Volunteers Policy

Approved by Staff Governance Committee on

27 January 2025 with an implementation date of 1 February 2025

Document Control

Approval Date	27 January 2025
Implementation Date	1 February 2025
Policy Number	POL-CS-0019
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Approval Authority	Staff Governance Committee
Scheduled Review	Annually
Date and Changes: • Replaces the Education, Culture and Sport Volunteer Policy 2013 • Replaces the Making a Difference: Volunteering in Aberdeen Strategy 2013-2015	

Table of Contents

1.   Why does the Council need this Policy?

1.1   This policy sets out how any volunteering activity for Aberdeen City Council (ACC) will be managed to ensure uniformity of processes and to mitigate against any potential risks to the Council through the use of volunteers. The Policy will specifically aim to reduce risk as set out in section 6 around:

- the health and safety of volunteers, employees and our communities
- any potential legislation breaches including data

1.2   ACC recognises that volunteering activities are a choice made freely by the individual.

1.3   ACC recognises volunteers as playing a complementary role alongside paid employees. Benefits gained include building stronger relationships with our communities, opportunities to deliver more effective projects and to learn from volunteers who bring different experiences and knowledge.

1.4   ACC recognises that volunteers should be involved in appropriate volunteering activities which complement but never substitute the work of paid employees or the work formerly carried out by paid employees. Examples of where the Council has volunteers include Libraries, Educational establishments, Environmental Services, Museums and Galleries, Archives and our City Events service.

1.5   There are a variety of volunteering opportunities across the Council which provide high quality experiences that are positive, enriching and enjoyable for all participants. All ACC volunteers will have access to relevant training, support and guidance throughout their time volunteering with ACC, offering quality opportunities to develop and broaden skills for learning, life and employability. Volunteering provides opportunities to tackle social isolation and improve health and wellbeing.

1.6   ACC is a Volunteer Charter Champion and will use the Volunteer Scotland Volunteer Charter alongside this policy to ensure that volunteers are engaged in rewarding, appropriate and sustainable volunteering activity.

1.7   ACC (People and Citizen Services) will maintain a 'pool' of its own employees who wish to volunteer for specific volunteering activities such as Emergency Resilience. This is separate to their substantive roles and contracts of employment.

1.8   This policy sets out the requirements on ACC managers to uphold best practice in selecting volunteers and in the management of and providing support to our volunteers. Relevant procedures are set out in the accompanying guidance with reference to national and local volunteering strategies as well as ensuring compliance with Data Protection and Equality legislation and protecting vulnerable children and adults.

2.   Application and Scope Statement

2.1   This policy applies to all staff involved in offering volunteer opportunities and engaging and managing ACC Volunteers.

2.2   This policy only relates to volunteers and volunteering activities. Within this policy, volunteers are defined as the following:

- Volunteers from the community who are managed and supported by an ACC manager. e.g. Libraries and Museums and Galleries
- Community Resilience Groups who correspond with a named ACC manager e.g. Corporate Companies, Local Community Groups
- Council employees who volunteer to support ACC volunteering activities (separate to their substantive roles and contracts of employment) e.g. Emergency Resilience
- Council employees who volunteer to support external volunteering opportunities (separate to their substantive roles and contracts of employment) e.g. Spectra, Tall Ships

3.   Responsibilities

3.1   Overall responsibility for this Policy is held by Chief Officer - People and Citizen Services.

3.2   Each individual Cluster will have responsibility for supporting the implementation of the policy within individual services. Specifically, they will:

- Appoint a named person responsible for the management of volunteers in line with the accompanying guidance within individual services.
- Ensure all administration processes related to engaging volunteers, within the Policy and accompanying guidance are completed. Examples include advertising volunteering opportunities, undertaking any necessary checks such as PVG/Disclosure, Right to Work checks, signed Volunteer Agreements and Identification Badges.
- Cover the cost of PVG/Disclosure checks where required.
- Maintain the standards of the Volunteer Scotland Volunteer Charter.
- Ensure volunteers are provided with a Privacy Notice setting out their rights in respect of the use of their personal data.
- Ensure volunteer records are maintained and retained confidentially in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Maintain compliance with Health & Safety legislation by ensuring that tasks undertaken by volunteers will be subject to a risk assessment with appropriate safe systems of work put into operation and any necessary training, equipment and PPE provided. All accidents, injuries or near misses will be reported to the Council through the named person.

- All ACC employees managing and supporting volunteers must complete the mandatory training courses to ensure they have a clear understanding of their role in preventing the exploitation and radicalisation of vulnerable people.
- Discuss with all volunteers any potential expenses that may arise as a result of their volunteering activity e.g. travel costs that would otherwise prevent them from volunteering. Any expenses should be agreed in advance with the named person in accordance with the accompanying guidance.
- Comply with ACC's financial regulations policy.
- Report any non-compliance with this policy to the Chief Officer - People and Citizen Services.
- Provide any feedback on this policy or suggestions for improvement to the Chief Officer - People and Citizen Services and this will be taken into account as part of the regular review of this policy.
- Provide induction, training, support and guidance throughout the volunteer's time that they are engaged in volunteering activity with ACC.
- Report on the usage of volunteers, on a regular basis as set out in the accompanying guidance. The impact of the volunteering activities undertaken across ACC will be monitored by People and Citizen Services.

3.3   ACC will ensure that adequate levels of public liability and employer's liability insurance, which includes volunteers, are maintained at all times. Managers engaging and managing volunteers must ensure that activities are restricted to those set out in their volunteer agreement, and to adhere to corporate policies and procedures as outlined in this document, in order to ensure that the use of volunteers is covered by corporate insurance.

4.   Supporting Procedures and Documentation

4.1   There is accompanying Managing Volunteers guidance to support this Policy. Other policies and procedures that may apply include:

- Corporate Health and Safety Policy
- Corporate ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- Corporate Information Policy
- Corporate Information Handbook
- Corporate Child Protection Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Risk Assessment Procedure
- The Council's Guiding Principles
- Make a complaint procedure
- Mental Health and Wellbeing guidance
- Retention period for volunteers who volunteer with children or vulnerable adults guidance

- <u>Retention period for volunteers who do not volunteer with children or vulnerable adults guidance</u>
- <u>Retention period for unsuccessful volunteer applications guidance</u>
- <u>Financial Regulations</u>

4.2   Supporting documentation

- <u>Scottish Government Volunteering For All</u>
- <u>Volunteer Scotland Volunteer Charter</u>
- <u>UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018</u>
- <u>Equality Act 2010</u>
- <u>The PVG Scheme</u>
- <u>Right to Work checks: An Employer's Guide</u>
- <u>Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>
- <u>Council Delivery Plan</u>

5.   About this Policy

5.1   The policy is not creating any specific regulations or requirements other than what is stated under section 3 above.

5.2   This policy ensures that volunteers are engaged in rewarding, appropriate and sustainable volunteering activities in line with the Volunteer Scotland Volunteer Charter. This will contribute to building stronger relationships with communities.

5.3   This Policy recognises volunteers as playing a complementary role alongside paid employees but does not substitute the work of paid employees or the work formerly carried out by paid employees.

6.   Risk

This Policy and its supporting documentation will mitigate the following risks:

6.1   **Compliance Risks**
- The volunteering activity may involve 1-2-1 contact with children or protected adults, and may be classed as "regulated work." Services must ensure that appropriate checks under the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme (PVG) are undertaken.
- Volunteers may have access to personal, including confidential information about others as part of the volunteering activity, including information about; employees, children, and members of the public. Services should ensure that access to such information is minimized and that appropriate training in the correct handling of data will be provided to mitigate this risk as detailed in the accompanying guidance.

- The selection of volunteers must comply with the terms of The Equality Act 2010. This policy is committed to ensuring fair and equal treatment of volunteers, open to all, no matter what their background, age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion (including belief and non-belief), marriage & civil partnership and sexual orientation. All managers managing and supporting volunteers must have undertaken the online mandatory Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training to ensure that they understand their obligations under The Equality Act 2010.

6.2 **Operational Risks**
- The Policy will mitigate the risk of non-compliance with Health & Safety legislation by ensuring that tasks undertaken by volunteers will be subject to a risk assessment with appropriate safe systems of work put into operation and any necessary training, equipment and PPE provided. All accidents, injuries or near misses will be reported to the Council through the named person.

6.3 **Reputational Risks**
- There is potential for reputational risk arising from engaging unsuitable volunteers, for example a volunteer undertaking 'regulated work' without a PVG/Disclosure check or not being trained in Data Protection. To mitigate against this reputational risk, all staff who manage volunteers must comply with the terms of this policy and the Managing Volunteers guidance to ensure compliance with all essential requirements in using volunteers.
- Volunteers can undertake appropriate volunteering activities which complement, but never substitute for, the work of current paid employees or the work formerly carried out by paid employees.
- All ACC employees managing and supporting volunteers must complete the mandatory training courses to ensure they have a clear understanding of their role in preventing the exploitation and radicalisation of vulnerable people.

7. Environmental Considerations

7.1   ACC will ensure that where expenses are required to be paid for travel, these are agreed with the named person and that the volunteer uses public transport (where possible) to help achieve Net Zero Emissions by 2045.

7.2   ACC has volunteers within Environmental Services who assist with Clean Up Aberdeen, Friends Groups and Community Gardening Groups to help keep Aberdeen's green spaces clean and well maintained. This links to the LOIP "Prosperous Place" outcome with people benefiting from spending time outdoors whilst maintaining the appearance and appreciating the nature of Aberdeen.

7.3   ACC has volunteers who undertake volunteering activity within schools on environmental projects, for example, developing fruit and vegetable allotments. This links to the Keep Beautiful Scotland Eco-Schools initiative which ACC supports through a pupil-led approach to learning for sustainability.

7.4   ACC has volunteers within the Library and Community Learning service who provide lifestyle choices briefings on growing fruit and vegetables. This links to the LOIP "Prosperous People (Adults)" outcome by encouraging healthier lifestyles through improved healthy eating behaviours and "Prosperous Place" through the reduction of household waste.

8.   Policy Performance

8.1   Annual reporting will gather and evaluate data collected on volunteer numbers and activity to demonstrate compliance with the policy and the alignment with corporate and LOIP objectives.

8.2   Appropriate data from the report will be shared with relevant partners and statutory bodies, as appropriate.

9.   Design and Delivery

9.1   The Policy aims to support the ACC Delivery Plan, focusing on outcomes that make a difference, including working alongside partners to support Children, Young People and Adults with Additional Support Needs.

9.2   The Policy also aims to support ACC responding to emergency situations that may arise across the city.

9.3   This Policy links to outcomes of the LOIP across various actions including "Prosperous Economy" and "Prosperous People" offering support to those on the employability pipeline to gain skills for employment. It directly links to Stretch Outcome 2, Improvement Project Aim 2.8 to "Support 25 individuals to gain employability skills through volunteering opportunities by 2026."

10.   Housekeeping and Maintenance

10.1   The Policy will be reviewed annually and where necessary updates to it and the accompanying guidance document will be completed.

11.   Communication and Distribution

11.1   The Policy will be included with other People policies and guidance, published on Sharepoint People Anytime and communicated through various channels to ensure all relevant parties are aware of its content and have a full understanding of the Policy and their responsibilities when offering volunteering opportunities.

11.2   The Policy will be published on the ACC volunteering webpage to be viewed by potential volunteers.

12.   Information Management

12.1   Information generated by the application of this policy will be managed in accordance with the Council's Corporate Information Policy and Supporting Procedures.

13.   Definitions and Understanding this Policy

13.1   **Volunteering - "**Volunteering is a choice. A choice to give time or energy, a choice undertaken of one's own free will and a choice not motivated for financial gain or for a wage or salary". (Scottish Government, Volunteering for All: national framework)

13.2   **PVG** - The Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) membership scheme "helps ensure people who are unsuitable to work with children and protected adults cannot do regulated work with these vulnerable groups". (MyGov.Scot: The PVG Scheme)

13.3   **Regulated Work** - "There are 2 types of regulated work – work with children and work with protected adults. Examples include: jobs with caring responsibilities, teaching or supervising children or protected adults, providing personal services to children or protected adults and working directly with children or protected adults". (MyGov.Scot: Types of work covered by PVG)

13.4   **Right to Work -** "means allowed to be employed by virtue of qualifying immigration status" (Employer's guide to right to work checks). This definition of work includes volunteering activity.