



EMPLOYER SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING

1 *Policy Statement*

Participation in a volunteering project can be a truly rewarding experience. The Council is eager to encourage its employees to enjoy the benefits of volunteering and to contribute in a different way to our communities. Employer supported volunteering can support employees who are currently participating in volunteering or it can give employees who feel inspired to explore volunteering the chance to become involved. It can also encourage teams or groups of like-minded employees to volunteer for a specific project or event which will benefit our local communities.

Public enthusiasm for participating in volunteering has never been so immense. Supporting our employees to utilise their skills out with their role reinforces the Council's commitment to collaborative working with our communities and fosters an environment where employees are encouraged to support local community groups and voluntary organisations.

2 *Benefits of Employer Supported Volunteering*

Being involved in Employer Supported Volunteering has a large range of benefits for employees, the Council and for the local community:

Benefits for the Employee

- Personal development
- Learning new skills
- Meeting new people
- Boosting confidence
- Making a difference
- Sharing knowledge/expertise
- Engaging with the local community
- Adding variety to their work

Benefits for the Council

- Enhancing the skills of employees
- Improving local reputation
- Improving morale and motivation
- Improving community relations
- Building local partnerships
- Teambuilding

Benefits for the Local Community/Voluntary Organisations

- Raising their profile
- Access to new or specialist skills and knowledge
- Access to extra resources
- Increasing partnership working
- Improved links with the Council
- Gaining a fresh perspective

3 Definition of Employer Supported Volunteering

Volunteering brings huge benefits to local communities and makes an invaluable contribution to everyday life. Many employees may want to volunteer, but due to working hours or working patterns find that it isn't feasible. Employer supported volunteering aims to encourage and support employees to contribute to their local community out with their work role, resulting in Perth and Kinross being a more vibrant place for us all to work and live in.

Employer Supported Volunteering is the phrase used to describe any volunteering project that an employee may wish to undertake that will benefit the local community, within the Perth & Kinross Council geographical area.

Listed below are some non-exhaustive examples of activities which may and may not be appropriate for consideration under this policy:

Suitable

- Helping with a local community environmental initiative, e.g. Take a Pride in Perthshire activities
- Volunteering in activities such as: befriending, committee work, charity shops, youth work etc.
- Volunteering to join a Timebank and agreeing to donate any time credits received
- Community organised litter picking
- Supporting youth organisations, e.g. Scouts or Guides etc.
- Volunteering as a Duke of Edinburgh leader

Not Suitable

- Volunteering as part of a commercial activity, e.g. a marshal at a golf tournament
- Volunteering activities based out with the Perth & Kinross Area
- Helping people, (e.g. next door neighbour) out with a structured or organised programme or activity

Specific volunteering opportunities, for groups such as Planners who want to participate in Planning Aid, may be prohibited within their employing Local Authority, because this would be a conflict of interest. In these cases, an exception can be considered and volunteering activity out with the local area may be approved.

Employer Supported Volunteering can also be used by teams as a team building exercise or by colleagues who wish to join up with others to support an approved activity.

4 Scope & Eligibility

The Employer Supported Volunteering Policy applies to all employees in Perth & Kinross Council. However, there may be specific service areas where employees being absent from their post may not be practicable, e.g. social work employees in care homes, teachers or other key staff working in schools and educational establishments.

Service Management Teams should identify these posts within their Service. All requests should be fully considered by Managers taking account of the employee's individual workload and the requirements of the Service.

Where replacement cover is required to meet agreed staffing ratios or where compliance is necessary with legislative requirements or agreed standards, Managers must consider the impact on service delivery and financial resources.

The Council may seek volunteers from the workforce for specific corporate events or activities which employees would undertake in the course of their normal working hours rather than require approval under this policy. These events will be ad hoc and defined in advance by the Executive Director. There may also be specific corporate events or activities which take place out with working hours or at weekends and those who volunteer will be expected to do so in their own time.

5 Other Relevant Council Policies

The information contained within the policy should be used in conjunction with other relevant policies and procedures as appropriate, including:

- Employee Code of Conduct
- Achieving and Maintaining Standards
- Conflict of Interest
- Volunteers of the Emergency Services
- Fairness at Work
- Elections
- Maximising Attendance
- Corporate Health & Safety Policy

6 Allocated Time Off

Employees who wish to participate in Employer Supported Volunteering projects can apply to do so with a shared contribution for the time off required out of the workplace. Employees should request they use their annual leave, flexi leave or Time Off in Lieu (TOIL) for half the time required and the Council will match the employee contribution through special paid leave, up to a maximum of one day per annum. Time off for volunteering will only be approved in half day blocks. The provision would be pro-rated for part time employees. Any time requested should be during normal working hours.

In practice, this means an employee could request approval for community based volunteering for up to a maximum of two days per annum – one day contributed by the employee from their leave allocation and one day granted as special paid leave for volunteering by the Council.

For example:

- 1 If an employee wishes to volunteer for one full day, they should use either annual leave, flexi leave or TOIL for half of that day and request a half day special paid leave for volunteering.
- 2 If an employee has already completed a volunteering placement within the last year and has received a half day special paid leave for volunteering, and they wish to volunteer again, they should apply to use either annual leave, flexi leave or TOIL for half of that day and request a further half day special paid leave for volunteering.
- 3 If an employee wishes to volunteer for two full consecutive days, they should apply to use either annual leave, flexi leave or TOIL for one of the days and request one day special paid leave for volunteering.

7 Roles and Responsibilities

Managers are responsible for:

- Promoting and raising awareness of the policy and the benefits it can have for employees, the Council and the local community
- Meeting with employees to discuss the volunteering activity, benefits to the local community and the impact that this will have on the employee's workload and on service delivery
- Ensuring that fair consideration is given to every volunteering request received
- Ensuring that the maximum number of approved volunteering requests per employee is not exceeded in each calendar year
- Ensuring that all approved Employee Volunteering Requests are properly recorded to assist monitoring and reviewing
- Ensuring that any refused requests are communicated to employees timeously and the reasons for refusal are fully explained

Employees are responsible for:

- Identifying and researching volunteering activities in which they wish to participate in and ensuring that there is no conflict of interest. PKAVS or Voluntary Action Perthshire can provide further information on local volunteering opportunities that employees may want to consider.
- Requesting time off by discussing the volunteering activity with their Manager in the first instance and then making the formal application for time off
- Once the placement has been approved the employee is then responsible for organising their workload accordingly in conjunction with their Manager

- Checking either with the Local Community Organisation or the Voluntary Organisation that the appropriate risk assessments are in place. The Council's Health, Safety & Wellbeing Team will provide any advice in this area, if needed
- Ensuring that any confidential information obtained during a volunteer placement is treated as such
- Agreeing to share their experience once their placement has ended. This could be communicated via a team meeting, by speaking to groups of staff or putting information on eric etc.
- Terminating any volunteering placement if they believe that there may be a conflict of interest

Local Community Organisations and Voluntary Organisations are responsible for:

- Organising any induction training that may be a necessary part of enabling the volunteering activity to take place
- Ensuring that all volunteering placements are fully risk assessed

8 Procedure

8.1 Volunteering Requests

- The employee should identify the volunteering activity and discuss this with their Manager before making any commitments. This will enable the Manager to establish if the activity is a suitable volunteering opportunity which will benefit the local community and whether it is feasible for the employee to undertake volunteering at that time
- The employee should then make a formal application for Employer Supported Volunteering and pass this to their Manager for approval

8.2 Provisions

- Employees should be made aware that the time given for any volunteering placement is not inclusive of travelling time to and from the activity location
- Managers should clarify with employees that travelling expenses will not be paid for any volunteering activity
- If employees wish to extend the period of time of their volunteering placement to enable them to fulfil their commitment, then this should be facilitated by using either annual or flexi leave or in their own time
- If, for any reason, an employee is unable to attend their planned volunteering placement on the agreed day, they should inform their Manager of the reasons as soon as possible. They are also responsible for informing their key contact at the activity placement. If non-attendance is due to sickness absence then the Council's normal sickness absence reporting procedure should apply and employees can re-arrange their volunteering placement. If no reason is given for non-attendance this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and will be dealt with in accordance with the Council's relevant policies and procedures

8.3 Refusing Requests

- Managers should fully consider if the volunteering request can be accommodated and if this is not feasible, then this should be put in writing to the employee. If the request is refused, employees should be reassured that the refusal is related to that specific request only and should be encouraged to re-apply or explore other options to support volunteering
- Reasons that a Manager may refuse a request include:
 - If the volunteering opportunity does not fall within the Perth and Kinross area
 - Having a detrimental effect on the ability to deliver services
 - Having insufficient financial resources to provide critical cover in areas where staff ratios or minimum standards apply
 - An inability to reorganise workload within the business area

8.4 Risk Assessment

It is the responsibility of the Local Community Organisation or Voluntary Organisation to ensure that all placements are appropriately risk assessed. Employees are responsible for determining this at the planning/application stage of their volunteering placement. Time off for volunteering will not be granted unless a risk assessment has been completed.

8.5 Insurance

Employees who volunteer to work with a Local Community Organisation or a Voluntary Organisation will be covered by the organisation's insurance cover for the time they are with them or working on their behalf. All organisations' employers' liability insurances must extend to cover trainees, volunteers and work placement students.

Where employees are using their own vehicle or method of transport to carry out volunteering duties, they are responsible for contacting their own insurers regarding the extension to include volunteer work. Volunteers should be able to produce evidence of this cover. Travel to premises where volunteering work will be carried out will not be considered as mileage on behalf of the Council and will therefore not be reimbursed.

Employees should also check other relevant insurance that they have in place, for example, personal accident and critical illness, to determine if there will be any impact on their cover when carrying out volunteering activities.

8.6 Employee Conduct During a Volunteering Activity

Employees participating in an Employer Supported Volunteering placement are representatives of Perth & Kinross Council. As such, normal standards of behaviour and conduct continue to apply.

9 *Monitoring & Review*

The uptake of Employer Supported Volunteering placements will be recorded and the information will be reviewed regularly to ensure that the policy continues to meet the needs of the Council and to ensure it is compliant with relevant legislation. We will also seek feedback from Local Community Organisations and Voluntary Organisations on benefits and their experiences of having Council employees as volunteers.