



OUR PEOPLE

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Employer Supported Volunteering Policy

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Policy History

This policy will be reviewed as required and no less than every three years.

Version	Date
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Approved by SLT	
Review with Trade Unions	
Review date	

Review History

Version	Date	Amended By	Reviewed by Unions	Change
Review				

Introduction and scope

The Councils recognise the importance of volunteering and the positive impact it has on individuals and the communities they volunteer in. The Councils, acknowledge its positive impact on morale, productivity, and the Councils' reputation and its benefits in terms of delivering the Councils' priorities.

The Suffolk Volunteering Strategy and the Councils' Social Value commitment, encourage organisations to promote employee volunteering which benefit both our communities and employees.

Benefits

For our Employees

Volunteering provides our employees the opportunity to engage in new experiences, which supports development of new skills, wellbeing and gives a valuable insight into our communities.

- Contribution within the community leads to a greater sense of belonging and a sense of self-worth.
- Chance to experience new opportunities, meet new friends and be an active part of their community.
- There are well documented benefits of improved health and wellbeing, both physical and mental, through volunteering.
- Flexible working promotes a good work-life balance so staff can work in a way that supports their volunteering activities.
- It may lead, not only to a sense of contributing but could also result in new career pathways or inspire staff members towards further training and personal development.

For our Councils

- Building strong teams, especially when volunteering is used as a team building exercise.
- Provides employee skills development and developing future leaders.
- Opportunity for 'back office' staff to work in the community and see the impacts of their work on the districts.
- Improved staff retention & recruitment.
- Increased staff morale and reduced sick leave.
- Improved status of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils through staff volunteering in local communities and increased understanding of the communities we serve.
- Effective investment in the community through the utilisation of our workforce skills & expertise, recognising the skills within our people and the benefit this can bring.

Procedure

The Councils offers a maximum of 3 volunteer days paid time away from work during any Leave year, to carry out individual and team voluntary activities. This provision is in addition to any other time allowed off for special duties. The employee can top up volunteering allowances with annual leave, or unpaid leave with approval from their line manager.

Volunteering time may be taken as whole or part days. Time off will be agreed in advance with the employee's line manager and is subject to service needs. Staff may be able to claim time off in lieu for a volunteering activity that takes place outside of work hours at the discretion of their line manager.

Employee's may organise their own volunteering activity or work with local voluntary agencies who will be able to recommend activities. Alternatively, they can take part in a team volunteering activity organised through the council. Some ideas of Volunteering activities are as follows:

- Supporting a charitable event day such as Suffolk Dog Day, the Men's Cycle Tour or fundraising events such as a sponsored walk or marathon
- Charity Trustee
- Coaching and/or one-to-one mentoring
- Skills sharing (where these lie outside the scope of your day-to-day role) such as cookery workshops, coding lessons, sailing lessons, etc.
- Schools career talks (where these lie outside the scope of your day-to-day role)
- Community youth projects
- Supporting charity infrastructure
- One off volunteer days e.g., River or Park cleaning, conservation, litter picking, gardening and maintenance
- Online volunteering
- Team building exercises
- Supporting a VCFSE group with skills or knowledge relevant to your job role (such as planning, health & safety, or IT advice) through Suffolk ProHelp in the instance where there is no conflict of interest with your day-to-day role

Employees should submit a "paid leave" request through Oracle to their manager with reasonable notice, selecting "volunteering" from the drop-down list of reasons.

The manager will review the application and respond accordingly, taking into consideration the current business needs and appropriateness of the request. Once agreed, times and dates of the volunteering activity should be updated on the employee's outlook calendar.

If claiming time off in lieu for a volunteer activity that takes place outside of work hours, this should still be submitted as a "paid leave" request with "volunteering" selected from the drop-down list and details outlined in the comments box so that it is recorded as part of your volunteer leave allowance. Time off in lieu can only be claimed after the volunteering event and is granted at the discretion of your line manager.

Activities that are not considered part of your volunteering allowance include:

- Public Duties – Public duties are carried out by people who are local authority councillors, members of statutory tribunals, school governors, members of police authorities and magistrates. Leave allowance for these activities can be found under "special leave" in the councils' leave policy
- Members of Reserve Forces – leave allowance for members of reserve forces can be found under "special leave" in the councils' leave policy
- Volunteering within the council itself (e.g., supporting Community Action Days with the Housing team or Tree planting with Public Realm). Cross-team support is usually within the scope of an employees' job role and would not be deducted from your volunteering leave allowance

Conditions

- Where possible, the volunteering activity should take place within the districts.
- The volunteering activity should not bring the councils into disrepute.
- The volunteering activity must not conflict with the employee's work for the councils, for example acting as a treasurer for a charity that the employee has regular contact with in their council role. Employees should seek further advice from their manager if they are concerned about potential conflicts of interest.
- As an employee of the council, it is important to adhere to the councils' policies and procedures including the Code of Conduct. Employees must also respect confidentiality when undertaking a voluntary activity.
- Employees should demonstrate the councils' values and behaviours.
- Employees who accept a volunteering activity are expected to attend and meet their commitment. If an employee is unable to attend a pre-agreed volunteering activity, they will need to inform the voluntary organisation as well as explain their non-attendance to their manager.
- Volunteers must not be paid, receive financial benefits or gifts by the organisation they are supporting, except for expenses incurred. Employees will not be able to claim back from the council any travel and subsistence incurred.
- Activities must be undertaken with organisations who deliver services that are 'not for profit'.
- Any abuse of the scheme could result in disciplinary action in accordance with the council's policies.

Monitoring and Evaluation

It is the responsibility of the employee and their manager to monitor the number of volunteering hours their employees undertake. Employer Supported Volunteering opportunities should be regularly discussed with employees during 121 meetings to identify where it may be beneficial to use volunteering as a tool for skill development.

Health and safety

It is the employee's responsibility to satisfy themselves that the volunteering organisation's quality assurance and health and safety policies are adequate and request sight of risk assessments if they have any concerns. The voluntary organisation will be responsible for providing any induction, health and safety or other training required in order that the volunteer can perform activities correctly and safely.

Insurance

Unless an employee is volunteering to assist an activity directly managed by the council, no insurance cover will be afforded by the council and employees should check arrangements with the organisation that they are supporting.

DBS Checks

Some external organisations, for example those working with children or adults at risk of harm, may require their volunteers to undergo Disclosure Barring Checks. Where a Disclosure and Barring Service or other check is required, it is the responsibility of the host organisation to conduct and pay for such checks. The host organisation is responsible for ensuring that they have the relevant safeguarding policies in place prior to the start of the volunteering activity.

Expenses

Any expenses incurred whilst volunteering is the responsibility of the host organisation. Employees are advised to confirm any reimbursement provisions with the host organisation prior to commencing a placement. Where suitable, for example when the volunteering activity relates to individual or team development, managers can explore whether teams are able to use any training budget towards expenses incurred to the VCSFE specifically in relation to the ESV activity.

Further Information

For examples of volunteering opportunities that currently exist with community and voluntary groups in the districts, please visit [Volunteer Suffolk](#) or contact Community Action Suffolk on volunteering@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk

For further information or advice, contact the HR & OD Team.

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Our Values
...we believe in