

North Yorkshire County Council**Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee****Corporate Volunteering Project Update****4th March 2019****1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the Corporate Volunteering project and outline progress made to date.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 At the mid-cycle briefing of the committee held on 24th April 2018, a presentation was delivered on the use of Volunteers within NYCC. The wide use of volunteers to deliver services was highlighted, including the services in which they were utilised and the value they bring to the authority and wider community. A proposal was subsequently approved as part of the 2020 Programme to internally deliver a Corporate Volunteer Project that aimed to maximise and optimise the use of volunteers across all services, creating consistencies in: marketing, recruitment, induction, training, ongoing support and efficient volunteer processes with the purpose of optimising the use of volunteers and aiding retention. It was agreed that an update would be provided on this project in spring 2019.

3.0 Corporate Volunteering Project

- 3.1 A Volunteer Adviser was appointed in July 2018, based in the Resourcing Solutions Team - HR. The focus for this role was to achieve the objectives presented at the mid-cycle briefing last year. To provide a framework for this a Volunteer Sub-Group of the Stronger Communities Board has been established and is meeting regularly to discuss challenges and priorities, inputting into areas of work as they progress. This group comprises of representatives from Stronger Communities and the Resourcing Solutions Team and lead officers from the services that use volunteers.
- 3.2 One of the key focuses of the work in recent months has been to develop a Corporate Volunteer Strategy that outlines NYCC's commitment to volunteers, alongside a set of Volunteer Strategy Standards. This document has been produced in consultation with the volunteer sub-group, volunteer co-ordinators/managers in NYCC and our volunteers. A draft of the Volunteer Strategy is attached to this report, see Appendix 1 and accompanying Strategy Standards, see Appendix 2.
- 3.3 Expenses
Research has been undertaken as part of this project in relation to custom and practice regarding the payment of volunteer expenses and has identified inconsistencies in the rationale and rates provided to volunteers for claiming

expenses. National best practice¹ advises that volunteers are not paid for their time but should be paid for any out-of-pocket expenses. These expenses could include:

- travel
- postage and telephone costs if working from home
- essential equipment, such as protective clothing.

3.4 Currently no policy or guidance document exist that details what NYCC consider to be reasonable out-of-pocket expenses, or defines the situations when these do/do not apply and the rates that can be claimed. This has resulted in volunteers from a wide variety of services being treated differently in terms of claims for subsistence and travel resulting in issues of inequality and inconsistency.

3.5 In order to develop a fair, consistent and efficient approach it is proposed that NYCC thoroughly review its approach to volunteer expenses with view to adopting a Policy and guidelines on the type of expenses that can be claimed, including the rate for mileage. This will be developed in partnership with the services using volunteers, volunteer co-ordinators and the Volunteer Sub Group, including consultation with volunteers and HR (Pay and Reward).

4.0 Future Focus

4.1 The Corporate Volunteering Project is currently working on a range of projects to streamline the processes for attracting, recruiting and managing volunteers.

4.2 Elements include:

- Developing and implementing a marketing strategy to promote NYCC volunteering in an engaging and positive manner
- Transitioning to customer focussed digital volunteer customer journey
- Reviewing volunteer expenses, including the rate, when and how it is applied and transitioning to an online claim form
- Developing a consistent customer focussed approach to volunteer induction and training
- Reviewing methods to celebrate, recognise and reward volunteers and raise the profile of volunteer value.
- Develop business tool to aid the assessment of appropriateness of volunteers as an approach including awareness of the minimum commitment and volunteer experience standards.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that Members review the update provided on the Corporate Volunteer Project and provide feedback, thoughts and ideas for future consideration in order that a consistent and equitable approach is adopted.

¹ Gov.uk/volunteering and National Council for Voluntary Organisations

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NYCC Volunteers Strategy

Introduction

The purpose of this strategy is to set out our principles and practice for involving volunteers, how we aim to improve the way we recruit, manage and celebrate our volunteers, and our commitment to develop new volunteering opportunities that complement existing community provision.

The scope of this document is our approach to volunteers who are recruited and managed by NYCC, but also takes account of our relationship with external community and voluntary organisations who involve volunteers.

The *supporting document* gives further details about the procedures and practices for involving volunteers that are being introduced.

Our principles

We recognise volunteers as an integral part of our service delivery who benefit our customers, our services and the volunteers themselves.

- We are committed to ensuring that good quality volunteering opportunities are available to all
- We will ensure volunteers are managed effectively and efficiently and consistently across the council.
- We are committed to removing barriers to volunteering where possible and to ensuring that a wide range of people can become involved.
- We recognise that volunteers are not a free resource and we are committed to ensuring that volunteer services are properly funded.
- We will ensure that the costs and benefits of involving volunteers are understood, including related or 'hidden' costs such as those for IT access, and that these costs are regularly reviewed, in order that the valuable gift of volunteering is best used to the mutual advantage of all concerned.

Who is a volunteer?

A volunteer:

- Commits their time and energy for the benefit of others;
- Gives their time freely, through personal choice; and
- Volunteers without expectation of financial reward.

A volunteer is not:

- A paid worker; or
- On a work placement, work experience or on government sponsored schemes.

Volunteers may be involved in one-off, short-term or longer term, regular activities and may be based in an NYCC office or out in the community or in the countryside within North Yorkshire.

There are different ways that members of the community support our work. All of them are valued, but not all of them will be classed as volunteering within the scope of this

strategy statement. However, in all cases where volunteers are involved with North Yorkshire County Council services, this statement and the supporting document will set the standard by which we expect such groups to be managed.

In scope:

- Direct service delivery - Examples of this type of volunteering include our core library volunteers, the countryside volunteers and the Rotters.
- Engagement Participation groups – There is a range of different types of group and therefore each group will need to be considered separately to decide whether they are in scope. An example of a participation group in scope is Flying High, a group of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who represent the views of others within North Yorkshire.

Out of scope:

- Governance groups covered by statute – Examples include School Governors and School admission appeals panels
- Community volunteers – volunteers who help us with some of our services but who are managed or jointly managed by an external organisation. Examples include the Community Library volunteers. We will work with these organisations to ensure that standards and principles are consistent with those of NYCC.

Volunteers are valued for:

- bringing additional skills, knowledge and expertise to the organisation
- enabling us to be more responsive and flexible in our approach
- giving us insight to the needs and priorities of our communities
- enabling us to extend service provision in ways that would not otherwise be possible
- championing our cause within the wider community
- enhancing the quality of our work and of customer experience
- improving the wellbeing of customers, staff, local communities and themselves

Roles and responsibilities

A review of procedures and policies for recruiting and managing volunteers is underway with a view to improving our approach and ensuring consistency. The work is being led by a sub-group reporting to the Stronger Communities Boards and is being delivered by the HR Volunteer Adviser.

In each service which involves volunteers, at least one member of staff has been designated to support and lead the volunteers, either exclusively as a designated Volunteer Co-ordinator, or alongside their other duties. Volunteers are informed who will be allocating their tasks and who they can go to for support. There is guidance on best practice available for staff who work with volunteers.

The volunteer role is based on trust and mutual understanding. There is no enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, either for the volunteer to attend or to undertake particular tasks or for NYCC to accept a volunteer, provide continuing opportunities or provide training or benefits.

However, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged – both what the NYCC expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of us.

We expect volunteers:

- to be reliable and honest
- to uphold our values and comply with relevant NYCC policies and procedures
- to make the most of opportunities given, e.g. for training
- to contribute positively to the aims of NYCC and avoid bringing the organisation into disrepute
- to carry out tasks within agreed guidelines
- to maintain confidentiality regarding details of customers and of other volunteers

Volunteers can expect:

- to have clear information about what is and is not expected of them
- to receive adequate support and training
- to be insured and to volunteer in a safe environment
- to be treated with respect and in a non-discriminatory manner
- to receive appropriate out of pocket expenses within the agreed NYCC expenses policy.
- to have opportunities for personal development
- to be recognised and appreciated
- to be able to say 'no' to anything which they consider to be unrealistic or unreasonable
- to know what to do if something goes wrong

Appendix 1 - NYCC Volunteers (at Feb '19)

Directorate	Service	Role(s)
BES	Countryside Volunteers	Checking paths, low-level maintenance and conservation tasks
BES	Rotters	Events/shows, schools workshops and talks to groups all promoting reduction of food waste, home composting, recycling and reuse.
CSD	Libraries	Help customers in library, help with shelving and stock, deliver books for home library service, help with childrens activities and IT
CSD	Records and archives	digitising records, cataloguing, organising materials
CSD	Democratic Services	Volunteers serve as appeals panel members for exclusion or admissions appeals
CSD	MIRT	Supporting people affected by an incident
CSD	Ready for Anything	Database of community volunteers to be called on in an emergency.
CYPS	Adult learning	Volunteer teaching assistants (Syrian Refugee project and English classes)
CYPS	Childrens Centres	Support in group activities and engage with children and families
CYPS	Youth Justice Service	Panel members, appropriate adult, mentor, reparation supervisor
CYPS	Flying High	A youth voice project for young people with special educational and additional needs
CYPS	Young People's Council	Youth voice project for care experienced young people
CYPS	SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information and Advice Support Service)	Independent support for parents of children or young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), or for young people (16 -25 years) with SEND to ensure their education, learning or training needs are supported.
CYPS	School governors	Serve as governors and trustees on school boards (estimate based on 330 establishments x average 10 per board)
HAS	Day services for adults with complex needs	Helping with activities, befriending
HAS	Residential Care Homes (elderly)	Helping with activities, befriending

DRAFT NYCC Volunteer Strategy - Standards for working with volunteers

Introduction

This document sets the standard we are working towards in order to achieve best practice in involving volunteers. We will also work with other organisations who deliver services for us and who involve volunteers to work towards the same standards.

Planning to involve volunteers

Before volunteers are involved in a project we will evaluate the costs and benefits and ensure that involving volunteers is the best approach. Any new volunteer projects will be fully planned and must be authorised by the relevant Director before any work starts on recruiting volunteers. A business decision tool will be available to help with this process.

Co-ordination and support

Services which involve volunteers allocate a member of staff to act as Volunteer Co-ordinator either as all of their role or alongside their other duties. The role of the Volunteer Co-ordinator is to:

- Complete and review risk assessments on volunteering activities
- Recruit and support volunteers
- Ensure relevant checks are completed and appropriate safeguarding procedures are in place
- Provide induction and relevant training
- Ensure the volunteers have adequate information, equipment and PPE for the role
- Keep records of volunteers and volunteer activity as requested
- Listen to volunteer feedback and help the volunteers to gain the most they can from their volunteering.
- Authorise appropriate expenses
- Ensure that volunteers are recognised and thanked for their contribution
- Resolve any issues arising in the course of the volunteering relationship

The Volunteer Co-ordinator will ensure that volunteers are clear who they report to and where to get further help and support.

Recruitment

We actively promote volunteering opportunities through our website, social media and local media and encourage prospective volunteers to contact us to find out more. In addition, people contact us to offer their time and skills and if it is appropriate, we find a suitable activity that benefits both NYCC and the volunteer. In either case, all volunteers go through the same process of registration and checks. This includes:

- the availability of written information about each role, locations, activities, support and training offered, the recruitment process. This is usually sent by email or found on our website.

- a face to face information session with the volunteer co-ordinator to discuss the role and answer any questions. For some roles this may be a more formal interview and the volunteer will be told what to expect beforehand.
- completion of a volunteer application form
- an ID check
- references and appropriate criminal record checks if deemed appropriate for the role, in accordance with our DBS policy.
- a declaration from the volunteer regarding any extra support needs or any health issues which they feel may affect their volunteering
- A volunteer agreement which sets out our expectations of volunteers and what volunteers can expect from us. This is an agreement in honour only and is not intended to form a contract.

Induction

All volunteers receive an initial induction covering their role, practical arrangements, health and safety and a general introduction to NYCC and key policies. At present there are also four online modules available for volunteers which can be completed during the first few months of volunteering:

- An introduction to Diversity and equality for volunteers
- Data Protection and Information security for volunteers
- Health and Safety for volunteers
- Customer care essentials for volunteers

The corporate induction is currently being reviewed and a new programme is being developed that will bring consistency and make efficiencies to the way in which this is delivered.

Training

We ensure that volunteers are adequately prepared for their role and this may require further training. Training is currently provided in-house or by external, accredited agencies as determined by the role, and may be offered using online or classroom methods.

The corporate training for volunteers is currently being reviewed and a new programme is being developed in consultation, this will bring a fair and consistent approach to the delivery.

Support and personal development

We will review the volunteering placement with the volunteer to gain feedback on how the volunteer feels about their volunteering, answer any questions and discuss any issues or concerns, we will also give feedback about how they are doing. Where volunteers are interested in developing their role further we will discuss whether opportunities to do this are available and what support or training they may need. Frequency of reviews varies according to the role, but all volunteers will have a review at least once a year.

References about volunteers

We will develop a process whereby managers of volunteers can supply a reference from NYCC regarding their role as a volunteer.

Volunteer feedback

We will develop a mechanism for volunteers to give regular feedback about their role and about volunteering for NYCC.

When a volunteer leaves

A letter is sent to the volunteer to thank them for their volunteer service.

Expenses

Volunteers can claim reasonable expenses where it is agreed that this is appropriate. The Corporate Volunteer Project is currently reviewing volunteer expenses with view to developing an NYCC Volunteer Expenses Policy to ensure equality and consistency of approach.

Insurance

- **Liability Insurance** - volunteers operate on behalf of the NYCC and are covered by our public liability insurance and, for the purposes of insurance only, volunteers are also covered by Employers Liability Insurance.
- **Personal Accident Insurance** – NYCC volunteers are covered by our Personal Accident Insurance whilst carrying out volunteer activities for NYCC which provides certain benefits in the event of an injury. Once a volunteer reaches the age of 80, the benefits payable are reduced.
- **Fidelity Guarantee Insurance** - This insurance covers NYCC in respect of loss of money or property as a direct result of fraud or dishonesty by a volunteer up to a certain limit.
- **Motor Insurance**
 - **Fleet vehicles** – If a volunteer needs to drive a vehicle provided by NYCC to carry out volunteering activities, NYCC insurance will be in place once the necessary checks have been completed and provided the volunteer has an appropriate licence.
 - **Private vehicles** - If the volunteer uses a private vehicle, they are responsible for arranging their own insurance cover. Volunteers should therefore be advised, in their own interests, to obtain confirmation from their motor insurers that they are fully insured to drive the vehicle they intend to use for volunteering activities for NYCC.

Before a private motor vehicle is used by a volunteer, for volunteering activities for NYCC, the Volunteer Co-ordinator must satisfy themselves that:

- the volunteer driving the vehicle has a current driving licence
- the vehicle has a current MOT certificate (if applicable)
- the volunteer has an appropriate insurance policy for the vehicle used whilst volunteering for NYCC.

Health and Safety

NYCC has responsibility for the health and safety of volunteers and all volunteering activities are risk assessed and the risk assessments are shared with the volunteers. Volunteers should at all times follow the Council's health and safety policies and procedures and have a duty to take care of themselves and others who might be affected by their actions. Volunteers should not act outside of their authorised area of work and should report all accidents and near misses to their Volunteer Co-ordinator.

The Volunteer Co-ordinator ensures that volunteers have the appropriate PPE (personal, protective equipment) and know how and when to use it. Volunteers are expected to use the PPE when it is provided.

ID cards

Some roles may require a volunteer to carry an ID card. The decision to issue volunteer ID cards must be authorised by the Director responsible for the service. ID cards must be returned when the volunteer leaves.

Young volunteers

Where volunteers are under 18, volunteering activities are assessed to ensure that they are appropriate for the age of the volunteer and a specific risk assessment is carried out which takes account of the potential for reduced experience, capacity or understanding of instructions and also of reduced risk awareness. Consideration is also given to whether any situations involving young people require DBS checks in accordance with our DBS policy.

Equality and Diversity

North Yorkshire County Council welcomes and celebrates diversity and the strengths this brings to our communities, our workforce and our volunteers. We have an Equality Policy Statement which applies to all staff and volunteers and which we share with our volunteers at induction.

Equalities monitoring forms are included with the NYCC volunteer application form.

Confidentiality

Volunteers are likely to become aware of confidential information about the Council, its employees, customers and suppliers. Volunteers should not disclose this information or use it for their own or another's benefit without the consent of the party concerned. This does not prevent disclosure once the information is in the public domain (unless it has been made public as a result of the volunteer's breach of confidentiality) or where the law permits or requires disclosure.

Personal information about volunteers, such as name, contact details and records of volunteering for the organisation, must be stored in line with the Data Protection Act 1998 and GDPR.

Safeguarding

Everyone has a right to live a life that is free from abuse and neglect and we have zero tolerance to all forms of abuse. We always respond promptly when we are made aware of

suspected abuse. We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Where volunteers are helping vulnerable people they will be given information on how to identify and report any safeguarding concerns and will be supported through this process where necessary.

Dealing with problems

Non-safeguarding problems - Volunteers should raise problems or concerns with their Volunteer Co-ordinator in the first instance. Any problems or concerns about the volunteer should also be passed to the Volunteer Co-ordinator. In both cases, the Volunteer Co-ordinator will meet with the volunteer to discuss the issue and to gather as much information as possible with a view to agreeing a resolution with the volunteer as quickly as possible. If the problem is about the Volunteer Co-ordinator, the volunteer will be given the details of an alternative member of staff who will attempt to resolve the situation.

If the situation cannot be resolved it may be necessary to end the volunteer placement.

Any complaints regarding safeguarding should be referred directly to the Safeguarding team and steps should be taken to ensure that customers, staff and volunteers are safe.

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