**COVID – 19 – Good Practice Guide for using Volunteers**

This guide provides information for managers on how to develop a fulfilling and meaningful experience for our volunteers in a fair, safe and supportive environment.

It has been written specifically for the COVID-19 response, taking account of guidance from Community Works, Government guidance on planning the coordination of spontaneous volunteers and our [Council Volunteering Toolkit](http://wave.brighton-hove.gov.uk/LGCSDocumentLibrary/Volunteering/BHCC%20Volunteering%20Full%20Toolkit.pdf)

For volunteering to be a successful and rewarding experience for both parties, the following should be considered:

* **Volunteering is not one-sided** - there should be a recognition that there are mutual benefits to be had between the volunteer and the organisation
* **Taking part in volunteering should be a choice** – volunteering is an activity that is freely entered into and does not have conditions attached
* **Volunteers should be recognised and rewarded for their time and commitment** – volunteers give their time freely and because they choose to, however a thank you in some form is both appreciated and critical to maintaining good relationships and retention
* **Recognition of the benefits of having a diverse volunteer base and proactively work towards increasing levels of the diversity** – diversity brings in new skills, experience and builds relationships and inclusion
* **Volunteering opportunities should are not a substitute for paid employment –**volunteering should be genuine and should not be in competition with paid work. Volunteering adds additional value to services and activities

This guide provides the following information:

1. How to get started
2. Key Considerations
3. Tasks a volunteer might do
4. Advertising for volunteers
5. Planning for your volunteer’s arrival
6. Behaviour and conduct
7. Volunteers arrival – first day
8. Debriefing and when volunteers finish
9. **How to get started**

Think creatively! What activities can a volunteer do, to free up your staff to carry out more specialist work?

Think about what sort of personal qualities are needed for the role and how the volunteer will benefit from the experience, i.e. skills development, experience and training.

Complete the Covid-19 Volunteer Jobs Details form, providing as much information as possible to support a good match.

Send to the deployment coordinator who will advertise the job and undertake the matching process on your behalf.

The [Volunteer Toolkit](http://wave.brighton-hove.gov.uk/LGCSDocumentLibrary/Volunteering/BHCC%20Volunteering%20Full%20Toolkit.pdf) has lots of useful information to help you.

1. **Key considerations**

When using volunteers as part of our COVID-19 response, managers should:

* Ensure volunteers are supervised whilst working
* In most cases only ask volunteers to work during daylight hours
* Ensure volunteers avoid hazards
* Ensure that volunteers have the appropriate resources to safely deliver their task
* Remove volunteers from potentially dangerous situations early; and
* Withdraw or redeploy volunteers when risks cannot be reduced to a satisfactory level.
1. **Tasks a volunteer might do**
* Sorting out clothing/bagging up food parcels
* Driving and delivery work
* Under the guidance of animal welfare agencies, assisting with evacuated pets
* Distribution of donated items
* Provision of light refreshments including washing up / clearing away
* Cleaning
* Food shopping
* Physical labour (such as street/house clean up)
* Gardening, with clear direction of what is required
* Providing a social media information outlet locally
* Door-to-door warning and checking on residents and delivering leaflets
* Clearing snow and ice.
1. **Advertising for volunteers**

Effective communication is essential in the advertising of volunteers. The advert is aimed at encouraging volunteers and should contain enough information to guide them in deciding which role they may wish to volunteer. Information might include;

* Where and when volunteers can offer their help; (location / duration / days / hours)
* The types of tasks for which help is needed; (see above)
* The resources that they might bring and what is not required; (e.g.PPE, equipment they might bring – see below)
* The training and support that will be provided (including the induction)
* Where they can get more information.
* Issues regarding insurance and liability (this would include DBS / First Aid qualifications / provision of driving licences)
* The benefits of working in this role, how their efforts will help the service during this time, such as reducing the duplication of effort.

.

1. **Planning for your volunteer’s arrival**

Managers need to:

* Familiarise themselves with the COVID-19 Induction Checklist
* Ensure safe practice regarding the deployment of volunteers has been identified (identification, briefing, signing in/out procedures, adequacy for the given task).
* Confirm that Health and Safety policy is applied to the deployment of volunteers, thereby encouraging a safe working environment. (see the **COVID-19 Induction Programme Checklist)**
* Ensure that volunteers do not operate equipment (unless they are suitably qualified/trained and this has been checked and confirmed in the matching process).
* Equipment required for tasks that have been identified as suitable to allocate to volunteers should, where possible, be provided by the Council. However, it might be that volunteers might arrive with their own basic equipment e.g. brooms, shovels. This should be agreed in advance.

The deployment coordinator will make sure the volunteer is:

* Provided contact details and completed the relevant forms
* Aware of their specific role and how it supports the COVID-19 response
* Given a clear understanding of the lines of communication and any procedures to use;
* Briefed on any equipment they may be using
* Informed of work hours and relevant welfare details;
* Knows who to report to, where and when and how to report back any issues.
1. **Behaviour and conduct**

A thorough matching process and induction will help in setting out expectations of behaviour around:

* Breaches in confidentiality;
* Misrepresentation of the Council to the public/media;
* Misconduct by volunteers;
* Harm to volunteers or those they help;
* Lack of cultural sensitivity and/or the use of abusive or discriminatory language; and
* Provision of misinformation.
1. **Volunteer’s arrival – first day**
* Thank your volunteer for helping us during this time
* Using the attached **COVID-19 Induction Programme Checklist,** ensure that volunteers know what is expected of them and what they can expect to support them.
* Conduct a risk assessment where required
* Oversee the safety, morale and welfare of volunteers
* Ensure that volunteers have the necessary identification.
* Ensure that volunteers have regular breaks (if working all day) and know how to address concerns.
* Monitor the performance of volunteers to ensure that they are competent to conduct the task. Be willing to decrease or stop that activity (ideally by agreement) and refer the volunteer to the VRC to change their volunteering activity.
1. **Debriefing and when volunteers finish**
* All volunteers should be thanked for giving-up their time to assist and letters of thanks might be considered appropriate in some circumstances.
* You may want to consider the roles that volunteers can have in the on-going recovery of our services and medium term planning. For example, before the volunteers leave you may want to find ways of keeping in contact should further volunteering opportunities become available. This may include signposting them to Community Works for similar opportunities in the future.
* You should review the use and effectiveness of volunteers once we are through this pandemic phase as this could well inform future resourcing plans.