

## **Brentwood Borough Council**

### **Volunteer Engagement Policy and Procedures 2010**

#### **Vision for Volunteering**

Brentwood Borough Council is committed to ensuring that the local community is fully involved in influencing decision-making regarding its services, and prioritises engaging local volunteers.

Volunteers have an integral role to play in promoting and contributing to community cohesion. Brentwood Borough Council recognises that there can be occasions whereby a volunteer's help can make an appropriate and significant contribution to the service delivery of the Council.

This policy has been developed to ensure that:

- Staff will consider involving volunteers when planning, contracting, monitoring revising and providing services
- Involving volunteers will become an integral part of the Council's service delivery
- Volunteering will become a key method in the delivery of public involvement and engagement

#### **What is a Volunteer?**

Volunteers may be described as individuals who put their experience, knowledge and skills at the disposal of an organisation, free of charge, with the primary aim of helping the organisation to achieve its service objectives and, or with the primary aim of bringing some benefit to the local community. In this sense, volunteers are to be distinguished from students, other work placements and secondees, where the primary aim is usually for the student or secondee to obtain certain work experience or to carry out work or research in certain areas.

#### **The Purpose of this Policy**

This policy outlines Brentwood Borough Council's principles, practices and procedures that will be followed in the recruitment, management and control of volunteers. It aims to:

- Provide a framework for all Brentwood Borough Council staff when considering involving volunteers in their work.
- Provide a foundation on which our involvement of volunteers will be based
- Give a cohesive and consistent approach to ensure that volunteers are fully supported during their volunteering role
- Help ensure fairness and consistency when involving a diverse group of people;

being able to refer to a written policy ensures that decisions are not made on an ad-hoc basis

### **Why Appoint Volunteers?**

There are many benefits to the Council in involving volunteers:

- Volunteers can bring a different perspective to our work; often one that reflects the diverse views of the local community.
- Volunteers can help to extend services the Council currently offers.
- Volunteering empowers our citizens to actively influence decision making and service provision.
- By providing opportunities for skills development within our local community.
- Volunteering can be a valuable pathway to employment or training opportunities
- Volunteering can provide opportunities to meet like-minded people
- Volunteering can provide an opportunity to be involved with something interesting, absorbing and rewarding
- Volunteering can improve general health and wellbeing

### **Our Volunteering Principles**

When appointing volunteers, Brentwood Borough Council will adhere to the following principles:

- (a) volunteers will not be engaged in work which facilitates the loss of an existing employee's post, nor on any tasks or projects which (within the past two years) were done by paid employees whose posts have since been deleted;
- (b) volunteers will not be used to do the work of paid staff during an industrial dispute;

### **What opportunities can the Council offer volunteers?**

There is a wide range of volunteering opportunities the Council can offer, such as:

- Befriending or mentoring citizens in need, such as in sheltered housing schemes
- Helping providing services, such as litter picks or graffiti removal
- Stewarding at community events
- Assisting with delivery of community projects
- Staffing holiday scheme activities
- Administration support, such as distribution and design of marketing materials and mail outs
- Community website / newsletter content management
- Leading consultation initiatives and focus groups
- Street Pastors to reduce anti-social behaviour and ensure safety of young people

- Countryside Management – maintaining our green and open spaces

The Council will endeavour to signpost volunteers to relevant external partners, such as the Brentwood Council for Voluntary Service if appropriate opportunities are not currently available with Brentwood Borough Council

### **Raising Awareness of Volunteering Opportunities**

The Council will endeavour to promote volunteering and local opportunities by:

- Raising awareness of volunteering opportunities through local voluntary, community and faith groups
- Displaying posters in partners' premises throughout the Borough
- Use word of mouth
- Establishing links with schools, colleges, local companies, places of worship
- Using existing Council publications including Vision, Vision for Business, and the Council website to promote local volunteering opportunities.
- Issuing pro-active press releases to local community groups and the media.
- Promoting volunteering opportunities with partners in the Local Strategic Partnership and the Brentwood Council for Voluntary Services.
- Actively encouraging diversity by targeting those from hard to reach groups and vulnerable groups, such as NEET, Teenage Parents and ethnic minority groups.

### **Recruitment Procedures**

#### Step 1

Should a staff member wish to appoint a volunteer, a completed Volunteer Role Description Form (Appendix 2) must be approved by the Head of Service, before submitting to the Volunteer Coordinator and copied to Human Resources outlining:

- Tasks,
- Responsibilities,
- Reporting lines,
- Terms and conditions, including duration, hours, expenses, insurance, etc, relating to the appointment.
- Role specification, outlining the relevant experience, skills, knowledge, abilities and equal opportunities awareness necessary to carry out the role effectively.

#### Step 2

The proposed volunteering opportunity will be advertised via external partners and through the Volunteer Centre. Interested parties will be required to complete a Volunteer Application Form (Appendix 1)

#### Step 3

The prospective volunteer will be invited to an informal meeting with the intended Supervisor and appropriate Human Resources representative if necessary. Using the Volunteer Role Description Form, an informal discussion will take place regarding the requirements of the role with a view to assessing suitability.

Following this meeting, the Council representative/s will decide upon the individual's

suitability and will inform the prospective volunteer within 1 week.

#### Step 4

Prior to commencement of the volunteering role, the Supervisor must ensure the following documents are completed and returned to Human Resources by the volunteer:

Volunteer Personal Details Form (Appendix 3)

Volunteer Agreement Form (containing confidentiality clause) (Appendix 4)

If necessary, a completed CRB form with relevant identification (see below)

If necessary, a 'Personal Commitment Statement' relating to IT access (To be returned to IT)

Copies of driving license if appropriate (see below)

A suitable reference, excluding relations, to attest to their character and suitability for the position

#### Step 5

Prior to commencement of the volunteering role, each successful volunteer shall be allocated to a particular employee who will supervise and support the individual throughout their volunteering placement. The supervisor's responsibilities will include ensuring the volunteer receives the following:

- A Volunteer's Induction and Recruitment Checklist (see Appendix 5 Volunteer's Induction and Recruitment Checklist)
- A Volunteer's Handbook (see Appendix 6)
- Volunteer Role Description (created using Appendix 2 - example given Appendix 7)
- Regular supervision and support sessions
- Positive feedback on the volunteer's contribution
- Adequate office accommodation if appropriate and all equipment necessary for them to perform their tasks effectively
- A risk assessment appropriate to their role.
- An Evaluation Form at the end of their placement (Appendix 9)

### **Safeguarding**

All supervisors must ensure that volunteers are aware of, and have access to the Council's Safeguarding Policy. CRB disclosures will be carried out on any volunteer who, in the course of their appointment, will have substantial, unsupervised access to children and young people under the age of 16 and vulnerable adults on a regular basis.

A vulnerable adult refers to any person aged 18 years or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or serious exploitation which may be occasioned by actions or inactions of other people. ("Who Decides" Lord Chancellor's Department 1997)

### **Health and Safety**

The volunteer will have access and adhere to the Council's Health and Safety Policy and

Procedures, including accident report forms.

### **Confidentiality and Data Protection**

Brentwood Borough Council will expect the volunteer to maintain strict confidentiality at all times, and to sign a confidentiality undertaking to this effect.

### **Supervision and Support**

It is important that volunteers are properly supported and supervised in their work; ensuring that the level of supervision given matches the nature of the job and the experience of the volunteer. All volunteers should have a nominated supervisor, someone they can have regular access to if problems arise or when help and support is needed.

### **Training and Involvement**

Where a volunteer is based at Brentwood Borough Council on a day to day basis she/he will be expected to be involved and included in general staff activities, such as staff meetings and to have general access to Brentwood Borough Council offices. Volunteers may also be offered, where appropriate and where subject to availability, to undertake relevant Council training courses free of charge.

### **Equal Opportunities**

In accordance with Brentwood Borough Council's Equal Opportunity statement, volunteer placements will be open to individuals irrespective of race, nationality, gender, disability, sexuality, age, belief or culture. In addition, the Volunteer Role Description Form must set out the equal opportunity dimension and any specific equality requirements of the role. Where, during the initial meeting a prospective volunteer demonstrates hostility to, or a clear lack of support for equal opportunity policy, she/he will be deemed automatically to be unsuitable for a volunteer position at Brentwood Borough Council.

### **Discipline and Grievance**

Volunteers will not be subject to Brentwood Borough Council's disciplinary procedures. Correspondingly, volunteers will not have access to Brentwood Borough Council's grievance procedures. However, volunteers will be entitled to use Brentwood Borough Council's Complaints Procedure. Where appropriate, the complaint will be investigated fully by the Supervisor or her/his representative.

### **Expenses**

Volunteers will be entitled to travel expenses, and subsistence allowance in accordance with the Council's policy for its employees.

Supervisors will be responsible for reimbursing all volunteer expenses through their service's budget and ensuring that the volunteers complete a Volunteer Expenses Form (Appendix 8) and return with all receipts.

### **Signposting**

There may be some occasions where Brentwood Borough Council does not have any opportunities suitable for a prospective volunteer. In such situations, the Council will signpost the individual to external organisations who will be able to support them.

**Dress Code**

Volunteers' dress code will be at their Supervisor's discretion and should be appropriate to their role.

**Private Use of Council Equipment**

All volunteers will be expected to adhere to the Council's policies on the private use of Council equipment, including use of the internet, email, telephones and post.

**Insurance**

Volunteers appointed to Brentwood Borough Council will be covered under the Council's employers, public liability and professional indemnity insurance where appropriate.

**Use of own vehicle**

Volunteers should be informed of the need to notify their insurance company if they intend to use their car for volunteer activities and must ensure that their policy is extended to cover business use. They will also be required to produce a current driving licence and evidence of car insurance if appropriate.

**Absence / illness**

If they are unable to attend, or expect to be late, it is important that volunteers inform their Supervisor as soon as possible, and certainly within one hour of their expected time of arrival.

**Termination**

Where appropriate, the role and placement of the volunteer may be terminated by the Supervisor at one week's notice, or immediately where behaviour is equivalent to gross misconduct has occurred. In all cases the volunteer will be entitled to an explanation of the decision and action taken.

**Evaluation**

It is important that Brentwood borough Council is able to measure the impact of the volunteer placements it offers. All supervisors should ask their Volunteer to complete the Volunteer Evaluation Form at the end of their placement (Appendix 9)

**Monitoring and Review**

It will be the responsibility of Human Resources to regularly review the operation of Brentwood Borough Council's Volunteer Engagement Policy and Procedures to ensure that it is in accordance with other relevant policies.