

Employee Volunteering Policy

Scope

This policy applies to all employees of Leicestershire County Council, with the exception of casual workers and those employed by schools and colleges.

Purpose

Leicestershire County Council recognises the positive contribution that volunteers can make to communities and is keen to encourage its employees to engage in voluntary service. Supporting its employees to volunteer helps the Council to build stronger links between the authority, its employees and the local community, and contributes to achieving the aims of the Communities Strategy.

This policy specifies the different types of volunteering that are supported by the Council including any applicable time off arrangements. It also sets out the application and approval process that should be followed when an employee wishes to undertake voluntary work.

Benefits of Employee Volunteering

Employee volunteering can provide a range of benefits for the Council, its employees and the local community.

For the Council it can:

- Reduce the impact on front-line services as individuals who would previously have contacted the Council can obtain the support they require within their own community;
- Enable the authority to achieve closer engagement with the local community and build a reputation as a socially responsible organisation;
- Encourage individual and team development thereby improving staff morale, enhancing work performance and helping to unlock potential;
- Support the changing expectations of the psychological contract¹ which will help to attract and retain high performing employees.

¹ Psychological contract definition: The perception of the employee and employer's mutual obligations towards each other.

For employees it can:

- Provide them with the opportunity to both apply and develop their professional skills;
- Give them an insight into the diverse needs of the local community;
- Enhance their health and wellbeing.

For the community it can:

- Provide community and voluntary organisations with access to high quality volunteers with varied skills;
- Improve relationships between the council and residents;
- Increase community cohesion, health and wellbeing and offer alternatives to traditional support services.

Types of Volunteering Supported

For the purposes of this policy five different categories of volunteering are recognised:

1. PDR related development opportunities;
2. Team volunteering;
3. Community Builder Project volunteering;
4. One-off corporate events and activities;
5. General volunteering.

These are defined as:

1. PDR related development opportunities

An employee (or manager) may identify a one-off volunteering opportunity which supports the development requirements set out in the employee's PDR (e.g. improving presentation skills by delivering a talk to 'looked after' children). As with other training and development opportunities, managers may grant employees paid time off, where necessary, to undertake the activity. A post volunteering discussion should take place, as part of the normal supervision and/or PDR process, to evaluate the success of the activity.

2. Team volunteering

Managers may wish to consider using a one-off volunteering project as a team building exercise. To identify an appropriate activity, managers should contact [Voluntary Action LeicesterShire](#) or view the opportunities available under the [Community Builder Project](#). Activities should last for a maximum of one day and must be suitable for all team members to participate in (e.g. employees with disabilities or medical conditions, etc.). As with other team building activities, paid time off during work time may be granted, where necessary.

3. Community Builder Project volunteering

The Council has identified a number of volunteering opportunities which are aimed at supporting the delivery of the Communities Strategy. Managers may grant up to 14.8 hours paid time off (pro rata for part-time) per year to an employee who wishes to undertake one of these activities. Employees are encouraged to match any paid time granted with the same amount of their own time. Available opportunities will be regularly updated and will be available via [include link once finalised](#).

4. One-off corporate events and activities

On occasion, the Council may invite employees to volunteer at local events (e.g. traffic marshals for a road race). In these circumstances, separate application processes will apply and employees may be granted paid leave or time off in lieu (TOIL).

5. General volunteering

An employee may request to undertake a period of voluntary work during either their own time or work time. Time off during work time will be unpaid and employees will be required to either make up the time taken or request annual or unpaid leave. Depending upon the frequency and duration of the volunteering commitment, employees may wish to agree with their manager a temporary or permanent amendment to their working pattern in line with the Smarter Working Policy.

Time-off requests related to the following are covered by the Leave Arrangements Policy and therefore should not be considered under this policy:

- Army, air force or sea cadets;
- Election duties;
- Public service duties (e.g. school governor, magistrate, youth offending panels);
- Representing the council, county or country at sporting events;
- Reservists;
- Retained fire fighters;
- Special constables;
- Trade union activities.

There is no automatic entitlement for employees to be granted time off to undertake voluntary work. All requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account service needs.

Whilst undertaking voluntary work, employees are required to adhere to the standards of conduct set out in the Code of Conduct.

Application Process

Employees who are interested in undertaking voluntary work should follow the declaration process set out in the 'Other Employment and Interests' section of the Policy on the Declaration of Personal Interests.

When completing the registration form, the employee will need to confirm:

- The category of volunteering activity that is being requested (see above);
- Details of the host organisation;
- The nature of the activity that the employee will be undertaking;
- The times/dates that the employee is proposing to volunteer;
- Whether a change in their working pattern is being requested (and if so, the details of the change).

The employee's manager will use this information to assess whether the request can be accommodated and to ensure that no conflict of interest exists. Proof of the volunteering activity may be required.

Employees must obtain management approval to undertake voluntary work prior to committing to the volunteering activity.

Approval Process

Managers should refer to the Policy on the Declaration of Personal Interests for guidance on what they should consider when reviewing a request. Any requests for time off during working hours will take into account the needs of the service.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks

Where a DBS check is required for a voluntary role, it is the responsibility of the host organisation to conduct this check.

Expenses

Any expenses incurred whilst volunteering are the responsibility of the host organisation. Employees are advised to confirm any reimbursement provisions with the host organisation prior to commencing a placement.

Health and Safety

The Council will not be liable for any damages or injuries that occur whilst volunteering for another organisation. Employees must abide by the health and safety procedures for that organisation.