

Worcester City Council

Employer Supported Volunteering Policy (ESVP)

1 April 2019

Employer Supported Volunteering Policy	
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Finding a VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITY:

[Worcester Volunteer Centre](#)
[Worcester Community Action](#)
[Find It in Worcestershire](#)
[Reach Volunteering](#)
<http://www.dwt.org.uk/>
<https://do-it.org/>

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Scope.....	3
3. Definitions	3
4. Exclusions	4
5. Benefits of volunteering	4
6. Time off	5
7. Legal responsibilities.....	5
7.1 Insurance	5
7.2 Health and Safety	5
7.3 Disclosure and Barring Service Checks	6
7.4 Safeguarding.....	6
8. Volunteer Expenses	6
9. Monitoring and evaluation	6
10. Any problems.....	7

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Employer Supported Volunteering is where employees can take paid time off to volunteer in their local communities during work hours. Employees can choose to use their volunteering time to support a charity or community group of their own choice or to take up an opportunity provided by the council. In its broadest terms, it is a way for the council to demonstrate corporate social responsibility whilst developing and enabling its people to 'give something back'
- 1.2 This policy sets out Worcester City Council's approach for supporting and encouraging involvement in voluntary activity by its employees. The voluntary activity must be linked to the Council's Vision for Worcester and in particular, contribute to one of the city plan priorities, which are:
- Stronger and connected communities
 - Prosperous city
 - Healthy and active city
 - Heritage city for 21st century
 - Sustaining and improving our assets

2. Scope

- 2.1 Our Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) approach is firmly aligned with our People Strategy. In particular, it aims to address our ambitions for:
- enhancing our offer to attract new employees;
 - continuously improve levels of employee engagement and satisfaction;
 - recognise what people have said is important to them;
 - help people perform with excellence;
 - broaden our learning and development offer; and
 - promote improved health and wellbeing.
- 2.2 Specifically this policy provides all employees with the opportunity to request up to 2 days paid leave (over and above annual leave) in any given financial year for community volunteering activities.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 We define volunteering in line with the National Council for Voluntary Organisations' (NCVO) guidance which states that it is:

' any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives. Central to this definition is the fact that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual'

- 3.2 In addition, we would expect any volunteering activity supported as part of our ESV to be based in, or for the benefit of, Worcester.
- 3.3 Volunteering can also include any internal opportunities to support major city events and can either be for the short or long term

Example of Short term	Example of Long term
Supporting a charitable fundraising event such as a marathon, cycle ride Career talks in schools Team challenge Other Council events such as the Christmas fayre, park shows	Charity trustee School Governor Befriender or mentor Work in a charity shop Organise a community group

4. Exclusions

- 4.1 The council reserves the right to decline any volunteering activity if it has cause for concern. But specifically, we will not support:
- 4.1.1 Volunteering activity that has or appears to be driven by any political or extremist view;
- 4.1.2 Any volunteering activity that presents itself as potentially bringing the council into disrepute;
- 4.1.3 Any volunteering activity that happens outside of work time or in the past. This can not be claimed in lieu or retrospectively;
- 4.1.4 Volunteering activity that the line manager believes could cause the employee a conflict of interest due to the nature of their job or wider service area.

5. Benefits of volunteering

- 5.1 Exposing employees to experiences in other environments, cultures and with other colleagues and customers can only enhance their overall contribution to the council. In particular, their ability to live our values
- 5.2 Volunteering should be a rewarding, worthwhile activity for all who participate. There are numerous benefits to be gained by the employee, the council and the partner organisation.

For the employee, volunteering can give the opportunity to:

- Develop new skills that have been identified either by them personally or as part of a performance review;
- Further develop existing skills in a contrasting environment;

- Increase motivation back in the workplace;
- Improve morale, having negotiated a personally rewarding experience;
- Increase in confidence;
- Increase awareness of the local community;
- Gain an added sense of purpose and value.

6. Time off

- 6.1 Employees will be entitled to apply for the equivalent of 2 working days paid ESV leave (pro rata) in any given financial year to participate in voluntary activities during working hours.
- 6.2 This leave is over and above any annual leave or statutory holiday entitlement.
- 6.3 ESV leave could be taken in no less than half a day, all in one period or over separate occasions. It is at the agreement of the line manager, within operational demands and must be requested in advance with at least 1 month's notice of start to enable effective planning
- 6.4 In line with the procedure at Appendix A, time-off can be granted by the line manager. Approvals will be considered on their individual merits taking into account:
- The discussion taken place with the employee about suitability;
 - Clear benefits to both the employee and the service;
 - ESV experience planned and managed in the learning lounge with obvious links to an employees personal development or well being;
 - Suggested evidence the employee will submit to support the volunteering activity;
 - Agreed time off being recorded on worklife and reflected in operational timesheets;
 - That random checks can be made with voluntary organisations that agreed ESV activity is underway or completed.
- 6.5 Where ultimately evidence can not be provided by the employee in support of volunteering activity, we will need to retrospectively agree how that time off will be recorded. This may result in the employee using annual leave, flex or unpaid leave.

7. Legal responsibilities

7.1 Insurance

Whilst the Council may endorse the chosen volunteering activities of employees, it will not accept responsibility for insuring them when engaged in activities outside of its premises. Individuals must therefore ensure that they are adequately covered by their chosen voluntary

organisation. During events organised by the Council, the Council will take responsibility for checking that adequate insurance cover is provided and will inform employees accordingly.

7.2 Health and Safety

Whilst the Council may endorse the chosen volunteering activities of employees, it cannot accept responsibility for their health and safety when they are engaged in activities outside of its premises or its control. Individuals must therefore ensure that they adequately understand and are shown the necessary health and safety responsibilities by their chosen voluntary activity/organisation. During events organised by the Council, the Council will take responsibility for ensuring relevant employees are aware of health and safety requirements.

7.3 Disclosure and Barring Service Checks

Some organisations, for example, those working with children or vulnerable adults, may require their volunteers to undergo Disclosure and Barring checks. Such checks will normally be carried out by the voluntary organisation itself. The council will not conduct these checks for another organisation.

7.4 Safeguarding

Employees are encouraged to understand the safeguarding reporting processes for the organisation or community group in which they are volunteering. It is advised that you raise any safeguarding concerns identified as part of the volunteering activity to the relevant voluntary or community group. However, the council will not object to receiving an employees safeguarding concerns as ultimately we want to ensure that issues are addressed.

8. **Volunteer Expenses**

8.1 The employee should expect the voluntary organisation to supply them with any necessary equipment or tools relevant to the voluntary role. Unless specifically offered otherwise by the voluntary organisation, the employee will personally be responsible for meeting any related travel or subsistence expenses.

8.2 For designed team activity agreed by a service, teams may wish to purchase materials to enhance team-building. These expenses will be met by service budgets

9. Monitoring and evaluation

- 9.1 The employee is responsible for creating their ESV plan, keeping it up to date, logging their agreed time off, successfully participating in the volunteering activity and then sharing any successes

An employees line manager can say 'no' where there are reasonable grounds to do so. Gaining approval is necessary before any time off is used.

- 9.2 The line manager is responsible for giving due consideration and response to any ESV request, monitoring time off for volunteering and maximising the benefits this can bring to the employee's performance, the work of the service and the reputation of the Council

Volunteering is open to all employees, whatever their grade or work pattern. Line managers are expected to be clear on rationale for any request not approved.

- 9.3 People Services will report to the Corporate Leadership Team on overall hours, uptake across the council and trends of ESV activity each year and share any particular success stories.

- 9.4 Any potential breach or misuse of the ESV policy may result in disciplinary action.

10. Any problems

- 10.1 The aim is that your volunteering will be a positive experience that meets all your objectives. Remember, you are under no obligation to keep volunteering for an organisation that you feel unhappy in.

- 10.2 If the you have any concerns about the volunteer placement you are encouraged to talk to someone at the partner organisation initially. This could be someone who is responsible for you while volunteering.

- 10.3 You can discuss any concerns with your line manager but they are not responsible for liaising directly with the voluntary organisation or community group on your behalf. You should talk to your line manager if you plan to end the voluntary activity sooner than planned.

- 10.4 Any issues that an employee feels unable to resolve and would like further advice, People Services can be contacted.

Appendix A: ESVP process outline

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Employee creates a 'Volunteering plan' in the learning lounge to start discussion with line manager. The plan can be added to throughout the year if more requests are made

Line manager discusses the plan with the employee and accepts or declines it accordingly. They track the employees overall use of ESV leave for that financial year in the plan

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E

Employee requests approved dates in worklife, adds details to outlook calendar and reflects on timesheet where relevant

Line manager discusses associated development to support performance in 1-2-1s and reflect on plan as part of PDR if relevant

Employee uploads evidence to volunteering plan when activity complete (this can include certificates, photos, signed timesheets). Such evidence may be used as 'success stories' across the council