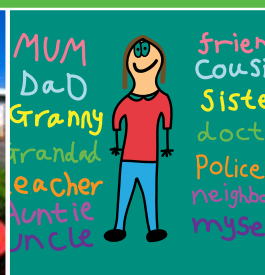




2011

Education & Children's Services Volunteering Policy



Introduction

This document details the policy on volunteering within Education & Children's Services (ECS) and applies to all situations and circumstances across ECS where volunteers (aged 16 plus) augment the work of employees.

This policy:

- ❑ *formally acknowledges, supports and values the role of volunteers;*
- ❑ *ensures effective leadership in volunteering;*
- ❑ *sets out the principles supporting the involvement of volunteers and provides procedures to ensure good working practice;*
- ❑ *defines the roles, rights and responsibilities of ECS and its volunteers;*
- ❑ *provides clarity about what constitutes adult volunteering within ECS;*
- ❑ *encourages and supports people from diverse communities to become involved in volunteering;*
- ❑ *plans for continuous improvement in volunteering management.*

Through the adoption of this approach, ECS recognises that the roles of volunteers will be to complement and not replace the role of paid staff. The policy is underpinned by an ECS online Volunteering Supervisor Toolkit, which is designed to support staff and ensure a consistent approach across the Service.

The ECS Volunteering Policy replaces the previous Cultural & Community Services Volunteering Policy (2007) and contributes significantly to two of the key policies within the ECS Policy Framework: Learning: Developing Communities and Learning: Realising Potential.

Service Vision

“Our vision is of a confident and ambitious Perth and Kinross with a strong identity and clear outcomes that everyone works together to achieve. Our area will be vibrant and successful; a safe, secure and healthy environment; and a place where people are nurtured and supported.”

(Source: ECS Statement of Intent 2011)

ECS works to keep people safe and protected, to improve health and wellbeing, to develop the range and quality of learning experiences for everyone, to raise standards of performance and achievement, to develop active and responsible citizens, thereby continuing to develop caring and confident communities.

Defining Volunteering and a Volunteer

There is not one common national definition of volunteering, so for the purpose of this policy the Scottish Executive's definition has been chosen:

“Volunteering is the giving of time and energy through a third party which can bring measurable benefits to the volunteer, individual beneficiaries, groups and organisations, communities, environment and society at large. It is a choice undertaken of ones own free will, and is not motivated primarily for financial gain or for a wage or salary.

(Source: Scottish Executive Volunteering Strategy 2004)

The time, energy and skills offered by volunteers not only benefits the work of ECS, but contributes to the achievement of the Service's aims. Experience has shown that volunteering also brings benefits to volunteers themselves, and to those with whom they work.

Within ECS a volunteer is understood to be a person who does voluntary work on the Service's behalf.

ECS believes that the relationship with volunteers is based on mutual responsibility and commitment, within which the Service and volunteers both have rights and responsibilities.

The roles of volunteers across ECS are varied. This policy is comprehensive, and proposes that the deployment of volunteers across the Service should be in accordance with best practice to maximise the benefit to both parties.

Responsibilities

ECS recognises its responsibility with regards to the rights of volunteers. The Service acknowledges that it has a responsibility to ensure that volunteers:

- know what is expected of them;*
- have clear specified lines of support and supervision;*
- are shown appreciation and respect;*
- have safe working conditions;*
- are insured;*
- know their rights and responsibilities if something goes wrong;*
- are paid appropriate out-of-pocket expenses;*
- are trained as appropriate for tasks;*
- are free from discrimination;*
- have confidentiality respected;*
- experience and are offered personal development opportunities;*
- are able to withdraw from voluntary work.*

ECS expects that volunteers will:

- be reliable, honest and honour the commitment they have made;*
- participate in induction sessions and other core training dependent on the placement area;*
- attend training and support sessions as agreed;*
- comply with all ECS/Council policies and procedures, particularly in relation to confidentiality, accident reporting, health and safety and Disclosure Scotland checks (where applicable);*
- be anti-discriminatory in their work;*
- act with care for their own safety and that of others;*
- treat colleagues and users/clients with respect;*
- inform the relevant member of staff if they are charged with or convicted of any offence whilst volunteering with Perth & Kinross Council, Education & Children's Services;*
- undertake their voluntary work without using it to generate business;*
- undertake their voluntary work at agreed times;*
- inform the relevant member of staff if they are unable to attend and if possible in advance;*
- give reasonable notice if unable to continue volunteering;*
- raise any issues of concern relating to their voluntary work with the contact person.*

Relationship With Education & Children's Services Staff

ECS is committed to ensuring that:

- volunteers complement the work of staff and will not be used as a substitute for paid work;*
- volunteers are not asked to take on tasks formerly undertaken by staff in times of industrial action. However, they may continue with their regular duties as a volunteer;*
- staff at all levels must be clear about the role and rights of our volunteers, and ensure that good working relationships are fostered between paid staff and volunteers. It will be the responsibility of managers of sections in which volunteers are placed to ensure that other staff are clear about these roles and responsibilities;*
- training and support is to be provided for those working alongside and managing volunteers;*
- the standard of care and conduct of volunteers should be of the same high quality as that of staff.*

Recognition of and Valuing Volunteers

Volunteers give their time and energy freely. They believe their contribution makes a positive difference to the communities within Perth and Kinross. **Therefore the time and energy that volunteers give should be valued and given positive recognition whenever possible.** It could be anything from inclusion in team meetings, a thank you letter, a mention in a local newsletter or an informal get together over coffee to a large annual celebration event such as Perth & Kinross Volunteer Awards, organised by Volunteer Action Perthshire, or the Spirit of Youth Awards organised by Youth Services.

The challenge for ECS, and those who support volunteers, is in being innovative about how to show volunteers that their contribution is recognised and valued by the Service in non-monetary terms.

Resources

ECS recognises that whilst developing effective volunteering programmes is an investment with significant benefits, there are many associated resource and financial implications. ECS is committed to identifying and covering the costs of involving volunteers - for example, reimbursing volunteers' expenses, volunteer recruitment, selection, training and insurance, staff costs, including, where appropriate, designated posts to manage volunteers and organise recognition/celebration events.

Those responsible for taking on volunteers need to take into account the demands that will be put on staff and must satisfy themselves that there is enough staff time available to support volunteers.

Budget Managers must ensure that, prior to taking on volunteers, they are able to meet expenses, pay for Disclosure Scotland checks and any other related costs, and contain these within their existing budgets.

Out-of-Pocket Expenses - No volunteer should be out of pocket as a result of their work and relationship with the Council. Receipts should be kept and submitted with a valid expense form.

Insurance - Volunteers will be covered by the Council's insurance policy. From an insurance point of view, volunteers are employees of Perth & Kinross Council. The insurance however, does not include personal liability in respect of a criminal charge.

Recruitment and Selection

In line with Perth & Kinross Council's Corporate Equalities Policy, ECS is actively committed to encouraging volunteers from all communities and will not discriminate on the grounds of race or ethnic origin, social or economic class, gender, disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation or age.

As part of the recruitment process, two references will be sought for the prospective volunteer, one preferably from a past employer.

ECS:

- ❑ *acknowledges the importance of social inclusion and recognises that all prospective volunteers have something of value to offer. All reasonable effort will therefore be made to find placements for everyone who offers their time and energy. Where there is no suitable placement available, the volunteer will be informed of the reasons and referred, where applicable, to Voluntary Action Perthshire (VAP);*
- ❑ *will place volunteers in accordance with appropriate volunteer recruitment and selection procedures. However, volunteer placements will be defined by the needs of Education & Children's Services and its service users;*
- ❑ *recognises that volunteering is a valuable experience for young people often assisting with future career plans. However, a lower age limit of years is in place to protect young volunteers.*

Information and Training

ECS will:

- ❑ *ensure that volunteers receive full information about their area of work and their responsibilities to the Service. This will include information about procedures for volunteers and their rights and responsibilities;*
- ❑ *provide volunteers with training from induction through to on-the-job or ongoing skills training where appropriate;*
- ❑ *provide a volunteer with access to any risk assessments carried out in relation to the responsibilities to be undertaken. Appropriate health and safety training will be given according to the Council's normal training regime for any activities with health and safety implications;*
- ❑ *give a pro-rata element of work break where a volunteer is working two days a week or more over a period of time. If a volunteer works **over two and up to four hours at a stretch** he or she will be given a 15-minute break and will be given a minimum 30 minute meal break if working **six hours a day or more**;*
- ❑ *ensure that, where appropriate, volunteers are given the same opportunities as staff to contribute to the decision-making processes of Perth & Kinross Council, Education & Children's Services;*
- ❑ *include and welcome the views of volunteers in shaping the operational evolution of the service and to this end supervisors and colleagues will accept and consider volunteers' opinions in the course of normal work. In addition the contributions of volunteers will be welcome at any meetings or training in which they are involved;*
- ❑ *put procedures in place to enable the views of Service volunteers to be represented.*

Support, Supervision and Review

Volunteers will be assigned a named contact person for supervision, support and periodic review, and will be given clearly specified lines of accountability.

While it is anticipated that relationships between ECS staff and volunteers will be productive, beneficial and rewarding to both parties, circumstances may arise in which one party is not satisfied with the other. If a volunteer feels they are being treated unfairly they can raise this within the management structure. If a volunteer is not performing adequately the relationship can be terminated.

References

On the basis of their voluntary work, volunteers will have the right to request a reference from their named contact person.

Involving Other Organisations' Volunteers

Organisations either working in joint initiatives with ECS or commissioned by the Service to carry out work, which involves volunteers, should have a volunteering policy, which adopts similar commitments to those outlined in this policy and procedures statement.

Developing a Relationship

A strategic approach to the development of volunteering will be taken by ECS and whenever possible in collaboration with other community planning partners.

Policy Implementation and Monitoring

The overall responsibility for the implementation and review of this policy and related procedures rests with the ECS Planning Officer with the voluntary sector liaison remit. On a day-to-day basis, implementation rests with a named contact/their line manager, and with volunteers themselves.

The work of volunteers should relate in part or in whole to Service plans which are subject to annual review. For their part, volunteers can expect to be monitored by means of specific meetings to discuss progress and contribution as time allows.