

Final approval given February 2010



Bromsgrove
District Council

www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING POLICY

For Employees at
Bromsgrove District Council

Introduction

Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) recognises the contribution that an employee-volunteering scheme can make to the wider community; allowing employees to 'give something back' to their community whilst at the same time enhancing flexibility and development opportunities for its employees. The Council also wishes to take proactive steps to develop our relationship with the voluntary sector and regards this as one small step towards that objective.

Employee volunteering can also act as a development tool for employees, providing them with "hands on" experience and the opportunity to make a real, worthwhile difference to the community. A range of skills can be acquired through participating in voluntary work, which in turn will benefit local communities. Achievements and opportunities may be recognised in the employee PDR scheme.

Volunteering is a chance to get out and meet new people, interact with other employees and explore new challenges. Volunteering opportunities will be promoted and supported by the council. BDC will work closely with BARN (Bromsgrove and Redditch Network) who will provide access to a database of volunteering opportunities across the district. All volunteering activities must be undertaken within or in support of the local Bromsgrove community.

BDC is committed to supporting employees who wish to take time to volunteer and become more involved in community activities during their normal working hours. BDC will encourage its employees to volunteer, but recognises that volunteering is a matter of personal choice. The take-up of volunteering opportunities will be monitored annually through the Staff Survey in order that it can be reported back to BARN and the Corporate COMPACT Group..

This policy applies to all employees of the council, irrespective of their status or position.

Equality of Opportunity

In accordance with the Council's Comprehensive Equalities Policy, the Council will ensure that no employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of their gender, sexual orientation, race, disability, age, religion or belief, spent criminal offences, trade union membership, political beliefs, marital status or responsibility for dependants in any conditions or requirements of employment.

Where a disabled employee seeks to undertake a volunteering opportunity the Council will work with the voluntary sector to make reasonable adjustments to facilitate the volunteers support..

What is Employee Volunteering?

Employee volunteering is when volunteers are supported by their employer, either during work time or on their own time. Volunteering is promoted, encouraged and recognised by the organisation.

Types of Employee Volunteering Activity

There are three types of volunteering activities available under this guidance:

Team Activities

A "one-off" practical task completed by a group of employees often in one day. Offers great team building opportunities, and gives employees a day away from their usual working environment where they can develop new skills and go home with a real sense of achievement. Teams can

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take a half or one day activities, working on projects such as painting buildings, undertaking a community garden project or taking on other exciting opportunities. The activities are designed to meet community needs, will support team building and learning and development as well as giving individuals the chance to try something new.

Individual Activities

Individual activities are a great way to gain individual skills in specific areas of work and work with different community groups. Examples include volunteering in the Youth Service (including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award), Ranger Service, undertaking administration tasks, coaching and even fundraising. Individuals can suggest their own ideas or work within local voluntary agencies who will be able to recommend and/or suggest activities.

Information on current opportunities can be obtained from BARN.

Skills Bank

Skills Bank is a term used for employees to enhance and develop their skills via volunteering. Employees will need to register their skills with BARN who will match the skills on offer to individual tasks/projects. Tasks/projects will vary and may require from 2 hours onwards to complete, with no further commitment. Examples include IT training, photography, undertaking presentations, project management, revamping websites and assisting with marketing projects.

Volunteering opportunities that are available will be advertised on the intranet/notice boards.

Why Employee Volunteering Can Make a Difference

There are benefits for BDC, its employees and the local community at large in volunteering.

Benefits to Employees

Community involvement offers a whole range of benefits to employees including:

Learning new skills

Employee volunteering is viewed as a positive activity which contributes to an individual's lifelong learning. It can also enable employees to develop their skills in a way not necessarily possible at work e.g. project organising. They can learn important life and work skills from working in a new and different environment.

Meeting new people

Volunteering can help to provide networking opportunities for staff with colleagues and employees from other divisions or organisations.

Boosting confidence

Volunteering can improve skills and self-confidence by trying things outside normal comfort zone.

Making a difference

Volunteering will help to get a wider perspective of some of the issues in the local community. It also provides employees with an opportunity to contribute to an issue they really care about. It can be satisfying and fulfilling to do something that helps others.

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Having fun

Most employees enjoy volunteering enormously, seeing it as an opportunity to do something completely different from their day job.

Benefits to the Local Community

The voluntary sector relies on outside support to meet the needs of the community it serves. Employee volunteers contribute time, skills and enthusiasm to get things done. Skilled employee volunteers can not only provide the professional skills which voluntary organisations struggle to afford, but also help the organisation's own staff. Volunteers, in turn, develop new skills and increased confidence.

Benefits to the Council

Employee volunteering can help BDC to:

Help the local Community

BDC recognised the importance of playing an active part in the local community and believes it is important for employees to get involved in community activities as a way to give something back.

Improve local reputation

Employee volunteering can attract positive media coverage, enhance BDC's reputation and raise its profile. Employee volunteers make great ambassadors and will help make BDC an employer of choice and a great place to work.

Build important relationships

Employee volunteering will help BDC to establish beneficial relationships in the wider community.

Enhance the skills of employees

Employees have the opportunity to develop and practice a wider range of skills, especially leadership, communication, creative thinking, problem solving, decision making, project management and team working.

Improve levels of recruitment and retention

Employees are the most valuable asset that BDC has. It is important that employees feel good about working for BDC. Employee volunteering helps to create a positive culture.

Time allowed for Volunteering and Application Request

What can I request?

BDC will grant a maximum of 16 volunteer hours during any 12-month period, which is paid time away from work (part time employees will be on a pro rata basis) for all employees, to carry out individual and skills bank voluntary activities.

The 16 volunteer hours, may be taken as a whole block of time or alternatively, can be spread across the year. However, time off must be agreed in advance with the employee's line manager and will be subject to service needs.

The work time that is spent as a volunteer is in addition to any other time allowed off for special duties such as:

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- Jury Service
- School Governor
- Magistrate
- Trade Union Activity
- Reservist

How do I make an application?

It will be the employee's responsibility to organise his or her own volunteering activity whilst being supported by BDC. It is important for employees to take time to decide what volunteering activity they would be interested in, because working in an area that they would enjoy will make the experience more rewarding.

Once the employee has identified a volunteering activity and made contact with the voluntary organisation, they must complete the Employee Volunteering Request Form, which is attached to this guidance. Employees should remember to leave enough time for the request to be agreed with their line manager.

The Employee Volunteering Request Form must be completed every time they make an application to volunteer and be sent to their line manager.

What happens next?

The line manager will consider the application as they are the person who will authorise time off for volunteering activities. The line manager also reserves the right to decline an application. Reasons for this decline could include service needs/delivery, planned structural changes, etc.

Once agreed or declined a copy of the Employee Volunteering Request Form will be sent to Human Resources for monitoring and evaluating purposes.

Once agreed, times and dates of the volunteering activity should be agreed in conjunction with the employee's line manager and the voluntary organisation/charity.

Conditions of Volunteering Activities Supported by this Scheme

An employee who wishes to participate in a volunteer activity in the community must adhere to the following conditions:

Time away from work must be agreed with their line manager in advance, and reasonable notice of the request must be given (at least 4 weeks). Reasonable notice is required to allow both the individual and their line manager to organise any necessary cover within their team.

The volunteering activity should not bring the Council into disrepute.

The volunteering activity must not conflict with the employee's work for the Council for example, acting as a treasurer for a charity that you have regular contact with in your council role. Employees should seek further advice from their line manager if they are concerned about potential conflicts of interest.

As an employee of the Council it is important to adhere to Council's policies and procedures including the Code of Conduct. Employees must also respect confidentiality when undertaking voluntary activity. In practice, this will mean being aware of sensitive or confidential information disclosed.

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Time taken for voluntary activities must be recorded as "Volunteer Hours".

Employees who accept a volunteering activity are expected to attend and meet their commitment. If an employee fails to attend a pre-agreed volunteering activity they will need to explain their non-attendance to their line manager. If non-attendance is due to sickness absence, then it must be reported by the usual sickness absence notification. Please refer to the Sickness Absence Reporting Requirements. If no reason for the absence is provided for the employee's non-attendance, this should be treated as an unauthorised absence and no payment for the time not worked will be made.

Either party has the right to terminate an arrangement to volunteer, however a reason for the discontinuation will be required from the Council.

Use of Council Resources and Equipment

In preparing for a volunteering placement, it is anticipated that it will be necessary to use some of the Council's equipment, within reason. As a reasonable guide, employees may use office facilities for the purpose of arranging their placement:

- Up to 5 local rate telephone calls
- Up to 50 pages of photocopying
- Up to 5 faxes

Should employees require further equipment or facilities above this limit, they will need to discuss and agree this with their line manager.

There is no central volunteering budget; therefore time and costs will be covered from existing budgets. However, apart from the indirect cost of covering the work of the volunteers, it is not anticipated that direct costs will be unmanageable.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Evaluation of the Employee Volunteering programme is vital so that we can improve and build on it. We endeavour to continually monitor and evaluate its impact to ensure long-term success.

Employees must send a copy of their completed "Employee Volunteering Form" to the HR Team. Their line manager will keep the original of the form to discuss with the employee as part of the wider evaluation of their learning and development activities during annual PDR meetings and at 1-2-1's.

It is the responsibility of the employee and their line manager to monitor the number of volunteering hours their employees undertake.

After the volunteering experience, we would welcome employees to record and share their experiences by completing the "Volunteering Feedback Form" and return to the HR team. This feedback will assist us to ensure our Employee Volunteering Programme is successful and worthwhile for our employees.

Communication

Volunteering activities will be promoted in the following ways through:

- The intranet with appropriate links to external web sites about volunteering
- Notice Boards
- Employee Induction

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- PDR's and Development
- Cascade through team talks, team briefings & 1-2-1's

Health and Safety

Bromsgrove District Council Volunteering Activities

If an employee undertakes a volunteering activity, they will be automatically covered by the Council's Public Liability Insurance and the Council's Employer's Liability Insurance.

However, employees may need to undertake a risk assessment and have any additional health and safety training that is relevant to the activity i.e. manual handling. The voluntary agency will be asked to advise if this is required prior to the volunteering commencing.

Criminal Records Bureau Process

If employees are going to be working with children, then the Criminal Records Bureau process must be undertaken before any volunteering activity can commence. Employees will be advised on this by the appropriate contact for the volunteering activity. If you require further information, please contact the HR Team.

EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING REQUEST FORM

<p>This form should be completed when making a request for time off under this policy.</p> <p>Time away from work must be agreed with your line manager in advance.</p> <p>You should give as much notice as you can, (a minimum of 4 weeks), as this will help you and your line manager to make any necessary arrangements for cover etc where the request is approved.</p>	
Name	
Job Title	
Division	

<p>Details of the Request (to be completed by employee)</p> <p>Reason for request (please attach any available information you may have about the volunteering opportunity)</p>
<p>Time off required: (dates and no of hours requested)</p>
<p>Signed: (employee)</p> <p>Date:</p>
<p><i>When you have completed this section pass the form to your manager or supervisor who will advise you of the decision, returning a copy of the completed form to you.</i></p>

<p>Line Manager to Complete: Decision: agreed/not agreed (delete as appropriate)</p>
<p>If not agreed please give the reason(s) for your decision</p>
<p>Line Manager Name:</p> <p>Signed:</p> <p>Date:</p>

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Evaluation Form

Please remember to keep a copy and use as part of your annual PDR review.

Name:

Department:

What did you enjoy about the volunteering activity?	
What new skills or knowledge did you acquire?	
What did you least enjoy about the volunteering activity?	
Are there any changes to policy you would wish us to reflect on?	
Any Other Comments (continue on separate sheet if necessary):	
How would you rate the overall volunteering activity?	
1	Poor
2	Satisfactory
3	Good
4	Excellent