



Blackwood Town Council

Volunteering Policy

Introduction

This volunteer policy sets out the principles and practice by which the Town Council involves volunteers and is relevant to staff, volunteers, and Members within the council.

The policy aims to create a common understanding and to clarify roles and responsibilities to ensure the highest standards are maintained in relation to the management of volunteers.

Our commitments

We recognise volunteers as an integral part of the organisation. Their contribution supports our strategic aims, and complements the role of Council Members, ultimately benefiting the local community. We aim to encourage and support volunteer involvement to ensure that volunteering benefits the organisation, its activities, and the volunteers themselves.

Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that paid staff and Members are clear about the role of volunteers, and to foster good working relationships between them. Volunteers will not be used to replace staff.

We are committed to offering a flexible range of opportunities and to encouraging a diversity of people to volunteer with us, including those from under-represented groups such as youth, people with a disability, older people and people from black and minority ethnic communities.

We recognise that there are costs associated with volunteer involvement and will seek to ensure adequate financial and staffing resources are available for the development and support of volunteering.

We recognise that people have a right to participate in the life of their communities through volunteering and can contribute in many ways. We recognise our responsibility to organise volunteering efficiently and sensitively so that the valuable gift of the volunteer's time is best used to the mutual advantage of all concerned.

Who is a volunteer?

Volunteers are individuals who undertake activity on behalf of Blackwood Town Council, unpaid and of their own free choice.

The Welsh Government Volunteering Policy (2015) defines volunteering as activity which

- is undertaken freely, by choice
- is undertaken to be of public/ community benefit

- is not undertaken for financial gain

Work experience placements and internships are not the same as volunteering.

Volunteers may be involved on a one-off, short term or on a longer term, regular basis. They may be involved:

- in the direct delivery of our activities
- in community engagement to raise awareness of council activities
- in one off events and promotional activities
- in our office or in community venues

Volunteers are valued for:

- bringing additional skills and new perspectives to the council
- enabling council to be more responsive and flexible
- championing Town Council within the wider community
- enhancing the quality of the services delivered by the council
- promoting the wellbeing of local communities and volunteers themselves.

Roles and responsibilities

A designated Council Member has responsibility for overseeing the development and co-ordination of voluntary activity within the council, including volunteering policies and procedures and the welfare of volunteers.

The volunteer role is based on trust and mutual understanding. There is no enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, for the volunteer to attend or to undertake tasks, or for the council to provide continuing opportunities for voluntary involvement, provision of training or benefits.

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

- to be reliable and honest
- to uphold the council's values and comply with council policies
- to make the most of opportunities given, e.g., for training
- to contribute positively to the council aims and avoid bringing the council into disrepute
- to carry out tasks within agreed guidelines

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 out of pocket expenses

- 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

Recruitment and selection

Equal opportunities principles will be adhered to in recruiting volunteers. Opportunities will be widely promoted to attract interest from different sectors of the community. Electronic application is encouraged but non-digital methods of application are also available.

Information will be made available to those enquiring about volunteering, including the nature and purpose of the volunteering role, key tasks, skills required.

Recruitment will usually involve an informal interview, application form and the taking of references; the process will be defined and consistent for any given role.

For roles which involve sustained and direct contact with young people or adults at risk, volunteers will be required to have a full DBS disclosure check which will be arranged by the council. DBS disclosures are dealt with in the strictest confidence. A criminal record is not necessarily a bar to volunteering.

Induction and training

Volunteers will be given induction and training appropriate to the specific tasks to be undertaken.

Support and supervision

Volunteers will be offered support and supervision as appropriate, and this is discussed during induction. Arrangements vary according to the volunteer and the role undertaken, and may include telephone support, group meetings or one to one review.

Recognition

Volunteers will be given the opportunity, where relevant, to share their views and opinions with the council.

Formal recognition of the contribution of volunteers is expressed through annual reports, website articles, social media, and during celebrations.

Dealing with problems

The town council aims to treat all volunteers fairly and consistently. It seeks to ensure that volunteers' views are heard, noted, and acted upon promptly. We will attempt to deal with any problems informally and at the earliest opportunity. All volunteers will have a named person to whom they can turn in the case of any difficulty. Where informal resolution is not possible, the council's 'conflict resolution' policy will be adhered to.

Volunteers will be made aware of the organisation's complaints policy and how to use it. They will also be made aware of how inappropriate behaviour by volunteers will be addressed by the organisation.

Expenses

Volunteers working for Blackwood Town Council will not be out of pocket because of their involvement. Approved out of pocket expenses will be paid and should not affect benefits claims or have any other legal or tax implications.

Volunteers may claim out of pocket expenses when they are involved in any activities relating to their work with Blackwood Town Council. The expenses paid will be actual costs incurred. All expenses claimed **MUST** be supported by valid receipts as evidence of expenditure.

The expenses that volunteers are entitled to claim whilst working at Blackwood Town Council are listed below:

- travel to and from the place where the volunteering activity takes place •

travel while volunteering

Expenses Reimbursement

These expenses are in accordance with the Inland Revenue and the Department for Work and Pensions guidelines.

Rates for claiming Expenses

Travel:

Expenses will be reimbursed for any travel incurred to and from the place where the volunteering activity takes place and travel during the course of volunteering.

Travel expenses will be reimbursed at the following rates:

Public transport fares - Second class fares will be reimbursed on production of receipts/ tickets.

Mileage Allowance (as per HMRC guidance, on the first 10,000 miles in the financial year **45p per mile for cars; 24p per mile for motorcycles; 20p per mile for bicycles**)

Blackwood Town Council encourages the use of public transport where possible.

Moving on

When volunteers move on from volunteering with BTC they will be asked to provide feedback on the volunteering experience by way of an exit questionnaire. They will also be given the opportunity to discuss their responses to the questionnaire more fully.

Volunteers who have remained with the organisation for at least 3 months will have the right to request a reference. Volunteers will be supported to move on to other options.