

CAMBRIDGESHIRE COMPACT

Volunteering Code of Good Practice

1. Introduction

Volunteering is defined as an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than, or in addition to, close relatives and friends. Volunteering is a freely given commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community. The unique contribution of volunteers adds value to service delivery and offers many benefits to volunteers themselves. This contribution should be measured, recognised and celebrated.

Building upon the Cambridgeshire Compact published in February 2007, this Code of Practice has been developed by the Cambridgeshire Compact Group, representing the broad range of statutory and third sector infrastructure organisations in the county. This Code seeks to:

- Set out the key principles that underpin volunteering activities
- Understand the scope and potential of volunteering
- Identify barriers that prohibit volunteering
- Set out good practice that reduces barriers and thereby encourages more people to volunteer

There are four other Compact Codes, which overlap with and complement this one, as well the overarching Cambridgeshire Compact:

- Consultation
- Funding & Commissioning
- Diversity
- Community Groups (See Section 12 for further information)

2. Guiding Principles

Partners in this Code are committed to developing, promoting and celebrating volunteering as an expression of both active citizenship and the basic human rights of freedom to assemble and associate. This Code is founded around the guiding principles set out in the Cambridgeshire Compact where volunteering is characterised by:

- **Stability** All partners contributing towards sustainability of local volunteering activities
- **Consistency & Fairness** A standard, honest and transparent approach across all sectors

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- **Independence** Recognition of the third sector's rights to self-determination and campaigning
- **Accountability** The need for value for money and efficient use of public funds
- **Needs Driven** Recognising the benefits of placing communities at the centre of services

3. Understanding Volunteering

People volunteer for many different reasons. They may choose to volunteer to develop skills or gain experience, to socialise or give something back to society. They may also volunteer because they feel a moral duty or compelling reasons to take part in voluntary action. The key element is that it is freely undertaken.

There are four principles fundamental to volunteering which inform every aspect of this Code:

Choice: Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. Freedom to volunteer implies freedom not to become involved.

Diversity: Volunteering should be open to all, no matter what their background, race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origins, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or disability.

Mutual Benefit: Volunteers offer their contribution unwaged but should benefit in other ways in return for their contribution. Giving voluntary time and skills must be recognised as establishing a reciprocal relationship in which the volunteer also benefits and feels that his or her contribution is personally fulfilling.

Recognition: Explicit recognition of the value of the contribution of volunteers is fundamental to a fair relationship between volunteers, voluntary and community organisations and government policy and practice. This includes recognising the contribution to the organisation, the community, the social economy and wider social objectives.

(Extract from the National Compact – Code of Good Practice in Volunteering)

4. The Scope and Potential of Volunteering

Decision-makers need to be aware of ways that their actions and decisions may affect volunteering and voluntary activities. Local Government can play a vital strategic role by supporting and enabling volunteering and community activity. Employers actively promoting good practice and supporting their staff in volunteering has been identified as a key factor in community cohesion (Cohesion Delivery Framework, DCLG, 2008). Research also strongly suggests that encouraging volunteering improves employee commitment (Caring Companies, IVR, 2007).

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Volunteering is a powerful force for change, both for those who volunteer and for the wider community. Volunteering plays a key role in empowering individuals and communities through building skills and confidence, as well as the potential to influence cultural change. It has been proven that volunteering markedly improves health and social inclusion through promoting positive social engagement (Volunteering & Health, University of Wales, 2008), and can often be a first step back to paid work. For young people volunteering can offer a way of gaining valuable skills and experience as well as contributing to their local community.

Volunteering activities can include:

- Helping provide a service as a volunteer within a voluntary or community organisation, the public sector or a private sector body
- Befriending and mentoring
- Taking part in running a voluntary or community organisation as a trustee or member of a board or management committee, for example managing sports or faith groups
- Serving as a non-executive member of a public body or participating in civic governance, for instance serving as a school governor or a community representative
- Leading a voluntary initiative, usually as part of a voluntary organisation or community group, to improve the quality of life for people in a neighbourhood or community of interest
- Group activity, within a neighbourhood or community of interest, providing a community service, or campaigning for a public cause
- Helping to develop public policy through involvement in consultation processes and campaigning
- Helping to raise funds for an organisation

5. Overcoming Barriers to Volunteering

Barriers to volunteering can be due to a variety of causes. They may include physical and financial barriers, attitudes and behaviour by individuals, access to opportunities in society, opportunities to volunteer being located far from where potential volunteers live or where transport is poor, or the institutional behaviour and culture of organisations themselves.

Volunteers should not be out of pocket because of their voluntary activity. Volunteers should be reimbursed for additional costs incurred in pursuit of their voluntary activity. Volunteers are entitled to reimbursement of all reasonable out-of-pocket expenses and volunteers should be encouraged to claim. It is good practice therefore to include an amount of money in every project that will provide for volunteer expenses. By developing funding to cover a range of expenses, for example travel and care for dependents, a wider range of people can be encouraged to volunteer.

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When working with children, young people and vulnerable adults it is recommended that CRB checks and a face to face interview should be seen as part of a wider risk-management strategy. Whilst CRB checking should not be a barrier to volunteering, groups where volunteers are placed need to have effective policies that act as a safeguard for both volunteers and service users. Advice on assessing risk is available from local and national sources (see Section 12 'Further Information').

6. The Volunteering Infrastructure

In Cambridgeshire volunteering activity is focussed through the accredited volunteer centres in Cambridge, Ely, Fenland, Huntingdonshire and Royston. In 2007 these organisations came together to establish a county-wide forum, Volunteering Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, with the aim of increasing the quality and quantity of volunteering in Cambridgeshire and its neighbour; Peterborough (a unitary local authority). This will be done by providing information, support and guidance to potential and existing volunteers and to volunteer-involving organisations.

All Volunteer Centres are accredited with Volunteering England having achieved minimum standards in their six core functions of brokerage, marketing, development, good practice, policy response & campaigning and strategic development. Volunteering England describe Volunteer Centres as *'The beating heart of volunteering, providing lifeblood to local communities. Volunteer Centres link up with local business, current and potential volunteers, local decision makers, central government, those at risk of social exclusion, active citizens, and voluntary and community groups'* (Volunteering England 2008). Cambridgeshire's volunteer centres cover both city and rural locations and employ a small number of part time staff. Youth volunteering is co-ordinated by Young Lives.

By working collaboratively through Volunteering Cambridgeshire and Peterborough the volunteer centres aim to establish their own infrastructure and extend their capacity and expertise from which they will be able to deliver high quality, cohesive volunteering services to potential volunteers, existing volunteers and volunteer using organisations across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

7. Volunteering and Statutory Organisations

It should be noted that some statutory organisations recruit and employ volunteers in delivering their own services, for example youth clubs and school governors. Therefore, it is necessary for these organisations to consider their position both as a potential funder and a volunteer-involving organisation (VIO) and develop policies to ensure good practice from both perspectives.

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With respect to the recruitment and management of volunteers, Cambridgeshire County Council, for example, has a volunteer policy that provides a basic minimum standard for managers to follow. In addition to this, whilst paid time off is not given to staff to volunteer, CCC is, for example, supportive of volunteering and recognises the benefits, particularly the potential contribution to the community and staff health and wellbeing. CCC also has a policy for staff volunteering across the Council in a crisis, e.g. during a flood or foot and mouth outbreak.

8. Trustee Obligations

Trustees should be aware that, as managers of third sector organisations, who will very often employ paid staff, they will have financial and employer responsibilities. Further information, guidance and training on these responsibilities is available from CVS, see section 13.2 below.

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9. The Undertakings

The signatories of this Code of Practice are committed to the undertakings set out below.

The Statutory Sector undertake to:

- Support both volunteer development agencies (VDAs) and volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs)
- Consult the sector so that proposed policies optimise appropriate opportunities for volunteering
- Work to actively reduce barriers to volunteering resulting from existing policies, for example by taking on good practice set out in paragraph 5 above
- Recognise that it is legitimate for voluntary and community organisations to include the costs of enabling greater access to volunteering in relevant applications for funding, for example costs of CRB checks, volunteer expenses and supervision
- Recognise the independence of volunteering bodies
- Adopt policies to help ensure that volunteering infrastructure can develop realistic sustainable long term funding
- Recognise that volunteers need support, management and other resources to work effectively
- Support VDAs and VIOs in developing robust child and adult protection policies and procedures
- Support VDAs and VIOs in carrying out any associated requirements for example CRB checks and Safeguarding training when appropriate.
- Have comprehensive and robust policies in place for recruiting and supporting volunteers in public sector services

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The Third Sector undertake to:

- Promote volunteering opportunities including looking at how volunteers are recruited to ensure equal opportunities for prospective volunteers
- Include reasonable costs for reducing barriers to volunteering in relevant funding bids
- Encourage good practice by ensuring that they have both the time and resources to support and train volunteers
- Ensure that arrangements made for volunteers do not unfairly exclude particular groups from volunteering, for example through the timing and accessibility of activities
- Encourage the involvement of volunteers in decision-making in groups and organisations and include them in internal communications
- Identify a named person, or persons, to be responsible for volunteer involvement, and for monitoring and reporting on it
- Have fair, appropriate and clear policies and procedures regarding the steps that are taken to check the suitability of volunteers for their roles. Where appropriate, these policies will comply with safeguarding standards (under 18's) and the Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) scheme
- Where it is not appropriate for volunteers to take up opportunities, the sector will signpost to other volunteering opportunities and progression
- Tell volunteers how their volunteering has benefited the organisation or group where they volunteer

Together the Third and Statutory Sectors undertake to:

- As employers, develop good practice models in promoting and supporting their staff in volunteering activities
- Recognise that in order to provide user-sensitive services organisations will need an understanding of how to involve, support and manage volunteers
- Develop training opportunities for managers working with volunteers
- Develop training opportunities for volunteers
- Expand the public perception of volunteering by improving the profile, status and range of volunteer activities
- Work in partnership to tackle discrimination to ensure that volunteering is open to all and reflects the diversity of Cambridgeshire's population
- Recognise that volunteering is freely given but not cost free. Resources, support, training, development and promotion for volunteers may incur costs
- Adopt clear volunteering policies including ones relating to the payment of volunteer expenses and to health and safety
- Adopt comprehensive volunteer recruitment and support policies and procedures that include job descriptions and plans for induction and supervision
- Value, and make visible, the value of volunteers' contributions, ensuring that the contribution of volunteers is recognised as having more than monetary equivalence

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- Acknowledge that volunteering can help tackle social exclusion. Individuals can improve their skills and employability and can show that they have a contribution to make to society. It can also bring people together from different backgrounds and contribute towards more cohesive communities
- Involve volunteers when developing new policies and ideas
- Ensure that arrangements made for volunteers do not unfairly exclude particular groups. Where necessary make reasonable adjustments to enable disabled people, and others who may face barriers, to engage in volunteering
- Consider ways in which they can support volunteers into employment if that is what they want. For example through helping to identify sources of support and acting as referees
- Recognise that voluntary activities should never be a substitution for paid work
- Ensure that appropriate safeguards are in place for the users of services provided by volunteers
- Work together to create and maintain a modern and dynamic volunteering infrastructure
- At the outset of a project include exit strategy planning which takes into account the limited nature of many sources of funding and the shifting policy environment, and ensure that volunteers are well informed of these strategies

10. Dealing with Disputes

Early resolution of complaints should be sought as close to the source as possible. Any disputes in relation to the application of this Code should initially be made to the organisation concerned. And, if unresolved, should be escalated through the relevant management structure or partnership as appropriate. If the complaint or dispute is not resolved through these processes or if it has wide spread implications for the third sector or for local policy or practice, the issues should be raised through the Compact Resolution Process.

11. Taking the Code Forward

For both sectors this Code of Practice sets out a framework for strategic direction for the development of volunteering across the county of Cambridgeshire. For local authorities it will play a central role in directing work that will contribute to achievement against National Indicators 6 and 7 and be part of the work set out in the Local Area Agreement (LAA) block 'Safer and Stronger'.

Development of a thriving infrastructure and promotion of good practice are central to the work of Volunteering Cambridge and Peterborough (VCP), the county volunteer forum. This Code will therefore contribute to VCP's business and action planning processes.

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A strong and vibrant volunteering environment in Cambridgeshire will make all sectors of the community better placed to take advantage of social opportunities, such as the Olympics and the Cultural Olympiad.

Compact in Cambridgeshire is driven by a multi-agency group, the Compact Development Group, who will have ownership for progressing and monitoring the undertakings set out in this Code. As such, the work will form part of the Group's action planning, communications and performance management processes.

12. Further Information

Access the full range of **Cambridgeshire Compact** resources, including other Codes and the Dispute Resolution Procedure:

http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/depts/ecsoffice/learning/compact?wbc_purpose=http%3a%2f%2fwww.intel.com%3f%22%3e%3c%22%3e%3c

Volunteering England

<http://www.volunteering.org.uk/>

Volunteering England – Risk Management Toolkit

http://www.volunteering.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/2B108CBD-0BBD-4DB3-A4D2-D987B885D1F3/0/Risk_toolkit.pdf

Sport England

<http://www.sportengland.org/>

Youth Sport Trust Step into Sport programme

<http://www.youthsporttrust.org/page/sis-passport/index.html>

Community Service Volunteers

<http://www.csv.org.uk/>

Commission on the Future of Volunteering

'Manifesto for Change', other research and good practice

<http://www.volcomm.org.uk/>

Youth Volunteering (For young people aged 16-25)

<http://www.vinspired.com>

The Office of the Third Sector – CRB Guidance for Volunteering

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/~/_media/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/CRB%20final%20pdf.ashx

National Council for Voluntary Organisations

<http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/>

Institute for Volunteering Research

Monitoring Volunteers: A guide to collecting and using data

<http://www.ivr.org.uk/VolunteeringEngland/Core/RecordedResource.aspx?resource=afecea7244d54d75a8f019f61541a06a>

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Job Centre Plus: Volunteering while receiving benefits

http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/stellent/groups/jcp/documents/webcontent/dev_015837.pdf

Olympic Volunteering

<http://www.london2012.com/get-involved/volunteering/the-volunteer-programme.php>

13. Contacts

13.1 Volunteer Centres and other Volunteer Development Organisations:

Cambridge & District Volunteer Centre

01223 356549 <http://www.cam-volunteer.org.uk>

Fenland Volunteer Centre

01945 582192 <http://www.fenlandvb.org.uk>

Royston Volunteer Centre

01763 243020 (covering part of South Cambs area)

<http://www.roystonvolunteer.org.uk>

Voluntary & Community Action East Cambridgeshire

01353 666556/666166 <http://www.vcaec.org.uk/>

Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre

01480 382440 (website to come)

Young Lives 'involved' Teams (Youth volunteering, covering Cambridgeshire and Peterborough)

01733 341345/01480 461336 <http://www.young-lives.org.uk>

Student Community Action

01223 350365 <http://www.cambridgesca.org.uk>

Living Sport

01487 849928 <http://www.livingsport.co.uk>

Care Network

Supporting independence for older, isolated and vulnerable people for example Good Neighbour Schemes

01954 211919 <http://www.care-network.org.uk/>

13.2 Council for Voluntary Service

Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service covering Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire

01223 464696 <http://www.cambridgecvs.org/>

Voluntary & Community Action East Cambridgeshire covering Ely and East Cambridgeshire

01353 666556 <http://www.vcaec.org.uk/>

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Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations covering Huntingdonshire
01480 420601 <http://www.huntsforum.org.uk/>

Fenland Council for Voluntary Service covering Fenland
01354 659772 <http://www.fenlandcvs.co.uk/>

13.3 Other

Cambridgeshire.net

Online directory providing contact details and information about community, voluntary and self-help groups, clubs and societies

<http://www.cambridgeshire.net/>

Nextstep (advice on learning and work)

0845 068 1400

<http://www.nextstepcambs.org.uk>

<http://nextstep.direct.gov.uk>

For further information contact Sandie Smith, 3rd Sector Development Officer,
Cambridgeshire County Council on 01223 715471 or
email [sandie.smith@ cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:sandie.smith@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)