

Ysgol Maesydderwen



Volunteering Policy

Polisi Gwirfoddoli

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CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL Employee Volunteering Scheme

This policy applies to all Council employees but excludes School-based employees

Policy Author	S Holcroft
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Cyngor Sir Powys County Council

Yn agored a blaengar - Open and enterprising

Employee Volunteering Scheme

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1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 Being a good corporate citizen and investing in the communities we serve is an important part of the way we do business as a public service employer. This Policy sets out the detailed requirements to implementing the Council's commitment to supporting employee volunteering.

2. Scope

- 2.1. The scheme applies to all Council employees with at least six months' continuous service with the Council.
- 2.2 The scheme does not apply to school-based staff.

3. Objectives

- 3.1 As one of the biggest employers in Powys, we are committed to playing our part as active corporate citizens by sharing our expertise, skills and resources and creating partnerships which have a positive impact on our wider communities. Accordingly, the Council encourages its employees to engage as volunteers in a broad range of social, environmental and economic initiatives in the communities of the county of Powys as a means of enhancing the Council's community leadership role.
- 3.2 By actively supporting the community and continuing to be a socially responsible organisation, the Council believes that this scheme will bring real benefits to our customers, our communities and our employees.

4. Principles

- 4.1 Employees are permitted to undertake up to 15 hours of paid volunteering each year, which will be pro rata for part-time employees. All volunteering activities must be undertaken in the county of Powys. Further unpaid time may be agreed, on the strict proviso that this does not impede Council service delivery.
- 4.2 The responsibility for determining who should participate in the Employee Volunteering Scheme will rest with the employee and their line manager and should be based on the employee's Individual Performance Review (IPR) and the Service's ability to accommodate the time off without impacting on service delivery.
- 4.3 No additional people resource will be allocated for covering time off spent undertaking volunteering activities – before requesting to undertake volunteering activities, employees must ensure that they have sufficient time in their schedule, carefully balancing work and private commitments. Any concerns should be discussed with the employee's line manager.

- 4.4 Before approving an individual or group volunteering activity, managers should consider the type of volunteering and the amount of time required to undertake it in relation to the needs of their service and the individual employee.
- 4.5 If a volunteering request is refused by a manager, valid operational/service delivery must be given and blanket refusals are not acceptable. Should a request be declined, employees may wish to raise their concerns regarding the refusal with their respective Head of Service.
- 4.6 Volunteering can be one of the ways that an employee can utilise to assist in meeting developmental needs but it will be up to the individual employee and not the line manager to decide which organisation to volunteer for. Volunteering does not have to be used exclusively for personal development but can be used where an employee's skills and competencies will benefit the community.
- 4.7 Suitable volunteering opportunities include working in environmental conservation, with faith groups, food banks, working with children and young people or the elderly, general fundraising, school governance, holding raffles, etc. Note that as employees of the Council, volunteering for political parties must be avoided.

5. Making volunteer work successful

- 5.1 To be successful, time spent volunteering should aim to:
- Meet employee learning objectives and expectations;
 - Meet the objectives of the external organisation;
 - Be led by experienced volunteers or staff within the external organisation;
 - Fit in with the employee's other commitments to ensure a proper work/life balance;
 - Enable the employee to reflect on the experience and to transfer the learning back into the workplace; and
 - Promote the community leadership role of the Council.

6. Health and Safety

- 6.1 Where volunteering activity involves an element of risk, line managers must satisfy themselves that volunteers have considered and accepted the risks involved before permission is given to participate in the activity.
- 6.2 Individuals volunteering will also need to satisfy themselves that they are not putting themselves at any undue risk before participating.
- 6.3 The Council will not be held responsible for any injuries or loss of earnings incurred whilst an employee engages in volunteering activity.

7. Insurance

- 7.1 Employees need to ensure that the organisation the employee is volunteering with has appropriate insurance policies in place – the voluntary organisation’s definition of “employee” must include volunteers under their employer and public liability policies.
- 7.2 The Council’s insurance policies do not provide any cover for its employees volunteering with other organisations because it has no control over the work that the volunteers undertake.
- 7.3 The approval of any volunteering placement will be subject to the employee providing copies of the appropriate employer and public liability insurance documents (i.e. copy of insurance certificate) to their line manager.

8. Procedure

- 8.1 Employees requesting to undertake volunteering activities with the Council’s support must complete the Employee Volunteering form (see Appendix A) and give it to their line manager for consideration.
- 8.2 The line manager will consider the request in line with the principles of the scheme and must meet with the requesting employee within 15 working days to discuss the request, ensuring that adequate cover arrangements are in place before approving.
- 8.3 A response shall be given by completing and returning the Employee Volunteering form within 5 days of the meeting.
- 8.4 If a request is declined, valid reasons must be provided. Employees who are unhappy with the decision can request the Head of Service to review the decision and the outcome of the review must be provided within 5 days. The Head of Service’s decision is final.

9. Policy history

Policy Date	Summary of change	Contact	Version/ Implementation Date	Review Date



Employee Volunteering Form

Name:	Preferred Title Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Mx
Tel. No.:	Department:
Employee number:	Service:
Address:	
E-Mail:	
What volunteering option have you chosen?	
Where is the volunteering option located?	
How did you find out about this volunteering option?	
How many hours do you intend to volunteer for per month?	
Preferred volunteering start date:	
Your skills and interests (please tick)	
Admin /Clerical	Fundraising
Arts and Crafts	Listening /Befriending
Car Owner	Practical (DIY, gardening, shopping, etc.)
Computer Skills	Telephone Skills
Driving	Other – please specify:
Form Filling	

Employee signature: _____

Date of request: _____

Line Manager decision: Approved/Declined

Manager's signature: _____

Date: _____

Head of Service decision: Approved/Declined

Head of Service signature: _____

Date: _____

Employee Volunteering Guidelines

Getting started...

The Council is committed to volunteering as a means of meeting employee development needs whilst meeting the Council's objective of being an active corporate citizen in the community. We have a policy and guidelines to help you and your manager think about how taking part in a volunteering activity could be part of your learning and development and provide benefits to the community or how your existing skills and competencies could provide benefits to the community.

How volunteering can help your learning and development - look at the policy and guidelines. For example, for volunteering opportunities in the county of Powys, visit the PAVO site (<http://www.pavo.org.uk/>) that has links to other volunteering sites. These will give you more information about the range of volunteering opportunities available to you. Furthermore, the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) has a lot of information on volunteering in Wales – see <https://www.wcva.org.uk/>

Project and activities need to be safe, achievable and beneficial to your learning and development. For some volunteering tasks, you will need a criminal records check and references, e.g. working with vulnerable people. Voluntary organisations have their own processes to ensure both you and the work you will be involved in is safe. For instance, working on a conservation project for a day may require considerable physical activity, but would not require the same sharing of personal information that will be required to work as an Adult Literacy Volunteer, for example.

Employee volunteering does give you the flexibility to do something of value that suits you and the community. We have links with a range of voluntary organisations that would welcome the commitment of Council staff.

The Council believes that the involvement of volunteers brings responsibilities and benefits both for the Council, the employee volunteer and the voluntary organisation or community project.

The benefits of volunteering

There are numerous benefits for employees, the Council as an employer and for the community. By actively encouraging voluntary activities, the Council is demonstrating that it values all communities in Powys. Recent research (MBG, 2016) suggests that putting others before yourself is in fact a profound show of self-care. Acting philanthropically has been shown to emit dopamine and oxytocin, the same happiness-promoting brain chemicals that flow when we give hugs, reach our goals, and fall in love. What's more, service work can have physical manifestations like lowering blood pressure, easing depression, and even lessening risk of mortality. Science has also found a "feel-good feedback loop": the more gratitude you have, the more likely you are to give back, and the more you give back, the more grateful you become.

Benefits for the individual:

- Volunteering provides an opportunity to develop professional and personal skills. Whilst developing these skills, staff will be helping local people or improving the environment.
- It provides a chance to use existing skills in a different setting.
- Staff can explore and learn to cope with new situations and challenges.
- They can work with a wide variety of people from other departments or organisations.
- They can gain experience outside of the usual work and social environment.

Benefits for the Council:

- A chance to provide different and exciting training and development opportunities.
- Employees' motivation can be improved when they are placed in situations that suit them and which they enjoy.
- Companies supporting employee volunteering have discovered benefits such as improved staff retention, staff morale and working performance.
- Employee volunteering can enhance an organisation's reputation.

Benefits for the community:

- Access to more volunteers with varied skills.
- Employee volunteering builds important links between the Council and other organisations in the community.

What are the options?

Team challenges

A team challenge is a one-off practical task completed by a group of employees, often over one day. Examples include refurbishing old rooms for new uses, clearing a riverbank, organising a Christmas party for a group of children. Team challenges are great for team building and offer staff a day away from the workplace where they can develop new skills and come away with a real sense of achievement.

Individual volunteering

Voluntary, community and other organisations value volunteers who are able to help regularly, perhaps for a couple of hours each week or fortnight. All kinds of volunteers are needed for all types of activities: administration, befriending, giving advice, helping at a youth club, conservation, etc. Employees can find activities that suit their existing skills or help them develop new ones.

One-to-one support

Supporting a person as a mentor, helping them through a difficult time or to achieve their full potential can be a rewarding experience for a volunteer. Schemes that rely on volunteers include those mentoring young people who are at risk, excluded from school, offending, abusing drugs or alcohol, or experiencing family breakdown. Employee volunteers are also welcomed at many schools to support clubs and activities, help children learn to read or to raise aspirations among older children. Volunteer mentors develop skills in communication, motivation, influencing and coaching.

Using professional skills

All employees have a whole range of skills which voluntary and community organisations need to help them run and develop their services. For example, they may have skills in IT, financial planning, management, marketing, gardening, accountancy or law. An employee volunteer can offer a long-term commitment or undertake a one-off piece of work.

Board membership

Volunteers are needed to sit on the management committees and boards of voluntary organisations and schools. They can offer specialist knowledge and a different perspective, which can contribute enormously to the running of local groups. As a trustee, an employee can gain invaluable experience of the strategic management of an organisation.

Fundraising

Consideration will be given to allowing staff to use work time for fundraising activities. Alternatively, staff could support an annual appeal, for example Christmas present or Easter egg appeals, Children in Need, foodbank collections, etc.

Frequently Asked Questions – Employee Volunteering Scheme

Q: Whose permission do I need to volunteer in work time?

A: Any proposed volunteering activity must be discussed with and approved by your line manager by completing the Employee Volunteering Form.

Q: How many hours can I volunteer?

A: The Employee Volunteering Scheme (EVS) provides up to 15 hours paid time off per year. This is the total amount of time you may be credited with. These hours do not have to be used all at once, and with the agreement of your line manager it is possible to volunteer as the activity requires. For instance, reading in schools may need you for an hour a week, and so you will need agreement from your line manager to commit to a set time during the school term.

Q: All of my team want to do a Team Challenge but our line manager won't agree it

A: It is not possible to agree to all requests but there must be valid operational reasons for refusing.

Q: Am I covered by the Council's insurance while volunteering?

A: NO – the organisation that you are volunteering for should be picking up any liability from the work you do. Staff should check that the organisation's definition of employee includes 'volunteers' under both the Employers and Public Liability policies, and that both policies are valid for the whole period of volunteering. The Council's insurance does not provide any cover for volunteering, as it has no control over the work that you are doing. If volunteering in work time, managers should ensure that the member of staff has checked the organisation's insurance and signed the EV form accordingly.

Q: Will I be able to claim expenses?

A: NO – expenses will not be paid by the Council, but you should establish whether the voluntary organisation you choose is able to pay expenses.

Q: I do voluntary work in my own time can I use the Council's resources?

A: You can use the Council's ICT equipment to produce forms and letters in your lunch break. However you must fund your own printing costs or you could discuss the matter with the Reprographics team to see if they can offer a 'charitable' rate.

Q: My line manager has refused my application what can I do?

A: You may request your Head of Service to review the matter and his/her decision is final.

Q: Will the volunteering I already undertake be recognised?

A: One of the EVS aims is to use volunteering as a vehicle for developing skills that will help you do your job more effectively and develop as an individual. Any volunteering you already undertake is no doubt very valuable to your personal development and in many cases there may be the opportunity to develop an area of your existing volunteering* activity to meet the needs of your personal development plan.

Q: I enjoyed my EVS volunteering so much that I would like to continue volunteering in my own time, is this allowed?

A: Definitely. Volunteering can be very rewarding in a number of ways and many people find that they want to become more involved during their leisure time. One of the aims of this scheme is to provide information about the wide range of opportunities available. So if you want to try something else please do!

Q: Where can I find out more about organisations which need volunteers?

A: Powys County Council does not match employees with organisations but the Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations (PAVO) or Volunteering Wales are likely to be good starting points.