

# **Sandwell Compact** **Volunteering Code of Practice**

## **Introduction**

The Volunteering Code of Practice forms part of the Sandwell Compact which sets out the agreed framework for the relationship between the voluntary and community sector in Sandwell and their statutory partners. Whilst the Compact is not a legally binding document it is a statement of intent and aspiration. This code of practice sets out undertakings by third sector and public organisations in Sandwell on good practice for volunteering. The undertakings aim to promote volunteering; value and celebrate the contribution of volunteers; enable and support more people to volunteer; encourage better practice in the management of volunteers; and tackle the barriers to volunteering.

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## **Fundamental Principles of Volunteering**

There are four fundamental principles of 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.

### **Diversity**

The people of Sandwell bring varying qualities and experience to volunteering. Diversity is recognised, respected and valued. Volunteering should be open to all, no matter what their background, age ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender or disability. Volunteering can help individual volunteers to overcome social exclusion and a diverse volunteering base also makes services more accessible and relevant to our diverse communities.

### **Mutual Benefit**

Volunteering should be reciprocal, mutual relationship. Although a person is not paid for their efforts, they should feel a sense of achievement. Volunteers gain useful skills, experience and contacts, sociability and fun, and feel part of the organisation and wider community. Volunteers should be complementary to and not a replacement for paid staff. In return volunteers bring a wealth of skills, time and energy to volunteer involving organisations and their services

## **Recognition**

The value of volunteers to the organisation, community, the social economy and wider social objectives is fundamental to a fair relationship between the volunteers, public organisations and the third sector.

## **Undertakings**

### **All partners will**

- Work together to develop, implement, share and disseminate good practice in volunteering.
- Comply with all relevant legislation.
- Work together, to identify and remove barriers to volunteering and community involvement and actively seek to enhance public perceptions of volunteering through greater publicity, particularly of volunteers' achievements.
- Recognise that volunteering is of value to the community, and encourage partnership working between organisations to improve and expand the variety of volunteering opportunities offered, minimise duplication of services and maximise value for money.
- Promote volunteering as an economic activity which builds skills, experience, employability and social cohesion
- Develop relevant policies and procedures in relation to recruitment, selection, induction and retention of volunteers to ensure a fair transparent and consistent approach.
- Provide volunteers with the appropriate support, supervision, appraisal, training and guidance to enable them to perform the volunteering roles.
- Recognise that effective volunteer management requires investment and commitment.
- Ensure that the work of all staff that recruit, induct, and manage volunteers is recognised and they receive the appropriate training and support.
- Recognise that organisations have a duty of care towards volunteers and should conduct regular risk assessments and adopt policies which protect volunteers in respect of health and safety, equal opportunities, and public liabilities insurance.

- Adopt clear and consistent principles regarding the reimbursement of volunteer expenses (i.e. reimburse actual out-of-pocket expenses against receipts and maintain appropriate records.
- Recognise that, as part of the reciprocal relationship, volunteers should be given thanks and recognition for their contribution. Ensure that the nature and extent of volunteering is acknowledged in annual reports and other public information
- Support media and communication strategies which ensure that volunteer contributions to raising the quality of life in Sandwell are promoted both internally and externally
- Support activities which motivate people to volunteer
- Work together to address any demographic under representation in volunteering

### **Statutory partners will**

- Recognise the financial implications of volunteer involvement in funding arrangements
- Support the volunteer brokerage role

### **Voluntary and Community Sector will**

- Value the important role volunteers play as trustees and committee members and recognise the need for appropriate training and support to enable them to carry out their tasks
- Include the cost of volunteer involvement in organisational and project budgets

### **Volunteer brokerage organisations will**

- Assist potential volunteers to find volunteering opportunities that fit their needs, interests and abilities by working in partnership with other agencies
- Provide specialist knowledge, information and expertise on volunteering, including best practice guidance

## Appendix 1

The following is a good practice checklist based on the National Volunteering Compact Code.

You should note that these are basic summary points, with further guidance available from other sources. They apply to organisations where paid members of staff manage volunteers, not to community groups, however they can be adapted accordingly.

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Prior to recruitment, been clear about why you want/need a volunteer		
Provide the volunteer with a clear role/task description, identifying anticipated requirement(s) of the organisation		
Provide the volunteer with an initial induction and training programme		
Provide the volunteer with appropriate line management		
Provide the volunteer with awareness (and sign up where appropriate) to policies on matters such as Data Protection and Confidentiality		
Add volunteers to organisation charts. Encourage volunteers to participate in the organisation's wider decision making process		
Monitor and acknowledge the contribution that volunteers make to the organisation, to the wider public, to funders and to other volunteers		
Ask the volunteer what they seek from their placement and share with the volunteer what you want. Remember any placement should be by mutual consent		
Always offer to reimburse out-of-pocket expenses. These normally include travel and lunch. Where a placement is away from home, this might also include accommodation and a subsistence allowance		
Ensure that Health and Safety standards are in place and applied equally to all employees (and volunteers). Insurance policies should be extended to cover volunteers		
Provide opportunities for volunteers to acquire or develop new or existing skills and assist volunteers who want to gain accreditation towards recognised qualifications		
Volunteers should not be recruited to fill in the place of paid staff. This could be perceived as exploitation of the volunteer and deprivation of someone's livelihood		
Ensure that the work and contribution of the volunteer adds quality and value to the organisations' aims and objectives		
Ensure that Equal Opportunities and/or diversity policies are in place and applied equally to volunteers. Examine the organisation's way of working for anything that may pose a barrier for some members		
Encourage and promote a diverse range of employees at all levels.		

This will help volunteers of different ethnic groups, ages, disabilities, etc to feel welcome		
In order to attract volunteers from groups that the organisation has previously failed to reach, it may be helpful to approach those groups/people directly to establish what would make volunteering with the organisation more appealing to them.		