

Strategic Human Resources

Pilot Employee Volunteering Policy, Procedure and Toolkit

Making a difference where you live



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1. Policy Outline

1.1 What is the policy about?

The policy supports the County Council's commitment to volunteering as providing an important service within the community. The County Council has demonstrated this commitment through membership of the County Durham Compact. This aims to promote and support partnership working between the voluntary & community sector and bodies like the County Council. The policy and scheme has been prepared and operated in partnership and with the co-operation of the Volunteer Bureaux/Centres. The pilot programme will operate for a 12-month period, starting from 18 January 2008.

The draft Code of Practice on volunteering, aimed at supplementing the Compact, promotes employee volunteering schemes. The scheme within this policy creates the opportunity for a member of staff to agree and take a specified amount of paid leave to volunteer. Apart from the prospective benefits to the community, the County Council and employees can gain from positive contributions to individual staff development, improved morale, wider public profile and assistance towards our overarching strategies such as the corporate aims, the equality & diversity agenda and Investors in People.

1.2 Who does the policy apply to?

This policy is aimed to cover all County Council employees. Schools need to give consideration to their own procedures. However, where any school chooses to adopt this policy in its entirety, their employees can make requests to utilise the opportunities within this scheme¹. The policy is recommended as good practice to all other groups associated with the County Council who have the discretion in their employment to adopt our policies. However, any group wishing to adopt a similar policy will not be able to utilise the brokerage agreement agreed between the County Council and the Volunteer Bureaux/Centres within this pilot programme.

1.3 Responsibility

Chief Officers and managers are responsible for the management and smooth running of this scheme within their service area. When granting approval for an employee to participate in the scheme, the manager must take into account the need for relevant service cover to meet the demands of internal and external customers.

Employees are responsible for balancing the needs and demands of their work activities alongside any volunteering role.

The Head of Human Resources is responsible for the maintenance of this policy.

The Volunteer Bureaux/Centres are responsible for assisting in the delivery of this pilot project and acting as brokers for the project on behalf of Durham County Council.

¹ A school that wishes to adopt an employee volunteering policy that varies from these arrangements will not be able to utilise the agreement established with the Volunteer Bureaux/Centres within this policy.

1.4 Monitoring & Evaluation

Statistical data will be provided to the County Council through the brokerage service offered by the Volunteer Bureaux/Centres, indicating take-up of this opportunity through this scheme. In addition, further evaluation should take place between the individual County Council manager and employee through internal Service processes.

Within the pilot scheme, monitoring must take place between the manager and employee. This monitoring must take place either when the special leave granted through this policy has been fully utilised² by the employee or within one month of reaching 31 January 2009 if the overall allowance has not been taken up. General evaluation may also take place through regular Service appraisal and supervisory processes.

If the scheme is extended this will become an annual evaluation linked to all learning and development activities in the County Council. Successful volunteering should help the employee meet his/her learning objectives and expectations. Hopefully, the experience gained is transferable back into the workplace leading to an enhanced overall work performance.

An evaluation form is included in the Toolkit which should be completed by the employee alongside discussions with their manager. A copy of this form must be forwarded to the Policy and Recruitment Team, Strategic HR Division, Chief Executive's Office. The manager may also wish to contact the voluntary organisation that the employee has committed to within this scheme and seek additional evaluation information.

The monitoring process for the pilot scheme will be coordinated by the Volunteering Scheme Working Party. This may include accessing individual evaluation forms.

1.5 Support

Advice about volunteering opportunities can be obtained from the Volunteer Bureaux/Centres around the county. Further information can be found in the Toolkit at the end of this policy.

1.6 Confidentiality

All information will be handled sensitively and used only for its proper purpose.

Under the Data Protection Act 1998 individuals have the right to see their own personal data held subject to the rights of confidentiality of any third parties involved in that information.

Any individual volunteering within the scope of this scheme must adhere to the County Council's Code of Conduct and Information Security practices (both available on the Intranet). In addition, the individual will need to consider any confidentiality requirements laid down by the host voluntary and community organisation.

² As soon as practicable after the employee has completed the 20 hours within the scheme.

1.7 Dealing with abuses of the policy

Employees who attempt to abuse this policy may face disciplinary action. The County Council takes false or misleading accusations very seriously which may result in further action taken through the Disciplinary Procedure. This will not include ill-founded allegations that were made in good faith.

1.8 Publicising/distribution of the policy

A copy of this policy is available from key personnel within the Services and will be made available to employees on request. A copy can also be viewed via the Intranet. New employees will be informed of the existence of this policy in recruitment and induction information. The policy should also be publicised through the annual appraisal process.

1.9 Reviewing the policy

The Strategic Human Resources Policy and Recruitment Team will keep the operation of this policy under review and will make such changes to the policy as deemed appropriate following necessary consultation with the trade unions.

1.10 Equality and Diversity

The Council's Mission is "to make County Durham the best place to live, work and bring up a family". One of the primary values that underpins everything we do while working towards this statement is that we promote equality of opportunity. This applies both in the delivery of our services and in relation to our employment practices. We are committed to including equalities in everything we do. This includes the elimination of unlawful discrimination, promoting diversity as a positive force and valuing & celebrating our diverse workforce and community.

If necessary, an equality impact assessment will be carried out in the preparation of this policy and the assessment will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

1.11 Alternative formats

Where any alternative format is required, any initial enquiry should be made through your line manager or by following the instructions below:

If you need this information summarised in another language or format such as Braille or talking tape, please call the number below.

إذا اردت معرفت ملخص هذه المعلومات باللغة العربية اتصل علي الرقم التالي

Arabic

আকারে এই তথ্যটি পেতে নিচের নম্বরে ফোন করুন:

Bengali

假如您需要這份資料的中文摘要，請致電下面的號碼。

Chinese

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات اردو میں درکار ہیں تو اس نمبر پر کال کیجیے۔

Urdu

Jezeli potrzebujesz streszczenia tych informacji w jezyku polskim zadzwon prosze na ponizszy numer

Polish

ਜਾਂ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਖਬਰ ਦਾ ਨਿਚੋੜ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਥੱਲੇ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਹੋਏ ਨੰਬਰ ਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

Punjabi

यदि आप यह जानकारी का संक्षेप हिन्दी में चाहते हैं, तो कृपया निचे दिए हुए नम्बर में सम्पर्क करें।

Hindi



(0191) 383 4203

1.12 Forms

Forms relating to this policy and procedure will be downloadable from the Intranet. Sample forms are included at the back of this document for information purposes only.

1.13 Further information

If you would like any further advice on this document you can contact the Strategic Human Resources Employee Relations Team on either 0191 383 4191 or 0191 383 3495 (Internal - Ext. 4191/3495).

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2. Procedure

2.1 Introduction to volunteering

People have different ideas about what volunteering is about, but one clear way of defining it is:

“Volunteers are people who free of charge and without duress give up their time, skills or enthusiasm for the benefit of others, the community and themselves. Volunteers should compliment not cover the work of any paid staff.”

You might already be a volunteer or you could have thought about getting involved in a volunteering opportunity. There are numerous volunteering possibilities, the most popular areas of involvement being linked to sport, children’s education & schools and recreation & arts. Volunteering is open to everyone, whatever your age or skill level - the wide choice of opportunities requires different needs.

This policy tells you about what you need to consider if you want to volunteer and what needs to happen if you want to participate in the scheme.

2.1.1 Benefits of volunteering

There are many reasons why everyone can benefit from volunteering, but they include:

(a) For the employee

- Gain valuable experience;
- Help other people and make a difference to other’s lives and the community;
- Learn new skills in different work situations and help meet learning needs;
- Easier transition from work to retirement;
- Contribute to an issue you really care about.

(b) For the County Council

- Develop our staff through getting involved in new and challenging situations;
- Improve staff motivation and morale while encouraging staff retention;
- Further support staff involvement with local communities;
- Develop and strengthen partnerships with other organisations;
- Make a difference by leading by example and contributing to our corporate aims.

(c) For the voluntary and community organisation

- Actively involves people from the local community;
- Helps the organisation achieve its goals through use of volunteer skills & knowledge;
- Helps to reduce the shortage of volunteers available to assist some organisations.

2.1.2 Basics of volunteering

If you do choose to get involved, there are some main points you need to be aware of:

- The organisation that you work with must provide a safe and positive experience of volunteering.
- Even if you are already actively volunteering, you can still seek to access this scheme.
- You can apply to volunteer during working hours, but with your manager's approval.
- To use this scheme will require you to use the process provided through one of the six Volunteer Bureaux/Centres in County Durham.
- Any paid work time you spend as a volunteer is provided in addition to other time you be allowed for special duties³, for example, school governor, magistrate, trade union activity, TA, jury service. However, the overall maximum of a combination of activities remains at 48 half days per annum, unless otherwise agreed.
- Any volunteering role should normally be linked to activity within the county and benefit the community that is served by the County Council.
- Although you are free to choose your volunteering activity, this needs to be supported by your manager, the Volunteer Bureau/Centre and clearly support one or more of the corporate aims of the County Council:
 - promoting strong, healthy & safe communities;
 - building a strong economy;
 - looking after the environment;
 - developing lifelong learning.
- Working as a volunteer is entirely independent of your employment contract with the County Council - this includes for any circumstances where your voluntary work is in relation to a County Council service. Volunteers do not get contracts of employment, although there may be a need to complete an agreement with the voluntary and community organisation that is being supported.
- Any employee participating in the scheme will have their involvement with the voluntary and community organisation appropriately reviewed and evaluated by their County Council manager. This may include the manager seeking feedback from the organisation the employee works with in a voluntary capacity.
- Where a County Council employee operates as a manager or trustee of the voluntary and community organisation, they are doing so in their own right and are not representing the County Council.

2.2 How the scheme will operate

2.2.1 Time off for volunteering

Any employee who seeks to get involved in the volunteering scheme may be granted special leave of up to 20 paid hours per annum⁴ (pro-rata for part-time/temporary members of staff).

³ Established request and approval processes will continue for other special activities of this type.

⁴ For the purposes of this pilot scheme, the full 20 hours may be granted following an application at any time up to the scheme conclusion on 31 January 2009. The allowance must be taken by that time and will not be carried forward to any continuing scheme. Where, because of the lateness of the application or for business reasons, it is not possible for the manager to agree the granting of the full 20 hours, the manager and employee can agree a lesser amount of time.

The project must be agreed with local management and be of benefit to the communities of County Durham. Each individual involved is also encouraged to make at least a similar 'matching' commitment from their own time in volunteering. You may request to support more than one voluntary and community organisation, but the maximum amount of special leave that may be granted in the scheme remains at 20 hours per annum for the individual employee.

You should discuss your proposed volunteering activity with your manager within your appraisal or any other appropriate one-to-one/supervisory meeting. The relevant application form will need to be completed. Managers should seek to support volunteers, but must give consideration to their unit's resources and commitments when judging whether time off can be granted at a particular time. Any rejection of a proposal should relate to service delivery issues or be based on concerns over the suitability of the proposed voluntary organisation. Any rejection decision should be fully explained in writing.

Where the request is approved, the hours do not have to be used all at once. You will need to agree arrangements with your manager with regard to absences for volunteering activities, but it may be that time is taken on a daily, half-day or even hourly basis. No leave granted within this policy can be carried forward from one volunteering leave year to the next.

Whatever activity you are interested in volunteering for must be appropriate to the individual and not lead to any conflict of interest with your contractual obligations or be detrimental to the interests or reputation of the County Council - see the County Council's Code of Conduct for further information.

2.2.2 Registering with the Volunteer Bureaux/Centres

There are six Volunteer Bureaux/Centres covering County Durham - more contact details can be found in the Toolkit. You may already have a direct interest in volunteering for a particular purpose or may not be sure what you want to do. In all circumstances, you must complete the appropriate section of the application form and seek Service management approval in principle. The application must also be forwarded to the appropriate Volunteer Bureau/Centre for feedback before the arrangements can be fully agreed. The Volunteer Bureaux/Centres will be operating a brokerage process and register your interest. They can offer advice and direction on where suitable volunteering opportunities may be available - more information can be found in the Toolkit. The Volunteer Bureau/Centre will advise you and your manager when this registration process is completed. The Volunteer Bureau/Centre will also advise if they have no knowledge of any voluntary organisation that is being proposed. If you wish to access the County Council's scheme, you will need to complete this process.

2.2.3 Volunteering to work within the County Council

You may be interested in voluntary work within the County Council. However, to utilise the scheme, the registration process indicated above must still be completed. No volunteering activity must be used to replace or substitute for any paid role within the County Council (or any other organisation). Any volunteering activity to support a County Council service must be available without any coercive nature. Any such activity must also involve work outside of the employee's normal duties.

2.2.4 Existing volunteering arrangements

One of the aims of the scheme is to use volunteering as a method for developing skills that help you do your job more effectively and develop as an individual. Any volunteering you already commit to may well support this aim. As long as the voluntary role undertaken meets the requirements of the policy and you follow the registration process, the benefits of the scheme can be used.

2.2.5 Travel time and expenses

Travel and other expenses will not be paid by the County Council⁵, but you should investigate whether the voluntary and community organisation is able to pay expenses. The time it takes you to travel to/from any location to carry out your volunteering role is in your own time and will not be recorded as paid time within our special leave allowance.

2.2.6 Training requirements

Any training required, or offered, by the placement voluntary and community organisation is to be carried out in your own time and is not covered by the 20 hours special leave allowance. Where appropriate this could be seen as a contribution to the 'matching hours' that all volunteers are encouraged to contribute.

2.2.7 Volunteering Time

When agreed with your manager, volunteering activity within the limits of this procedure can be credited during or outside normal working hours, including evenings. However, time must not be credited for weekend voluntary activity unless your normal week includes for weekend working.

2.2.8 Insurance coverage

You are not covered by County Council insurance while undertaking your voluntary activities with another organisation as we have no control over the actual work that you are doing. It is your responsibility to check with the organisation you are volunteering to work with as to whether you are covered by their insurance arrangements during the time you are with them. Where you are approved to act as a volunteer in support of a County Council function you will be covered for public liability insurance purposes in your capacity as a volunteer.

2.2.9 Criminal record checks

The activity you volunteer for may require a Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) check to be made on your records. However, any CRB check is not the responsibility of the County Council or the Volunteer Bureaux/Centres. It will be the responsibility of the host organisation to carry out any relevant and suitable check. You may already have a certified CRB check for your employment with the County Council. However, you should be aware that the County Council

⁵ Unless the volunteering is carried out to support a County Council service that is actually provided by the County Council.

does not support the concept of portability⁶ of CRB checks due to the risk involved. Where a CRB check is required for a volunteering role with the County Council, the Council will pay for any costs related to the actual check.

2.2.10 Rejecting, postponing and cancelling requests for leave

Any volunteering arrangements need to be agreed with your line manager. Positive efforts should be made to come to a workable solution and resolve any potential problems locally. However, the line manager must consider any application alongside any impact on service performance and/or delivery and the suitability of the proposed voluntary organisation. Any rejection should be confirmed in writing.

An employee can appeal where their manager does not agree to any initial request to participate in volunteering arrangements by using this scheme. The appeal should be submitted in writing within 10 working days of the employee being advised of the refusal. Arrangements for a meeting to discuss the appeal should be made as soon as possible. It should be heard by a more senior manager in the County Council structure who has not been previously involved in the application. Where any rejection of a volunteering request is confirmed through the appeal process, no additional scheme application can be made by that individual for a further 3 months, unless otherwise allowed by local management.

Where a manager has agreed to the employee volunteering, but cannot agree to a specific request for a period of time away, there is no appeal. However, the manager and employee should seek to find suitable alternative dates.

An employee who does not use the approved time for volunteering for the agreed purpose will have their approval withdrawn by management and may face disciplinary action - for example, any false declaration of attendance. Where the County Council's service delivery is identified as being adversely affected by agreed volunteering arrangements and substitute actions are not proving effective, or the suitability of the voluntary organisation is becoming questionable, the manager should discuss the circumstances with the employee concerned. Ultimately, if any alternative arrangements are not possible or effective, the manager may withdraw support for granting time off in relation to this scheme within a reasonable time frame. The decision should be confirmed in writing. An employee can appeal against any such decision - see above for details.

Where an employee has an existing volunteering arrangement in place within this scheme and moves jobs within the County Council, they must seek confirmation from their new management that they are able to continue with that agreement. This does not require the completion of a further application form. However, the individual employee must advise the Volunteer Bureaux/Centre of their change in circumstances. Any rejection by the new management of the existing volunteering arrangements must be based on the guidance identified above and is subject to appeal.

⁶ Portability refers to the re-use of a CRB disclosure, obtained for a position in one organisation and later used for a position in a new organisation.

2.3 Conflict of Interest

Any volunteering and community activity, programme or project must not lead to a conflict of interest with your job within the County Council, or bring the County Council into disrepute. No approval will be granted within the scheme to carry out voluntary work with an organisation/sector that infringes the requirement to maintain political neutrality or conflicts with the County Council's beliefs and values.

Where approval is provided, a manager may allow limited support in kind - reasonable use of equipment such as the photocopier, telephones etc. Again, there must be no conflict or interference with the business requirements of the County Council.

2.4 Health and Safety

During any consideration or review of a volunteering agreement involving a County Council employee, there must be an assessment of any potential impact on the overall working time arrangements for the individual concerned. The Working Time Regulations limit the average working week to 48 hours although an employee can agree (in writing) to work more than this total.

Where voluntary/community activities involve an element of risk for an employee, managers should satisfy themselves that the employee is not putting themselves at undue risk before participating.

Individuals or groups volunteering should also be sure that there is no undue risk when participating in activities within their own time as well as within this scheme.

The County Council is not responsible for any volunteering activity that individuals may wish to carry out.

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3. Toolkit

3.1 Application & Review - Durham County Council Volunteering Scheme

This is to be completed to request approval for paid time off for work under the Employee Volunteering Policy, Procedure & Toolkit. As you will see, all of this form cannot be completed at the same time as it also provides an overall record of the individual's volunteering record with the scheme. After you complete the relevant sections (1 and 2) in consultation with your manager, the form needs to be forwarded to the appropriate Volunteer Bureau/Centre to complete the registration process (and to assist with the identification of a suitable volunteering opportunities, where required). Where agreement is confirmed the form will be signed by your manager and the Volunteer Bureau/Centre. The document must also be used to keep an agreed local record of the number of hours taken and a review of outcomes. A copy of the ongoing documentation is to be maintained by your manager and yourself. When completed, a copy of section 1-3 must also be forwarded to the appropriate Volunteer Bureau/Centre.

Section 1 must be completed in full by all applicants.

Section 2 requires the details about who you are applying to volunteer to work with:

Complete part A where you are already volunteering or know which organisation you wish to volunteer to work with. Complete part B if you if you wish to volunteer, but are uncertain where you skills and experiences may be best used. However, you may wish to discuss your overall application with your manager in advance of completing part B to assess whether he/she has any initial problems over considering an application. The Volunteer Bureaux/Centres should be able to assist in finding a suitable volunteering opportunity when they receive the application. You may be requested to meet with a representative of the Volunteer Bureaux/Centres to discuss opportunities - this meeting will be in your own time.

All applicants must complete part C.

Part D is optional and helps us with our equal opportunities monitoring.

Section 3 allows the manager, employee and Volunteer Bureau/Centre (select box as appropriate) to sign to accept the volunteering arrangements within this pilot scheme for a period of up to 12 months. This section should also confirm the voluntary organisation(s) that is to be supported within this agreement. The manager may want to wait for information from the Volunteer Bureau/Centre before confirming their approval. Where the manager does not authorise the scheme, suitable reasons should be recorded.

Section 4 provides a table to locally record the taking of voluntary leave within the scheme.

Section 5 provides an evaluation form for manager and employee to review outcomes on an annual basis. The form should still be completed where any scheme terminates early. This form can also be used to assess whether further time off can be granted in future years, if the pilot scheme is extended. A copy of the completed form must be forwarded to the Policy and Recruitment Team, Strategic Human Resources Division, Chief Executive's Office.

Section 1

Name:

Address:

Service: Telephone Contact No.:

Job Title: Payroll No.:

Manager:

In the last 12 months, have you carried out any voluntary work?

Yes, less than 20 hours Yes, more than 20 hours No

Section 2

Part A - Applicant knows who they want to volunteer to work with.

Name of organisation volunteering for

Purpose of activity

Part B - Applicant unsure who they want to volunteer to work with.

What attracts you to the idea of volunteering - tick any appropriate?

Personnel & professional development Helping people

Social opportunities Easier transition form work to retirement

Contribute to an issue you really care about Other - please specify

Your availability, for example, on specific days, at specific times?

Summary of any relevant experience, learning and skills?

Any other information that might influence your interest?

Any other information to support your application?

Part C - Corporate Issues and Requirements

You are not covered by County Council insurance while undertaking your voluntary activities with another organisation. It is your responsibility to check with the organisation you are volunteering to work with as to whether you are covered by their insurance arrangements during the time you are with them.

Any relevant Criminal Record Bureau check will be the responsibility of the host organisation.

The aim of my volunteering meets one or more of the County Council's corporate aims:

- Promoting strong, healthy and safe communities
- Building a strong economy
- Looking after the environment
- Developing lifelong learning

Part D - Equalities Information (Optional)

Gender: Male Female

Age Range: 20 or under 21-35 36-50 51-60 Over 60

Ethnic Group:

White British White Irish White - any other White background

Mixed - White & Black Caribbean Mixed - White & Black African

Mixed - White & Asian Mixed - any other mixed background

Asian or Asian British - Indian Asian or Asian British - Pakistani

Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi Asian or Asian British - any other Asian background

Black or Black British - Caribbean Black or Black British - African

Black or Black British - any other black background

Chinese or other ethnic group - Chinese Chinese or other ethnic group - any other

Disability: Do you consider yourself to be a person with a disability as described by the Disability Discrimination Act - *"Do you consider yourself to be someone who has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day duties."*

Yes No

Section 3 - Approval Confirmation

- I have read and understood the Employee Volunteering Policy, Procedure and Toolkit. I accept and agree to abide by the terms included in that document.

Signed (Volunteer)

Name (Volunteer)

- I consider this to be a genuine volunteering opportunity from the above employee of Durham County Council within the requirements of the Employee Volunteering Policy, Procedure and Toolkit.

We have no knowledge of this organisation.

Signed (Volunteer Centre rep.)

Name (Volunteer Centre rep.)

Volunteer Centre

- I have approved that the applicant can be granted paid time off within the terms of the Employee Volunteering Policy, Procedure and Toolkit.

Signed (Manager)

Name (Manager)

- Details of the voluntary organisation(s) to be supported:

.....

- Any additional comments:

.....

- Agreed start date of volunteering period:

- I have considered the application for paid time off within the terms of the Employee Volunteering Policy, Procedure and Toolkit, but am unable to approve it for the following reasons.

.....

Signed (Manager)

Name (Manager)

When Sections 1 to 3 are completed, a copy must be forwarded to the appropriate Volunteer Bureau/Centre to advise the individual agreement is in place, or has been rejected.

Section 4 - Record of Leave

Entitlement to paid leave within this scheme = maximum of 20 hours per annum (pro-rata for part-time and, where appropriate, temporary employees).

Leave requested From	Leave requested To	Amount of time taken	Balance to be taken later	Approved by

Section 5 - Review & Evaluation⁷ (complete on further page if required)

Name of voluntary organisation

Nature of project / activity

Contact person / telephone number within voluntary organisation

Indication of the number of hours worked beyond scheme entitlement

What was the purpose of the volunteering?

Have your aims been achieved?

What experience, skills or knowledge have been gained from the activity?

What would you do differently if you were to undertake this again?

What do you think your unit, Service and Durham County Council gained from this volunteering time?

Are you seeking a renewal of the agreement to allow paid time off for a further 12 months?

Manager's views on the value of the scheme

⁷ A copy of this completed evaluation must be sent to the Policy & Recruitment Team, Strategic HR Division, Chief executive's Office.

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3.2 Frequently Asked Questions

Why set up a volunteering scheme within the County Council?

Many employers are looking for ways to address the rising expectations that organisations need to act responsibly and working with voluntary and community organisations / sectors brings potential benefits to everyone involved. Many organisations have learned that encouraging their employees to volunteer is good for the individual, the community and for the business itself.

Why do people volunteer?

There are numerous reasons - but amongst some of the favourite examples are the opportunity to gain valuable experience, to help other people & make a difference to the community, to fill in free time, to help themselves return to work after a break, to learn new skills and to meet new people.

What restrictions are there on volunteering within the County Council's scheme?

Any employee must go through the registration process within the policy and procedure. This includes discussing any request with their manager and getting their agreement. The application form must be completed and the final agreement must include feedback from the Volunteer Bureau/Centre. The proposed volunteering role must be linked to one of the County Council's corporate aims, benefit the people of the county, must not cause a conflict with your employment contract and must not damage the reputation or interests of the County Council.

What if I want to, or already volunteer, for more than 20 hours?

Volunteering can be rewarding in many ways and lots of people want to become more involved during their own leisure time. This scheme may well provide you with information about a wide range of opportunities available - so if you want to try anything else, please do!

How does the brokerage service operate?

This is being provided by the County Durham Volunteer Bureaux/Centres in partnership with the County Council. Where you are uncertain what type of volunteering to carry out, then the Volunteer Bureaux/Centres will be able to help. New applicants will have their areas of interest noted at an initial discussion and attempts made to match them against suitable opportunities. Details of any such opportunities will also be forwarded to the appropriate line manager for final agreement.

Where someone knows what they want to do, or is already fully participating in a volunteering capacity somewhere, you would still need to register through this brokerage service to gain the benefit of the County Council's scheme.

Which Volunteer Bureau/Centre should be contacted?

You can contact any of the Bureaux/Centres, but it is probably sensible to use the one that covers the area you live in, or where you might be carrying out your volunteering activity.

What sort of monitoring and evaluation is going to go on?

This is initially a pilot scheme and we need to get some feedback as to how it is working and whether the aims of the policy are being met. This can be done in several ways. The brokerage service will be to advise the County Council on the numbers of people getting involved and the areas of activity people are volunteering for. However, it will also be important to get personal feedback. So, the manager and employee must evaluate how the programme is working on an individual basis. This must happen either as soon as possible after the 20 hour allowance has been used up - while memories and experiences are still fresh in the mind - or within one month of approaching the end of the pilot period if all the time has not been taken up. As well as providing information as to how well the scheme has worked for the individual volunteer, this feedback may also help the Volunteering Scheme Working Party assess the whole programme. The manager can also seek views from the relevant volunteering organisation to see if the scheme has worked from their view.

Although I work for the County Council, I actually live outside the county and the voluntary organisation I wish to support also operates outside the county - can I still use this scheme?

Living outside the county is not a problem as long as you are a County Council employee. However, any paid time off must be used for the potential benefit of the people of County Durham within this scheme. Therefore, if the voluntary service operates entirely in an area outside the county boundaries, then this scheme will not be appropriate. However, if the service operates across council boundaries or across the region, then it should be possible to use the scheme.

Will I be paid expenses for volunteering?

That is a matter for each voluntary organisation. Many voluntary organisations may offer some form of expenses as they take the view that volunteers are already donating time to the organisation, so it would be wrong to expect them to be out-of-pocket as well. Where your volunteering activity is directly supporting a County Council service that is actually provided by the County Council, appropriate expenses will be reimbursed.

I have a disability - does this cause any problems for me getting involved in volunteering?

Many of the potential business benefits for employing disabled employees also apply to volunteering. For example, this can include access to a pool of useful & skilled talent and increased awareness in the voluntary organisation about disability related issues. The Disability Equality Duty includes for the need to encourage participation by disabled people in public life - which will clearly involve encouragement and support of volunteering activities. Each organisation will consider its position on issues like clarity of role, their approach to making reasonable adjustments and use of accessible formats.

What sort of volunteering activity can I get involved in?

There are approximately 1,300 voluntary and community organisations in County Durham, utilising about 33,000 volunteers. There are lots of different approaches to volunteering such as supporting a charity or community organisation, getting involved in fundraising activities and 'one-off' challenge events, for example, painting a hall or giving a Christmas party. Other opportunities include mentoring, using your existing skills or virtual volunteering such as web research.

3.3 Volunteering Contacts

Volunteer Centres

Area	Address	Phone	Email	Website
2D (Teesdale & Wear Valley)	Unit 9, Crook Business Centre, New Road, Crook, DL15 8QE	01388 762 220	l.wright@2d.org.uk	www.2d.org.uk
CAVOS (Sedgefield)	20 High Street, Spennymoor, DL16 6DB	01388 811 115	sharon@cavos.org.uk	www.cavos.org.uk
Chester-le-Street & District	Volunteer Centre, Clarence Terrace, Chester-le-Street, DH3 3DQ	0191 389 2947	volunteerbureau@dsl.pipex.com	www.chesterlestreetcvs.co.uk
Derwentside	Tommy Armstrong Centre, Clifford Road, Stanley, DH9 0XG	01207 218 855	dvb@derwentside.org.uk	www.cvs.derwentside.org.uk
Durham City District	3 Redhill Villas, Durham, DH1 4BA	0191 383 1944	durhamvb@btconnect.com	www.durhamcitydistrictcvs.co.uk
East Durham Community Development Trust	1-3 The Upper Chare, Peterlee, Co. Durham, SR8 1BW	0191 569 3511	abby.thompson@eastdurhamtrust.org.uk	www.eastdurhamtrust.org.uk

3.4 Volunteering Approval Process - Flowchart

