

Volunteering Code of Good Practice

This Code of Practice sets out the principles and undertakings for how the Statutory, Voluntary and Community Sector and other partners can work together to support and promote volunteering in Essex.

Volunteering is an important expression of citizenship and a powerful force for change. Volunteers make a unique contribution to society and must be valued, supported and well managed.

What is volunteering? For the purpose of this Code, volunteering is defined as an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than close relatives. We recognise that a huge amount of informal voluntary activity takes place,; however, its informal nature means it does not need to be covered by this Code.

Key principles This Code recognises four principles fundamental to volunteering:

Choice - volunteering must be the result of a free choice by the volunteer

Diversity - volunteering must be open to everyone

Reciprocity - volunteers should benefit from volunteering in the sense that they gain satisfaction, feel both involved and that they are making a difference to the organisation and wider community

Recognition - the contribution of volunteers should be publicly recognised.

The Statutory and Voluntary and Community Sector undertake to:

1. Work together to expand the public perception of volunteering by improving profile, status and range of volunteering activity
2. Ensure that volunteering activity does not exclude particular groups but is open to all
3. Recognise that volunteering is freely given but not cost free. Resources, support, training, development and promotion for volunteers may all incur costs
4. Recognise that volunteers should not be out-of-pocket because of volunteering and adopt clear policies regarding the payment of volunteer expenses

5. Consider whether a role is suitable for a volunteer and recognise that volunteering should never be seen by organisations as a substitute for paid work
6. Recognise the different motivations of volunteers and reflect this in the way they are managed
7. Work together to create and sustain a modern and dynamic volunteering infrastructure that is able to meet the needs of the growing number and diversity of volunteers
8. Recognise and promote the value and benefits of staff in all sectors (public, private and voluntary and community sectors) taking up volunteering and adopt policies to support this.
9. Carry out risk assessments on volunteer roles. This includes considering whether a Criminal Records Check is necessary and carrying out only if and when appropriate.
10. Ensure that volunteers are effectively managed and supported, have access to appropriate training and are involved in ongoing decision making.
11. Recognise the added value that volunteers bring to an organisation and ensure that all volunteers are recognised and thanked for the unique contribution they make.

The Statutory Sector undertakes to:

1. Consult the Voluntary and Community Sector so that proposed legislation, guidance and policies take account of the ways they may affect volunteers and volunteering activities
2. Work to actively reduce barriers to volunteering and community involvement resulting from existing legislation, regulation and policies
3. Recognise that it is legitimate for voluntary and community organisations to include the costs of enabling greater access to volunteering in relevant applications for funding
4. Recognise the importance of the volunteering infrastructure in supporting volunteers and organisations where they volunteer
5. Adopt policies to help ensure the volunteering infrastructure can

develop realistic sustainable long term funding

The Voluntary and Community Sector undertakes to:

1. Consider the needs and interests of volunteers when developing volunteer roles to ensure they are interesting, diverse and inclusive
2. Develop recruitment procedures that give equal access to volunteering to all
3. Recognise the importance of securing resources to reduce barriers that prevent some volunteers from volunteering.

This document is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages.