

Gloucestershire Compact
Volunteering
Code of Practice

1. Who is this Code of Practice for?

- Voluntary and Community Sector Groups
- Public Sector Bodies

2. What is the Gloucestershire Compact?

The Gloucestershire Compact is an agreement between local public sector bodies and the voluntary and community sector to support and improve partnership working between the sectors. It is underpinned by Codes of Practice, based on the national Codes, which cover the following areas:

- Advancing Equality
- Commissioning
- Community Groups
- Consultation
- Mediation
- Multi-sector Partnerships
- Volunteering

The Gloucestershire Compact and its Codes contain specific undertakings for each sector, as well as a series of joint undertakings, which aim to make a positive impact on partnership working in the county. In this context, the term “undertaking” commits partners to work towards the principle or action in question.

3. What is the aim of this Code of Practice?

This Code of Practice aims to make a positive impact on the relationship between the public sector and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in Gloucestershire and their commitment to volunteering. It aims to set a framework for the implementing the fundamental principles to volunteering.

4. Fundamental Principles of Volunteering

There are five principles fundamental to volunteering:-

- Choice
- Diversity
- Mutual Benefit
- Recognition
- Support

Choice

Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. Any encouragement to become involved in volunteering should not result in any form of coercion or compulsion.

Whilst volunteering is not a contractual agreement, it does involve rights and responsibilities.

Diversity

Volunteering should be open to all, whatever their age, disability, gender, race, religion or sexual orientation. Implementing equalities policies and schemes, and a welcoming approach are fundamental to supporting diversity. Everyone has something to offer, whilst recognising all opportunities are not suitable for all people.

Mutual Benefit

Volunteers offer their contribution unwaged but should benefit in other ways in return for their contribution to the community. Giving voluntary time and skills must be recognised as establishing a reciprocal relationship. Benefits that volunteers can expect to gain include a sense of worthwhile achievement, useful skills, career enhancement and enrichment, improved health, personal and social development, experience and contacts, sociability and fun and inclusion in the life of an organisation.

Recognition

Explicit recognition should be given to the value of what volunteering contributes to the community, the economy and to society and wider social objectives. It is fundamental to an equitable relationship between volunteers, organisations and government policy and practice.

Support

Good support, management and training of volunteers are an essential part of volunteering. Support for organisations managing volunteers is available from voluntary and community sector volunteering support and development organisations. Volunteers must be well supported to have a worthwhile experience and to feel valued, as well as being able to contribute to an organisation's objectives.

5. What is Volunteering?

Volunteering is a powerful force for change.

Volunteering is a non-compulsory activity undertaken by anyone which aims to benefit individuals, the community or the environment. Volunteers, who give their time for free, can work alone or as part of a wider team. It is undertaken freely and unpaid although volunteers are entitled to receive reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses.

Volunteering embraces a diverse range of activities including formal opportunities through public, private and voluntary organisations as well as informal community participation and campaigning.

We have a thriving culture of volunteering in Gloucestershire. The county was successful in achieving its three year target to increase the number of adult volunteers. The latest household survey conducted in early 2010 to measure levels of volunteering in the county, revealed that 21.6 per cent of all adults volunteer for at least two hours a week in a formal setting. Certain volunteers, including some trustees, school governors, sports coaches and management committee members, do not view themselves as volunteers. Effort is being made in Gloucestershire to raise awareness of their voluntary status.

6. Joint Undertakings

All partners to the Gloucestershire Compact are committed to working together to continually improve the effectiveness of the relationship between the public sector and the VCS, and undertake to:

- 6.1 Work together to develop a modern and dynamic support structure to promote volunteering and support volunteering good practice, recognising that this is essential for the success of volunteering work across the county.

Increasing the Choice and Diversity of Volunteering Opportunities

- 6.2 Increase access to volunteering by overcoming the real or perceived barriers, which prevent people from volunteering.
- 6.3 Encourage volunteering by individuals from currently under-represented sectors.
- 6.4 Improve the opportunities for volunteering, ensuring a broad range of possibilities.
- 6.5 Support volunteers who have additional needs
- 6.6 Recognise that everyone has something to offer regardless of the time they can give and their individual circumstances
- 6.7 Recognise there is a difference between paid and voluntary staff and ensure that the organisation's policies reflect this

Ensuring Mutual Benefit of Volunteering

- 6.8 Show commitment to volunteers and volunteering at every level through their organisation or agency, for example including information about employer-supported volunteering in induction packs for new staff.
- 6.9 Seek to ensure that all relevant proposed policies and procedures are checked for impact on volunteers and volunteering before being adopted, acknowledging that whilst different from paid staff, volunteers have rights as well as responsibilities
- 6.10 Encourage organisations who work with volunteers to involve volunteers in decision-making and information flows, so that volunteers are acknowledged and valued as important partners and stakeholders in the organisation.
- 6.11 Encourage employers in all sectors to have embedded volunteer policies that encourage and enable staff to take part in volunteering activities (Employee supported volunteering)
- 6.12 Ensure that volunteering opportunities complement rather than replace the role of paid staff.
- 6.13 Recognise that there is a mutual benefit

Recognition of the real cost of Volunteering

- 6.14 Accept that although volunteering is given freely, it is not cost free. Recognise that managing volunteers needs resources and ensure there is appropriate financial provision for volunteer management
- 6.15 Work together to expand the public perception of volunteering by improving the profile, status and range of volunteer activity.
- 6.16 Support initiatives to widen the profile of volunteering.
- 6.17 Aim for greater publicity for the achievements of volunteers.
- 6.18 Recognise and budget for vetting procedures appropriate to the role and involvement of the volunteer.

Providing Support for Volunteers

- 6.19 Provide volunteers with the induction, support, management, training and other resources that they need to work effectively.
- 6.20 Ensure that supporting volunteers is embedded in appropriate job descriptions. Identify a named person within each agency or organisation to be responsible for volunteer involvement, especially at board and management level.
- 6.21 Ensure that volunteers are not out-of-pocket because of their voluntary activity.
- 6.22 Recognise the different motivations of individual volunteers.

7. Public Sector Partner Undertakings

The Gloucestershire Compact public sector partners undertake to:

- 7.1 Respect the independence of the VCS.
- 7.2 Adopt policies to ensure that specialist volunteering development agencies can develop realistic sustainable long term funding.
- 7.3 Recognise that the VCS needs support and resources to actively encourage a diverse range of people to volunteer.
- 7.4 Recognise volunteer time when assessing the added value that is represented within a funding bid.
- 7.5 Aim to increase staff awareness of the contributions made by volunteers to public sector objectives.
- 7.6 Recognise that many organisations are run solely by volunteers, and therefore consider the time implications for the VCS of any consultations that are being carried out.
- 7.7 Recognise that volunteers aren't free
- 7.8 Consult with the specialist volunteering development agencies when marketing and developing volunteering opportunities

8. Voluntary and Community Sector Undertakings

The Gloucestershire voluntary and community sector partners undertake to:

- 8.1 Seek to widen opportunities for volunteering and develop systems for working co-operatively with other organisations.
- 8.2 Work to develop a diverse volunteer base, including those who have difficulty in accessing volunteering.
- 8.3 Ensure that volunteers, as well as staff, know how volunteering has enhanced and benefited the organisation or group.
- 8.4 Ensure that adequate resources for volunteer management, training and expenses are included in funding bids.