



One Compact for Hampshire
Code of Good Practice: Volunteering

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1. Introduction

The Volunteering Code is to be viewed in conjunction with the One Compact for Hampshire and the National Compact Code of Good Practice on Volunteering.

Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, and can take many forms. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain. It does not include help given to close relatives.

The term **VDA** (Volunteer Development Agency) is used nationally by Volunteering England and has been used in this document to mean any agency that provides the core functions of a volunteering infrastructure organisation. For example, Volunteer Centre, Volunteer Bureau.

Development of the Volunteering Code of Good Practice involved an extensive consultation process co-ordinated by a sub group of the East Hampshire Compact Steering Group, following input from a variety of voluntary and community groups and statutory agencies. The Code has now been adopted by all the Hampshire-wide partners to the One Compact for Hampshire.

2. The Volunteering Code of Good Practice

The Volunteering Code sets out a series of undertakings on good practice in volunteering for the voluntary/community and statutory sectors in Hampshire. In common with the National Code, the undertakings aim to tackle the barriers to volunteering, enabling more people to volunteer, and ensure that both the individual and the organisation benefit from the volunteering.

2.1 Key points

- There is an agreed recognition that volunteering makes a major contribution to all aspects of life in the local community for example in health, social welfare, education and the environment.
- Actions and decisions taken in the voluntary and community and statutory sectors can affect community and voluntary activity, and this code highlights the need for a consistent and appropriate approach from all agencies which have an impact on volunteering.
- The voluntary and community and statutory sectors are committed to maintaining best practice in the promotion, development and celebration of volunteering.
- All signatories to this Code respect volunteers' personal commitment to the organisation to which they have volunteered.

2.2 There are four principles fundamental to volunteering

- **Choice:** Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. Any encouragement to become involved in volunteering should not result in any form of coercion or compulsion. Freedom to volunteer implies freedom not to become involved or to cease involvement at some future date.

- **Diversity:** People in Hampshire bring varying qualities and experience to the voluntary and community sector. Diversity is recognised, respected and valued. Volunteering should be open to all, no matter what their background, disability, age, race, sexual orientation or faith. It is recognised that social exclusion barriers can be overcome by skills, experience, confidence and contacts gained while helping others.
- **Reciprocity:** Giving voluntary time and skills must be recognised as establishing a reciprocal relationship in which the volunteer also benefits. Volunteers gain a sense of worthwhile achievement, useful skills, experience and contacts, sociability and fun, and inclusion in the life of the organisation and the wider community.
- **Recognition:** The value of what volunteers contribute to the organisation, to the community, to the social economy and to wider social objectives, is fundamental to a fair relationship between volunteers, organisations and statutory policy and practice.

2.3 Volunteer Centres

Within Hampshire, it is recognised that the Volunteer Centres operate as the local volunteering development agency (VDA). They have the following strategic objectives, which are common to volunteer centres throughout the country:

- **Brokerage:** The primary function of the Volunteer Centre is to match both individuals and groups interested in volunteering with appropriate opportunities in the local community. Information is held on a comprehensive range of opportunities. Potential volunteers are offered support and advice matching their motivation to volunteer, with appropriate volunteering opportunities.
- **Marketing Volunteering:** VDAs stimulate and encourage local interest in volunteering and community activity. This may include promoting and marketing volunteering through local, regional and national events and campaigns. VDAs manage and promote a national brand for volunteering.
- **Good Practice Development –** VDAs promote good practice in working with volunteers to all volunteer-involving organisations. They deliver training and accreditation for potential volunteers, volunteers, volunteer managers and the volunteering infrastructure.
- **Developing volunteering opportunities:** VDAs work in close partnership with statutory, voluntary and private sector agencies as well as community groups and faith groups to develop local volunteering opportunities. VDAs target specific groups that face barriers to volunteering.
- **Policy response and campaigning:** VDAs identify proposals or legislation that may impact on volunteering and will lead or participate in campaigns on issues that affect volunteers or volunteering. VDAs campaign proactively for a more volunteer-literate and volunteer-friendly climate.
- **Strategic development of volunteering:** VDAs inform strategic thinking and planning at a regional and national level.

2.4 Public Sector undertakings

In supporting this code, the Public Agencies undertake to:

- Recognise that volunteering is an exercise of both the basic human rights of freedom to assemble and associate, and fundamental to democracy.
- Seek to ensure that all new proposed policy and procedures are checked for their impact on voluntary and community activity and funding, before being adopted.
- Seek to limit the barriers to volunteering and community action presented by existing policies and practices.
- Assess the contribution made to local statutory policies and programme objectives by volunteering and community activities.
- Aim to adopt policies, which ensure that volunteering infrastructure bodies can rely on realistic sustainable long-term funding from appropriate statutory agencies.
- Recognise that volunteering infrastructure bodies are independent voluntary sector organisations, with voluntary management boards. Seek to work with those already active and organised, rather than setting up new structures.
- To review in partnership with the voluntary and community sectors the strengths and weaknesses of local volunteering information and infrastructure, and make recommendations based on best practice examples identified.
- Support media and communications strategies which ensure that volunteer contributions to raising the quality of life are promoted, and support activities which motivate more people to become involved.
- Support initiatives which provide accessible information about volunteering opportunities at a local level, and ensure distribution of this information throughout the statutory agency and its partner or subsidiary organisations.
- Seek ways in which public sector agencies can work with the voluntary and community sector to address how detailed demographic information on volunteering and community activity can be collected for comparison with other surveys and research.
- In consultation with the voluntary and community sector, seek to improve the effectiveness of voluntary and community activity.
- Where public sector agencies directly manage volunteers, they will act on the same undertakings as specified below in 2.5 for the voluntary and community sector.

2.5 Voluntary and Community Sector undertakings:

In supporting this code, the voluntary and community organisations undertake to:

- Develop and implement diversity and equality policies with the intention of being able to offer volunteer opportunities to all sections of the community.
- Recognise the importance of high standards and effective management of volunteers. Staff (both paid and unpaid) who recruit, induct, and manage volunteers will have this work recognised as part of their role and ideally receive appropriate training and support.
- Assist potential volunteers to find volunteering opportunities that fit their needs, interests and abilities.
- Provide appropriate training/induction for volunteers to enable them to carry out their volunteering. Sufficient resources will be budgeted to support volunteers, for example: management and/or peer support, office space and equipment.
- Ensure that the nature and extent of volunteering is acknowledged in all annual reports.
- Encourage and enable accreditation of skills acquired through volunteering. Recognition should be given to both formal and informal learning.
- Recognise that volunteers may have exceptional skills and talents and value their opinion on development and working practices.
- Support volunteers who are actively seeking further opportunities, such as paid employment.
- Recognise that volunteers should be valued for their contribution. They should get appropriate treatment and support.
- Reimburse actual out-of-pocket expenses incurred by volunteers, including consideration of care costs - this to be a priority for funded voluntary organisations and statutory agencies.
- Give volunteers the same protection under health and safety and public liability as paid employees.
- Recognise the importance of trustees as a specific group of volunteers and ensure they receive appropriate training and support to enable them to carry out their tasks.
- Develop systems to ensure that no volunteer potential is lost once a volunteering relationship comes to an end. Organisations will, wherever appropriate, refer volunteers back to the Volunteer Centre, so that they can discuss other options which may be open to them.
- Ensure there are adequate procedures in place, including an identifiable officer, to carry out Criminal Record Bureau checks and other references where appropriate or required by law.
- Assist public bodies in the collection of information on volunteering and community activity.

2.6 Mutual undertakings and agreed principles

- Both sectors agree to work together to identify and dismantle barriers to volunteering and community involvement.
- Both the public and the voluntary and community sectors agree that public funding should be invested in creating and maintaining a modern, dynamic volunteering infrastructure.
- The public and voluntary and community organisations in Hampshire will work together to establish:
 - practices that enable people from disadvantaged groups to become involved.

 - a consistent approach towards the reimbursement of expenses where it is agreed that volunteers will be involved.

3. The Volunteers' Charter

Partners to the One Compact for Hampshire have adopted this Charter, and will use it as a basis for developing good practice within their own organisations: -

Volunteers' Rights

- To be given a clear idea of their tasks and responsibilities within the organisation.
- To be given the name of someone in the organisation who will look after their interests and who will offer them appropriate support and supervision on a regular basis.
- To be assured that any information shared with the organisation is kept confidential.
- To be given the same protection under health and safety regulations and public liability as paid employees.
- To ideally be offered opportunities for training and skills development, appropriate for the voluntary tasks involved.

- To not be exploited - volunteers should not:
 - be used to replace paid workers
 - have unfair demands made on their time
 - be asked to do something which is against their principles or beliefs
- To be given the chance to play a part in decision making within the organisation.
- To not be out of pocket through doing voluntary work. Travel and other expenses should be offered by all funded organisations.
- To have published Grievance and Disciplinary procedures that uphold the principles of fairness and openness commensurate with that offered employees.

Volunteers' Responsibilities

- To accept the organisation's aims & objectives.
- To do what is reasonably requested of them, to the best of their ability and within the remit of the organisation's policies and procedures.
- To treat information obtained whilst volunteering in a confidential manner and in accordance with the legal requirements and the organisation's policies- this can be information about clients or other workers, paid and unpaid.
- To recognise the right of the organisation to expect quality of service from its entire staff, paid and unpaid.
- To recognise that they represent the organisation and therefore need to act in an appropriate manner at all times.
- To honour any commitment made to the best of their abilities, notifying the organisation in good time should they be unable to keep that commitment e.g. for holidays.
- To be willing to undertake appropriate training with respect to Health & Safety issues, insurance liability and general good practice as necessary for the voluntary work undertaken.
- To share suggestions for changes in working practices with the Volunteer Organiser.

Acknowledgements

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Appendices

A. Types of Volunteering

Volunteering can include:

- Helping provide a service as a volunteer within a voluntary or community organisation, international development organisation, the public sector or a private body
- Community activism, campaigning and action that affects social change
- Befriending and mentoring
- Sports and physical recreation
- Taking part in running a voluntary or community organisation as a trustee, board or committee member
- Serving as a non-executive member of a public body or participating in civic governance, for instance serving as a school governor or a community representative
- Leading a voluntary initiative, usually as part of a voluntary organisation or community group, to improve the quality of life for people in a neighbourhood or community of interest
- Group activity, within a neighbourhood or community of interest, providing a community service, or campaigning for a public cause
- Employer-supported community involvement
- Helping develop public policy through involvement in consultation processes and campaigning
- Volunteering overseas
- Volunteering through involvement in a faith congregation or community
- Helping raise funds for an organisation

B. Useful reference material

Volunteering England - general enquiries

Volunteering England (London)
Regents Wharf
8 All Saints Street
London N1 9RL
United Kingdom

Tel:

+44 (0)845 305 6979

Fax (London): +44 (0) 20 7520 8910

Email: information@volunteeringengland.org

The Voluntary Sector Legal Handbook

Sandy Adirondack & James Sinclair Taylor

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