in roles that match their original motivation to volunteer as well as their ability and availability linked to the Council's volunteering opportunities.
- 5.5 We welcome volunteer applications from all sections of the community regardless of gender, gender reassignment, colour, race, nationality, ethnic or racial origins, disability, marital status, sexuality, trade union activity, age, political or religious beliefs, or being a care leaver.
- 5.6 Opportunities for volunteers will be either as a result of an enquiry or by directly targeting schools, partners and other agencies as appropriate. Examples of opportunities within the Council can be seen at Appendix 1 Regular and Ad-hoc Volunteering Flowchart. There are also a number of voluntary and community sector volunteering opportunities available locally.
- 5.7 The registration and induction process is shown in Appendix 2. The volunteer must live, work or attend school and want to make a positive difference in the Ashfield District. On occasions references may be required due to the nature of the volunteering opportunity.

5.8 **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks**

DBS checks (either standard or enhanced) will only be carried out for volunteers where the volunteer role has been identified as requiring a DBS check in accordance with the eligibility guidance issued by DBS and with due regard to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Each volunteer role will be considered on an individual basis to ensure any checks carried out are not unlawful.

If the volunteer role is deemed eligible to have a DBS check then the volunteer will not commence the role unless completely supervised until a satisfactory DBS check has been received. Each section will have the responsibility of organising and funding volunteer DBS checks for eligible volunteers placed with them and to also notify the Human Resources Section that a check is required.

The suitability of applicants with criminal records will be determined based upon the volunteering role and the circumstances of the conviction. Any assessment will consider the nature of the work, any potential risks to the Council and its customers and whether satisfactory safeguards can be put in place.

Further general advice can be sought from the Human Resources Section as necessary.

- 5.9 Volunteers will be provided with a '**Volunteer Agreement**' during induction which will clarify the volunteer's role and expectations of both parties. For Litter Picking Volunteers this will be part of the online registration.

6.0 **VOLUNTEER INDUCTION AND TRAINING**

This section does not apply to litter picking volunteers who register online.

- 6.1 The training of volunteers is the responsibility of the host section.
- 6.2 If relevant, an initial meeting with an appropriate Officer will identify the scope of volunteering offered. Any specific training needs will ensure that the volunteer understands their voluntary role, often without direct Council Officer presence and supervision. The meeting could include:
- 6.2.1 An introduction to the Council, its aims and the roles, responsibilities, and relationships within the Council.
- 6.2.2 Information regarding roles, responsibilities, and relationships with outside organisations.
- 6.2.3 Advice and guidance on record keeping and relevant forms.
- 6.2.4 An explanation of the support available to volunteers and the problem solving procedure for reporting information and concerns.
- 6.2.5 An individual's responsibilities under Health, Safety and Insurance / Equalities and Diversity legislation and any other appropriate Policy documents.

- 6.2.6 Training opportunities including the Council's Corporate Training Programme available to volunteers provided that it is relevant to their duties and when spare capacity allows.
- 6.2.7 The Nottinghamshire District and Borough Councils - Children and Adults Safeguarding Policy and reporting arrangements.
- 6.3 Ad-hoc volunteering opportunities are made available periodically and would be subject to briefings on the day e.g. tree-planting volunteering and litter-picking duties etc.
- 6.4 If applicable, a Volunteer Induction Pack (VIP) will be issued as part of the process.

7.0 SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT OF VOLUNTEERS

This section does not apply to litter picking volunteers.

The Section hosting the volunteer must ensure that support exists, with decisions recorded where appropriate, and action taken. These arrangements should be an integral part of a volunteer's relationship with the Council.

The line management structure will require setting out for all volunteers and this will vary according to each Section's arrangements. Supervision will be delegated within the service area.

Effective support must be based on developing good working relationships between the supervisor and the volunteer which will contribute to retention of volunteers.

Arms-length support and a point of contact for some volunteering roles may be all the support that is required.

8.0 PROBLEM SOLVING PROCEDURE

The Council highly values volunteers and a volunteer's involvement is mostly a positive experience, however it is important to bear in mind that sometimes things can go wrong within a volunteer programme. A volunteer could have a complaint about another volunteer, an employee or the organisation itself. Similarly, it is possible that a volunteer's performance has declined, or that someone else has complained about a volunteer's work, attitude or conduct.

While we do not have legal duties towards volunteers and do not wish to create a contractual relationship, it is important that problems or complaints are dealt with fairly, openly, and consistently.

Please refer to Appendix 3 for full details of the Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure.

9.0 VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK

Volunteers are encouraged to provide feedback about their volunteering role and any issues that they feel may need addressing. They can do this by either using the on-line reporting form, emailing healthandwellbeing@ashfield.gov.uk in person at the council offices or by telephone.

10.0 VOLUNTEER EQUIPMENT AND OUT OF POCKET EXPENSES

Volunteers are provided with all the equipment they will need to undertake their voluntary role.

To reduce the impact on the environment, we encourage volunteers to be active in their local community within walking distance. As we do not expect volunteers to travel, we do not provide out of pocket expenses for volunteers.

11.0 HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE

Volunteers should ensure that the health, safety and welfare of themselves, customers, other members of the public and employees is considered at all times and to be aware of the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. Volunteers under the age of 18 will be strictly supervised at all times.

In order for the Council to protect its employees, which includes volunteers, from perpetrators and aggressors, it supplies a Corporate Employee Protection Register File (CEPR) that managers and staff can access to look for named persons and/or addresses. This is only to be used for awareness that gives recognised precautionary advice in the form of generic control measures.

In the event of a pandemic situation, it may be appropriate that all or some volunteering activities may be paused or modifications made to ensure compliance with any local or national guidelines. If paused, volunteering activities will only be resumed once deemed safe to do so by the Council's Risk & Emergency Planning Team.

12.0 VOLUNTEER CONDUCT

Volunteers are expected to display the highest levels of courtesy, conduct, integrity and behaviour towards employees, customers, members of the public and other volunteers at all times. They must not do anything which may bring the Council's or any employee's reputation into disrepute.

13.0 INSURANCE

ADC Insurance will provide full cover for all volunteers provided that they are volunteering directly on behalf of and are under the instruction of ADC and they meet the Council's criteria when accepted as a volunteer.

REGISTRATION

It is imperative that all volunteers have registered as this will confirm that they have been accepted as an ADC volunteer.

Anyone under the age of 18 must be registered and supervised by a responsible adult(s) at all times whilst volunteering

- 13.1 The Council arranges insurance contracts under two main headings: Employer's Liability and Public Liability. The following is a summary of these headings:
- 13.1.1 **Employer's Liability:** "Indemnifying" the Council against claims for employees for injury, death, illness or disease during the course of their employment. The contract is based on legal liability; any claimant must demonstrate that the Council has acted negligently.
- By definition "volunteers" are included within the term employees for insurance purposes. Any employee (and therefore volunteer) must act within the terms and conditions of their volunteer agreement in line with Council operating procedures, policies and guidelines.
- 13.1.2 **Public Liability:** Public Liability insurance protects the Council should a member of the public or any other third party suffer damage to property or injury to their person due to the negligence of any member or volunteer of the organisation. This covers the legal liability of the Council.
- 13.2 ADC Insurance will provide full cover for all volunteers provided that they are volunteering directly on behalf of and are under the instruction of ADC, including where ADC is engaged in a joint venture which has been declared to and accepted by our insurance company and where they meet the Council's criteria when accepted as a volunteer.
- a) "If the insured has a duty of care to these people whether volunteer workers or otherwise, and injury is suffered as a result of breach of such duty, the Policy will respond under the Employer's Liability or Public Liability as appropriate"
- b) There is a "grey area" on "shared projects with other organisations where it may be unclear for whose organisation a volunteer is working". ADC Insurance "will only cover those working directly on behalf of ADC and under the direction or control of, ADC and cover ADC's legal liability". The Council's risk assessment will need to scrutinise and challenge all models of outsourced delivery to seek assurances that service providers are competent, adequately insured and that standards of service are regularly monitored and reviewed by the Council.
- 13.3 All volunteer roles and tasks have been risk assessed and control measures implemented. All training should be thoroughly documented with relevant qualification / certificates in place. Each case is to be determined on its own merit and is the responsibility of the host Section concerned to make all necessary checks.
- 13.4 All claims are subject to the terms and conditions of the appropriate insurance policies.

14.0 CONFIDENTIALITY

In the course of providing volunteering services, volunteers may have access to confidential information relating to the host section or the Council's customers. The Council expects the volunteer not to use or disclose this information to any person either during the volunteer's volunteering experience or at any time afterwards. Any

breach of this requirement may lead to the volunteer being asked to leave. Volunteers agree to maintain confidentiality regardless of whether or not they know the individual, their associates and / or family. If the individual is known to the volunteer they should inform their volunteer supervisor immediately.

15.0 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

- 15.1 The Council is required to comply with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the FOI Act"), the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 ("the EIR"), any subordinate legislation made under the FOI Act / EIR and any guidance issued by the Information Commissioner. The Council is required to provide the information it holds unless an exemption applies.
- 15.2 Volunteers agree to assist and co-operate with the Council to enable the Council to comply with its obligations under FOIA and EIR whenever a request is made for information.

16.0 DATA PROTECTION LEGISLATION

- 16.1 Data Protection Legislation means the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 (or any other subsequent or additional legislation).
- 16.2 To process the volunteer's application, the Council will hold personal data about the volunteer. The Council will hold this data securely and process it in accordance with the Data Protection Legislation.
- 16.3 The Council may need to share personal information for the purposes of processing the volunteer's application, recruitment, management, payment (expenses) and for the collation of statistical information. The sharing of the information will be on this basis and will not be made public by the Council. The Council may need to share the personal information provided by the volunteer with relevant partnership organisations such as government departments, other local authorities and voluntary and community and private sector organisations such as Department for Work and Pensions, Job Centre Plus, Nottinghamshire County Council, Nottinghamshire Police, etc.
- 16.4 The Council is not able to preserve confidentiality where disclosure is required by other legislation.
- 16.5 The Council will also use the personal information provided for reasons in connection with Protecting Public Funds, preventing or detecting Crime and Disorder, Data Matching Initiatives with the National Audit Office and for other Government led initiatives.
- 16.6 Applicant volunteers are able to request / obtain copies of the information the Council holds about them by making a request in writing to the Information Officer or by completing the appropriate form on the Council's website.
- 16.7 If an individual is dissatisfied by how their personal information is held or disclosed a complaint can be made to the Data Protection Officer based at Ashfield District Council, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Nottingham, NG17 8DA.

- 16.8 Volunteers are required to comply with the Data Protection Legislation and agree that they will not provide any other Party information in breach of the Data Protection Legislation and all subordinate legislation relating thereto including the protection principles.

17.0 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY

Volunteers should familiarise themselves with the contents of the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy available on our website. Volunteers should be aware of its requirements as relevant to their own placements and the work of the Section(s) in which they are volunteering. Volunteers have a responsibility to act in a manner appropriate with the Equality Act 2010 and have a duty to report any discrimination. Each volunteer enquiry will be considered equally taking into account opportunities available and the complexity surrounding the individual's capability to undertake the duties.

18.0 VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT

Although a volunteer's time is given freely they are asked to agree what level of commitment they are able to give so that Sections can manage volunteer placements more effectively. If volunteers are unable to attend any agreed periods they should notify their Volunteer Supervisor in advance (giving as much notice as possible). If volunteers wish to increase or decrease their level of voluntary activity then their Volunteer Supervisor should be notified of this in advance.

19.0 POLICY REVIEW

The Council will review this Policy as required, or whenever there is a major change in legislation or relevant changes to Human Resource policies and practices.

Regular and Ad-hoc Volunteers Flowchart

Regular Volunteers

Undertake regular duties for ADC
see examples below

Environmental Activities
Environmental Volunteers on parks and open spaces, Heritage, Conservation, Ranger Activities / Walks

Other Volunteering Roles
Regular volunteering activities identified and created by the Section hosting the volunteer(s)

These volunteers should be registered by following the 'Regular Volunteers' Registration Process'

Ad-hoc Volunteers

Undertake ad-hoc duties for ADC
see examples below

Environmental Activities
Litter Picks / Clean-up Days and Tree / Bulb Planting

Events
Undertaking various duties at organised events

Consultation and Survey Support
e.g. events / car parks / environmental / site surveys

These volunteers should be registered by following the 'Ad-hoc Volunteer Registration Process'. If they wish to undertake these tasks on a regular basis they will need to follow the 'Regular Volunteer Registration Process'

Becoming a Regular Ashfield District Council Volunteer

Each volunteer enquiry will be considered equally taking into account opportunities available and the complexity surrounding the individual's capability to undertake the duties and after checking appropriate in-house registers i.e. Corporate Employee Protection Register

Enquiry: Talk / email a member of staff to discuss why you want to be a volunteer and what you hope to gain from volunteering. Complete an Enquiry Form



Getting to Know You, Registration and Induction: You complete the on-line registration process or attend a Volunteer Session where we will go through the registration process for your Volunteering Role

You will complete a Registration Form



DBS checks: If appropriate, you will complete a Disclosure and Barring (DBS) form
We send your DBS form off – this could take a few weeks to clear



Return of Satisfactory DBS, if appropriate



Induction: Depending on the volunteer role, an induction will take place and we will issue a Volunteer Induction Pack (VIP Pack) containing all necessary information



Health and Safety: We will do risk assessments, arrange training if necessary and issue you with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)



Congratulations, you are now an Ashfield District Council Volunteer and can begin your volunteering



Recording Activities

If you need to monitor your volunteering activities, you can complete a Volunteer Activity Record to demonstrate the valuable contribution you are making



Leaving your Volunteer Role: If you decide to leave your role, complete our '**Volunteer Leaver's Survey**'

Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure

A volunteer's involvement is mostly a positive experience, it is important to bear in mind that sometimes things can go wrong within a volunteer programme, and you may find that a volunteer has a complaint about another volunteer, a member of staff or the organisation itself. Similarly, you may find that a volunteer's performance has declined, or that someone else has complained about a volunteer's work, attitude or conduct.

The problem solving procedure will ensure that you know how to deal with problems if they arise. It can help to find the most appropriate solution to the problem.

Problem solving

Whilst we do not have legal duties towards volunteers and do not wish to create a contractual relationship, it is important that problems or complaints are dealt with fairly, openly and consistently. To help with this we have put in place the following procedures.

If a volunteer has a complaint about Ashfield District Council, a member of staff or another volunteer:

The Council's corporate Complaints and Compliments Policy should be followed. It can be found on our website along with details about the process to be followed.

If there is a problem with a volunteer's behaviour:

Many 'problems' are simply due to training needs, a lack of support, inappropriate roles and so on. Where such measures are not enough the relevant service area will raise the issue in a meeting with the volunteer. The volunteer will be entitled to put their case forward.

This may result in a formal warning, with the understanding that following another warning the volunteer will be asked to leave.

If a volunteer is believed to have behaved in a manner that has or could have seriously affected the organisation – for example theft, bullying, or violence – they will be required to immediately cease their volunteer duties while the matter is investigated by the relevant service area. The volunteer will be able to put their case forward and a decision will be made within 14 days. If the complaint against the volunteer is upheld the volunteer will be asked to leave.

If the complaint was raised by someone else, keep them informed of the measures you are taking to rectify the situation.