

Section 7: Frequently Asked Questions by Volunteers

Why does the Council involve volunteers?

Volunteers offer experience, skills, enthusiasm and the customer's eye view of services.

They can extend and improve services by providing new and different services that could not be delivered by existing employees.

Who should I apply to?

Sandwell Volunteer Centre find placements for volunteers of all ages and Vflex Sandwell work with young volunteers aged 16-25. Both organisations will know which areas of the Council are looking for volunteers. Their contact details are:

Volunteer Centre Sandwell,
Old Municipal Buildings,
Freeth Street,
Oldbury, B69 2AB
Telephone: 0121 544 8326
Fax: 0121 544 3959
Email: sandwellvb@btinternet.com
Web: <http://sandwellvolunteerbureau.org>

vflex Sandwell
12 New Street
Ringway
West Bromwich
B70 7PN
Telephone: 0121 553 5819
Fax: 0121 553 5819
Web: <http://www.rathboneuk.org/location.aspx?ID=51>

Alternatively contact the service area direct.

I am working for the Council, why am I not getting paid?

Volunteers make a fantastic contribution to Sandwell. Working within a Council setting can open up a range of opportunities and it is appropriate to offer these to as many people as possible. By developing a wide range of roles for volunteers the Council is able to open these opportunities up beyond paid employees.

Volunteering can enable unemployed people to gain valuable experience and older or socially isolated people to continue to lead active lives.

Will employees resent me?

Volunteers are there to enhance the work of employees, not to replace employees. They are there to offer new services, or increase the capacity of existing services, not to fill roles and duties currently being done by employees.

Work will have been done to ensure that paid employees support the involvement of volunteers

Am I entitled to expenses?

Yes it is good practice to pay reasonable expenses such as travel. The Council will be developing a policy on the payment of volunteer expenses but until then policies on expenses will be agreed by the service area. As a minimum, travel expenses will be paid at standard mileage rates or bus fares based on a day saver and whilst volunteering

I'm claiming benefits - can I still volunteer?

Yes. There have recently been changes in the law which recognise the value of undertaking voluntary work in order to increase your chances of finding paid employment, which means that you can now take a full time volunteering placement as a volunteer and still claim Job Seeker's Allowance

Do I need to go through the Vetting and Barring Scheme?

It will depend upon the type of voluntary work that you are going to do. The Scheme covers **anyone who wants to work or volunteer with children or vulnerable adults** in regulated or controlled activity on a frequent or intensive basis.

Am I covered by the Councils insurance?

Yes as long as you restrict your duties and tasks to those set out in your role description or volunteer agreement, and you adhere to the policies and procedures of the Council.

What happens if my volunteer placement doesn't work out?

You should be given a trial period which will give you and your manager the opportunity to see how the placement goes. If, for whatever reason, your placement doesn't work you may be offered an alternative in another part of the Council. If that is not possible then you may be referred to Sandwell Volunteer Centre who are well placed to find you something more suitable.