

# Employer Supported Volunteering Policy

HR Policy

HROD

December 2018



**MANCHESTER**  
**CITY COUNCIL**

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## Document Control

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## Introduction

- 1.1 In support of the Our Manchester strategy and the Council's Social Value commitment, the Council encourages organisations to promote employee volunteering activities which benefit both our communities and employees themselves. Leading by example, we will provide the tools and support necessary for our employees to pursue volunteering opportunities - working with residents and partners to establish and highlight activities which support our goals.
- 1.2 In addition to the valuable contribution volunteering provides our communities it also gives employees a chance to have new experiences. This can help to develop skills, support wellbeing and provide a valuable insight into our communities which can be brought back into the workplace.
- 1.3 This policy provides the information for those who wish to take paid volunteer leave. Additionally, managers are encouraged to support employees who volunteer outside of work (and outside of the scope of this policy), acknowledging the positive contribution this can have on our communities and their individual development.

## Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to Council employees who are not directly employed by schools. It enables employees to take paid time off to undertake volunteering during their normal working hours but it cannot be used to 'claim back' any time spent volunteering outside of these hours.
- 2.2 Voluntary activity can be defined as:  
  
*'any activity that involves spending time[...] doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives'* ([National Council for Voluntary Organisations](#)).
- 2.3 Central to this definition is that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. Whilst employees will be in receipt of their contractual pay when volunteering (in line with this policy), they must not receive payment (apart from claiming expenses) from the organisation where they choose to volunteer.
- 2.4 The Council recognises the benefit of giving time to help local communities and Manchester as a whole. Employees can receive time off in addition to the main provisions of this policy for certain public service activities. Provisions will (at a minimum) be in line with statutory requirements when employees volunteer for public duties with the detail agreed by line managers. Such opportunities include:
  - **School governor responsibilities** - employees will be granted leave of a half day per term (3 terms per year) with pay.
  - **Member of another local authority** - paid time off to undertake duties will be granted up to a maximum of 208 hours per financial year.
  - **Service in non-regular forces (reservists)** - employees who are reservists will be able to take two weeks of additional paid leave per year to allow them to attend the annual training camp.
  - **Magistrate responsibilities** - employees can take up to 18 days with pay for magisterial duties, employees will also be allowed an additional 4 days for their induction training.
  - **Special Constables** - upto 10 days paid leave will be granted for training that cannot be taken outside of working time.

- **Retained Firefighters** - as per Special Constables.
- **Regulation 44 visitors** - employees who volunteer as an independent visitor will be released from their duties during planned visits during working time, for any time volunteered outside of work paid TOIL will be provided.
- **Emergency Planning Volunteers** - will be entitled to take paid time off in lieu (TOIL) for any hours volunteered as part of the emergency planning team.

**2.5** Further information on the allowances provided for those who volunteer for Public Services can be found on the [Human Resources](#) intranet site.

## Individual Volunteering

**3.1** Volunteering leave must meet the three broad criteria set out below. When requesting paid volunteer leave employees must ensure these criteria are met before applying.

**3.2** The volunteering opportunity must:

- contribute to an individual's personal development
- support Manchester through contributing to the objectives of the Our Manchester Strategy and/or supporting our [social value objectives](#).
- benefit the organisation, either directly or by building the knowledge and experience of the workforce.

**3.3** Volunteering activity will normally take place within the City of Manchester.

**3.4** Individual volunteering can cover a number of activities such as care work, conservation projects and fundraising. Opportunities do not necessarily need to be related to an employee's current role or skills, they can be a chance to try something new. Alternatively, employees may want to put their expertise to use (for example those from ICT, Legal) to help those who may not usually have access to specialist skills.

**3.5** Individuals are encouraged to find volunteering activities for themselves and we will also use internal communications to highlight opportunities available.

**3.6** Any expenses (e.g. travel/equipment costs) to be claimed as a result of volunteering must be agreed and raised with the 'host' organisation, the Council will not reimburse any expenses incurred. However, employees will be allowed reasonable access to Council resources e.g. printing and stationery to support their approved volunteering activity.

## Time Available

**4.1** Three days paid leave per year is available to undertake volunteering work - so if you work a 35-hour week over five days, you can take 21 hours as volunteer leave each year.

**4.2** Employees can use their volunteer leave flexibly, for example one day at a time, half a day or a couple of hours. If less than half a day is needed, then the employee must return to work when they have finished and the time taken will be deducted.

**4.3** Employees will not be credited for time spent volunteering outside their normal working time with the exception of supporting Manchester City Council priority corporate events. Determination as to what

constitutes a corporate priority events for these purposes will be made by the Director of HROD on a case-by-case basis.

- 4.4 Any leave not taken cannot be carried over, exchanged or used against anything other than volunteer work.

## Team Volunteering

- 5.1 Teams may wish to volunteer together to assist their team development whilst contributing to projects or activities across the City. Team volunteering should also fulfil the three criteria and can be approved at the discretion of the Head of Service, taking account of organisational and service priorities.

## Applying for Leave

- 6.1 Approval for leave rests with line managers. Before submitting any request this must be discussed with your line manager, detailing how the opportunity meets the criteria.
- 6.2 Reasonable requests for volunteer leave that meet the criteria will be approved. However, the request could be declined if:
- there are health and safety concerns;
  - the criteria are not met clearly e.g. no apparent benefit to the organisation and/or individual;
  - there are concerns of the impact on the delivery of team/service objectives; or
  - there is a potential conflict of interest with your role or the Council's interests e.g. political campaigning.
- 6.3 If an individual feels that their request has been rejected wrongly then they can ask for a review by outlining their reasons in writing and sending this to the manager of their manager within 10 working days. Following this review there will be no further right of appeal.
- 6.4 In the case of volunteering in support of corporate priority events, managers must agree to the employees' participation as an instance of employer supported volunteering in advance. Equivalent time can then be 'claimed back' subject to the normal leave approval process.

## Volunteers in the Workforce

- 7.1 As well as our employees volunteering in the community we recognise the benefit of local residents volunteering within our organisation. This can provide individuals with a greater understanding of the work the Council does, helps develop their skills, improve confidence and build relationships within their community.
- 7.2 When offering volunteer opportunities, the Head of Service and line manager of the team (where the opportunity will be hosted) need to establish if volunteers need an appropriate safeguarding check (i.e. DBS), determine what training may be required and identify any Health and Safety issues. A named employee must have oversight of any volunteers during their time undertaking activity for the Council. Further support and information regarding recruitment to volunteer opportunities within the Council can be found on the Human Resources intranet site.

## Responsibilities

- 8.1** Employees are trusted to use this time for its purpose, any suspected instances of misuse will be investigated in accordance with the Council's disciplinary procedures. As representatives of the Council their actions will directly reflect on the organisation. As a result, all employees must act in line with the [Employee Code of Conduct](#) whilst using volunteering leave. Any concerns with an employee's conduct whilst volunteering will be investigated in line with the relevant Council disciplinary procedures.
- 8.2** It is the manager's responsibility to be satisfied that the employee has considered and accepted any risks associated with the proposed volunteering activity - the Council will not be liable for damages or injuries that occur whilst volunteering. It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that the host organisation has its own Public Liability Insurance in place as required. The host organisation is responsible for ensuring any required safeguarding checks are processed and in place prior to the start of the volunteering activity.

## Legal Considerations

- 9.1** Volunteers do not have the same rights as an employee or worker; they may have a volunteer agreement provided to them which explains:
- the level of supervision and support offered;
  - what training will be received;
  - whether a volunteer is covered under the organisation's insurance;
  - health and safety issues; and
  - any expenses the organisation will cover.
- 9.2** The volunteer agreement is not compulsory, although it may set out what is expected it does not form a contract between the volunteer and the organisation. As a result, volunteers are not covered by employment legislation but, as members of the public, they are covered by relevant legislation such as health and safety and data protection laws.
- 9.3** Concerns that volunteers may have in relation to the governance of the organisation, health and safety, data protection or harassment can be referred to external agencies. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has further information on [volunteers' legal status](#).