

# **Bradford Metropolitan District Council**

# **Volunteering Framework**

**Issued by: Occupational Safety Team**

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Bradford Metropolitan District Council would like to thank both Calderdale Council and Wales Council for Voluntary Action, for the free use of their documentation to help the Council to develop our own Volunteering Framework and associated processes and templates.

# Bradford Council Volunteering Framework

## Statement

Bradford Council recognises and supports volunteering for groups or individuals, whether this is through Bradford Council volunteering opportunities, voluntary sector grant-funding, voluntary sector infrastructure contract.

This Framework sets out the broad principles for voluntary involvement within Bradford Council. It is of relevance to all within the local authority, including Council members, directors, managers, school management teams, governing bodies, staff and volunteers. The Council recognises its responsibility to arrange and manage volunteering efficiently and sensitively so that the valuable gift of the volunteer's time is best used to the advantage of all concerned.

## Commitment

Bradford Council acknowledges that volunteers contribute in many ways, where their contribution is unique and can benefit users of council services, staff, local communities and the volunteers themselves. As a large diverse local authority we value the contribution made by volunteers and are committed to involving volunteers in appropriate positions and in ways which is encouraging, supportive and will develop volunteering.

Volunteering empowers our communities and can enable them to find ways to help themselves or support others to meet the demand for services. It helps build resilience and trust within our communities and at an individual level can make significant improvements to people's physical/mental health and their skills and future employment opportunities.

## Definition

Volunteering is an important expression of citizenship as well as an important component of democracy. Volunteers are people who, unpaid and of their own free will, contribute their time, energy and skills to benefit the community.

The Government's definition of regular volunteering is 'at least 3 hours every month.' It is understood that a volunteer is not an employee, a worker or a contractor providing services and there is no contractual relationship between the two parties. The above definition does not include those who take part in informal volunteering such as helping an elderly neighbour with their shopping or giving a friend's child a lift to football practice.

## Values and Principles

Volunteering is an important activity that is supported and encouraged by Bradford Council and is not intended to be a substitute for paid employment; but complimenting and adding value to the work we already do. Volunteers bring specialist knowledge and skills to their roles and the Council recognises that some of the work it does would not be possible were it not for volunteers.

The volunteer role is a special relationship, binding only in honour, trust and mutual understanding. No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, can be imposed on volunteers to attend, give or be set a minimum amount of time to carry out the tasks involved in their voluntary activity. Likewise, the Local authority cannot be compelled to provide either regular tasks, payment or other benefit for any activity undertaken by the volunteer.

Council Managers will take the appropriate steps to ensure that paid employees are clear about the role of volunteers, and to help foster good working relationships between paid employees and volunteers.

It is important to note that volunteers will not be used during times of industrial action to do the work of paid staff.

Although volunteers offer time freely and willingly without binding obligation, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged – both of what the Council expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of the organisation.

The Council's vision for Bradford to be an attractive place where people are prosperous, healthy and safe; supported by excellent services and a place where we value everyone being different and through our actions demonstrate that everyone matters.

A strong consistent approach to volunteering fits well with the local authority's vision and values.

Bradford Council's key values are:

- Good schools and a great start for all our children
- Better skills, more good jobs and a growing economy
- Better health, better lives
- Safe, clean and active communities
- Decent homes that people can afford to live in

Volunteers are likely to offer support to services across the Council and in a large variety of roles. It is therefore crucial that our values underpin the way we recruit, manage and recognise the contributions that volunteers make.

Bradford Council is committed to providing equal opportunity when developing, and supporting volunteering. Although there is no statutory obligation under equality legislation we recognise a clear moral obligation to promote fairness and equality in volunteering.

The Authority values all volunteers and celebrate their diverse and unique identity and background, including (but not exclusively) religious belief, social background, ethnic and national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability or age.

## **Aims**

This Volunteering Framework aims to:

- Provide a single corporate framework for volunteering within the Council that is clear, consistent and fair.
- Ensure there is a clear, consistent and fair approach to recruiting and managing volunteers within the Council.
- Ensure that volunteering with the Council is an enjoyable and rewarding experience.
- Ensure suitable guidance is provided to Council staff working with volunteers and for the volunteers themselves.
- Have clear role descriptions provided for volunteers and the necessary training/ induction plans in place, including health and safety.
- Ensure the safety of all those volunteers involved.
- Recognise the contribution of volunteers to the Council by supporting development and other opportunities.
- Ensure relevant information and guidance relating to the volunteering activities is provided by the services to the volunteers.
- Ensure the benefits of volunteering and working with volunteers are actively promoted throughout the Council, ensuring that the Council employees are aware of, and appreciate the role of the volunteer.

- Encourage feedback from volunteers to help improve service delivery and further develop volunteering opportunities.

### **Volunteer Co-ordination**

All volunteering activities will be managed by a volunteer contact or council manager, who will act as the main contact to individual volunteers and groups. They will offer support, guidance, advice and supervision, to help the volunteers carry out tasks effectively. These persons are also responsible for the management and welfare of the volunteers.

### **Recruitment and Selection**

Volunteering opportunities will be widely promoted in ways that makes them accessible to all members of the community or district.

Bradford Council is committed to equal opportunities and believes that volunteering should be open to all regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs or offending background that does not create a risk to vulnerable groups including children. The acceptance of a volunteer for a particular role will be made on merit, the individual's suitability and ability to carry out agreed tasks. Information about the volunteer that is not relevant to the performance of the volunteering tasks concerned will be disregarded in terms of recruitment and selection.

Volunteers who are considered unsuitable for a particular task or activity will either be offered alternative voluntary involvement within the Local Authority or referred to a Volunteer Centre.

Volunteers will be asked to produce two references (not family members) and will be invited to attend an informal interview. If the volunteer will be carrying out activities with vulnerable groups (children and/or adults) there may be other safer recruitment procedures carried out including asking a volunteer to undergo an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) check. More detailed information will be made available specific to legislative requirements and to the particular volunteer position.

Volunteers will have a clear and concise task/activity description, which will be subsequently reviewed, at least annually or where there are significant changes to task or activity. The task/activity description will be prepared in conjunction with the volunteer and the volunteer contact or manager noted above.

### **Training and Development**

All volunteers will be made aware of and have access to the relevant Council policies and procedures, including those relating to volunteering, health & safety, information confidentiality, safeguarding vulnerable groups and equal opportunities.

The development and support for volunteers is important for the Council in order to equip them with the necessary information and skills to carry out their tasks. It is the responsibility of the volunteer contact, manager or nominated persons to ensure that this training is provided and formally recorded. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to attend relevant training.

All volunteers must have an induction as apart of the introduction to the Council. They must be briefed about the tasks or activities they will undertake and given all the necessary information to enable them to perform with confidence and in reasonable safety.

Inductions should be held at the start of the volunteer's first session or specific task by the volunteer contact, manager, supervisor or group representative. These will cover the following:

- Project or activity volunteer contacts
- Site task and description
- Introduction to staff and other volunteers
- Equipment safety talks
- Risk assessments and Safe systems of work
- Information on welfare facilities (e.g. toilets, kitchenettes)
- Levels of supervision including young persons
- Emergency procedures

An induction checklist is available for volunteer contact, managers or supervisors to use.

### **Support, Supervision and Recognition**

Volunteers will have a named volunteer contact or manager who they can seek guidance, support and when necessary raise concerns they may have. They will have access to regular support and supervision. This will enable both the volunteer and the supervisor to identify, monitor and evaluate the volunteer's involvement, progress, recognise achievements and identify individual training needs. The frequency, duration and format of these sessions will be agreed between the volunteers and the volunteer contact.

Where appropriate, volunteers will be given the opportunity to share their views and opinions with the Council's staff, at service, team meetings, toolbox talks or similar.

A process will be developed in order to give formal recognition of the contribution of the Council's volunteers (e.g. internal awards, articles in newspapers and newsletters, thank you letters etc.) or outline any existing process.

### **Expenses**

Before undertaking any voluntary activity with the Council, a potential volunteer in receipt of state benefits should contact their Job Centre Plus Advisor, to ensure that they are not adversely affected by the duties to be undertaken.

Bradford Council recognises that the reimbursement of out of pocket expenses incurred in travelling to and from the place of volunteering or in the course of volunteering is important from an equal opportunities point of view. This is necessary to ensure that all individuals have access to voluntary opportunities.

'Reimbursement' over and above actual expenses could affect the legal status of volunteers, making them eligible for the national minimum wage and other employment rights. Expenses will therefore only be reimbursed against receipts, public transport tickets etc. as evidence of expenditure. Reimbursement will be in accordance with limits set for paid staff. It is the responsibility of the volunteer contact or manager to make volunteers aware of the procedure for the reimbursement of expenses.

Bradford Council has a consistent approach to the reimbursement of expenses which are the same for volunteers, staff, etc. and are as approved by the Inland Revenue.

### **Insurance**

Bradford Council's liability insurance policies include activities of volunteers and liability towards them. It does not insure the volunteer's personal possessions against loss or damage. The Council is unable to guarantee a secure locked location for personal possessions; they are wholly the responsibility of the volunteer.

### **Confidentiality and Data Protection**

Bradford Council will advise volunteers and volunteer groups on its Confidentiality policy and Data protection procedures, where relevant. This will include those relating to a volunteer's

personal information held by the Council. Volunteer contact details and personal information is confidential and is only available to relevant staff for the purposes of volunteer management. These details will not be divulged to any third parties.

Volunteers should regard all information they have access to, or are given as a result of their volunteering, as being confidential unless otherwise advised.

## **Grievances and Complaints**

Bradford Council aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. The Council will seek to ensure that volunteers' views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly and aim for a positive and amicable resolution based on the Council's guidelines for settling grievances.

The volunteer contact or manager is responsible for handling problems regarding volunteer concerns, complaints or conduct in the first instance. In the event of a problem, all relevant facts should be obtained as quickly as possible. Support will be provided by the Council to the volunteer while it attempts to resolve the problem in an informal manner. If an informal resolution proves impossible, the Council's wider grievance or complaints policies and procedures (which include volunteers) will be referred to. If a volunteer's behaviour is repeatedly or seriously unacceptable, they may be asked to change their role, or to leave the Council.

## **Rights and Responsibilities**

Bradford Council recognises the rights of volunteers to:

- Know what is (and what is not) expected of them.
- Have adequate support in their volunteering.
- Work in a safe environment.
- Be insured.
- Know their rights and responsibilities if something goes wrong.
- Receive appropriate training.
- Be free from discrimination.
- Receive appreciation.
- Receive relevant out-of-pocket expenses.
- Be offered the opportunity for feedback, appraisal or personal development.

Bradford Council expects volunteers to:

- Be honest and reliable.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Make the most of training and support opportunities.
- Carry out tasks in a way that reflects the aims and values of the Council.
- Carry out tasks within agreed guidelines.
- Respect the work of the council and not bring it into disrepute.
- Comply with the Council's policies and procedures.

## **Health and Safety**

Bradford Council has a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all our employees and this includes volunteers. All managers who are responsible for managing volunteers and or volunteering groups should follow the process as outlined in the health and safety application packs 1-3 (page 9).

Bradford Council managers are responsible for carrying out risk assessments for volunteering projects, activities or tasks that individual volunteers will undertake. Volunteers will be notified of key findings and agreed safe working procedures at the beginning of each volunteering session. Risk assessments and safe working procedures will be made available as part of their induction or as required.

Where it is deemed necessary, volunteers must ensure they wear suitable clothing and protective footwear at all times and they are responsible for this and managers will endorse

this requirement. These requirements will be identified through the risk assessment, and volunteers will be advised prior to the session of any specific needs.

Bradford Council will provide protective equipment such as gloves, goggles, ear protection and hard hats should they be required as identified via the risk assessment process. Where tools are provided by the Council, they will be in maintained in working order and fit for purpose. All equipment, provided by the Council, must be returned to the Council once the activity comes to an end.

If volunteers have their own preferred tools they wish to bring them along to use, they must be suitable for the intended task, maintained in working order and remains the responsibility by the volunteer. Some equipment will require proof of training, e.g. chainsaw. Any electrically operated equipment must be PAT tested. The Council may request to inspect any personal tooling to ensure it is suitable and safe to use. The supervision of volunteers will be discussed and agreed with the volunteer contact, manager or supervisor and volunteers prior to activities taking place, especially with regard to the supervision of young persons.

Volunteers who will be working alone will, at induction, be familiarised with the Council's Lone Working guidance and agree a safe working process with the Volunteer contact, manager or supervisor.

In the event of an accident the Council requests that volunteers seek assistance from the volunteer contact, manager or supervisor or a member of Council staff for first aid assistance and or to report the incident following the Council's accident reporting and investigation procedures.

Organisations volunteering to the Council will be required to carry out their own risk assessments and provide their own insurance to cover their team whilst engaging in activities. This will be discussed with the Council's volunteer contact, manager or nominated persons organising the project. Copies of the relevant documents must be provided to, and agreed by the Council manager prior to the commencement date.

Where these working groups are likely to be made up of more than 15 individuals, they will be required to provide their own first aide arrangements and a correctly stocked first aid kits.

## **Safeguarding**

Bradford Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk. Whilst the Council seeks to uphold the principle of equality of opportunity, it is mindful of its responsibility to protect children, young people and adults at risk for whom it cares and provides services to. Their needs and their welfare are the primary consideration.

As part of the induction, volunteers will be provided with information on safeguarding and have access to any relevant Council safeguarding policies and processes relating to their area of activities.

If at any time a volunteer has any safeguarding concerns relating to an individual they are working with or supporting they should raise with their volunteer contact, manager, supervisor in the first instance. If the concern is in relation to or involves the aforementioned person then the concern should be escalated to the next level of management or consult the Council's Whistle-blowing policy.

DBS disclosures will be carried out on any volunteer who, in the course of their appointment will have access to children and young people under the age of 18, a young person with a disability up to the age of 25, adults at risk and those volunteers involved in cash handling.

Corporate or voluntary groups working with vulnerable groups in the Council should have an up to date Safeguarding policy. A copy of this document should be provided to the volunteer contact, manager or nominated person organising the volunteering project, task or activity for review prior to start.

Each project, activity will be assessed to ascertain whether it is deemed suitable for volunteers under 16. If a volunteer aged 16 or 17 (classified as a 'Young Person' by Health and Safety legislation) should wish to be involved in a project, then the risk assessment for that project should take this into account. This is unless they are volunteering as part of a bigger group such as Scouts/ Guides or a corporate group etc. on specific project based events, in which case suitable documentation (group insurance etc.) will be required.

## **Volunteering and Driving**

Volunteers using their own cars for voluntary activity (this does not include getting to the venue at the start and end of the volunteer activity) is best avoided and public transport or Fleet transport should be used where possible. Where the volunteer uses their own car as part of the activity or transporting other volunteers then the following must be undertaken:

- Volunteer drivers will be responsible for ensuring that their vehicle insurance covers them for voluntary work. Volunteer drivers using their car for voluntary work must understand that if they have invalid insurance they are committing a criminal offence, it will invalidate their insurance cover and they are likely to suffer substantial financial losses even if the road collision was deemed not their fault.
- Volunteers need to provide proof of correct insurance and agree for the Council's Fleet Services to confidentially access to their records at the DVLA to check their licence for correct permissions and prohibitions.  
If a volunteer refuses to co-operate with this process they cannot be involved in volunteer driving activities.
- Volunteers' vehicles used must be roadworthy, in a reasonable state of repair, have a current MOT (if appropriate) and be taxed.
- Volunteers who may drive a Council Fleet Vehicle will have to adhere to the same licence checks and the driver training requirements of the Council's safe working procedures for Fleet drivers, prior to being given permission to drive a Council vehicle.
- All of the above will where appropriate be subject to regular review.

## **Volunteer process overview**

There are four broad ways to volunteer with the Council. This is important because although the approach to managing volunteers will be consistent there are slight differences in the process and documents completed. This will depend on the type of volunteering being organised.

1. Volunteers working on Bradford Council's premises or highway or public spaces without any supervision or management from Council employees (e.g. members of the public or named voluntary group restoring a feature in a park, leafleting, litter picking, snow clearing, gritting etc).
2. Volunteers working in a Bradford Council building without any council management or employee supervision (e.g. Library).
3. Volunteers who are employees of a private company doing voluntary work for the Council with no direct supervision from a Council manager or employee, perhaps as part of an organisation's corporate social responsibility.
4. Volunteers working under the direct/ indirect supervision of a Council manager or employee (e.g. Countryside Service, Flood warden)

## **Health and Safety Application Packs**

**Health and Safety application pack 1** - should be used for individual volunteers working under direct or indirect Council supervision. Example, an individual helping out in the Youth Offending Team or as listed in bullets 1, 2 and 4 above.



**Health and Safety application pack 2** - should be used for private business working on Council land or in a Council-owned building. As an example, as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility, company employees clearing weeds and tidying the area on a grass verges.

**Health and Safety application pack 3** - should be used for groups of volunteers / constituted voluntary groups working indoors or outdoor, without direct Council supervision. Example a 'Friends of' group who want to plant bulbs in the local park or some of those listed in bullet 1 above.

## **Process**

The following bullet points below outline a summary overview of the volunteer process. It offers a logical approach to working with volunteers, from recruitment to its end.

1. Volunteers and external volunteering groups are likely to respond to the Council advertising through various media for volunteering roles, activities or projects within the district. Individuals may also make a general enquiry for volunteer. It is likely that all will have to complete Volunteering Expression of Interest form
2. All applications will be processed, interview meetings organised and references requested. Potential volunteers will be invited to a meeting with the Council officer responsible for the volunteer role. This is an opportunity for both parties to determine if the particular volunteer role, or activity, is suitable. The interview meeting should be structured and organised without being unnecessarily formal. Organisations volunteering for the Council would be required to carry out their own risk assessment and provide their own insurance to cover their team whilst engaging in activities. This will be discussed with the Council's Volunteer contact at the interview meeting and copies of the relevant documents must be provided to, and agreed by, the appropriate Council manager prior to the commencement date.
3. At the interview the volunteer contact or manager will then complete the necessary Health and Safety application pack, see notes above. Following the interview meeting, the volunteer will receive confirmation from the volunteering contact or manager whether or not the volunteering role will go ahead. The volunteer contact or manager will collate all information necessary.
4. The start date will be agreed. This is subject to satisfactory references, identity check and a Disclosure and Barring (DBS) check (where required).
5. Completion and signing of the Volunteer agreement and all the other appropriate forms e.g. data protection.
6. Carry out induction and training of volunteers or groups.
7. Volunteering activity or projects starts, this may include additional training as required.
8. Monitor progress and success of the volunteering task, activity or project.
9. Seek feedback from volunteers during and or at the end of the activity or project.
10. Review the volunteering activity or project and maintain records

## **Review**

This framework will be reviewed periodically. However, if national guidance changes, or local issues arise which may impact on this framework, it will be updated as and when appropriate. To aid the framework review, feedback from volunteers and volunteer contacts, managers and volunteer supervisors will be sought. This may include surveys or open feedback sessions.

**Resource templates available to support this framework:**

1. Volunteer Expression of Interest Form
2. Volunteer Personal Information Form
3. Volunteer Reference Form
4. Volunteer Agreement
5. Volunteer Induction Checklist
6. Volunteer Feedback Form
7. Volunteer Project Outline
8. Health and Safety Application Packs 1-3
9. Volunteer Risk Assessment Form

**Bradford Council policies and associated documents that support this policy**

Health Safety at Work Policy

Equality and Diversity policy

Data protection

Safeguarding policies Adults/ Children

Risk Assessment guidance

Risk Assessment Form

Lone Working Framework

Driving for Business (Grey fleet) guidance

Accident incident Reporting and Recording Procedure

Grievance procedure

Whistle-blowing Policy

Policy for Supporting Employee Volunteering and Associated Managers Guidance