Thinking of Becoming a Volunteer?

Why Volunteer?

Volunteering is a simple but very effective way to get involved in your community and to make a positive difference to people’s lives.

It’s a brilliant opportunity to meet a diverse range of people, to use your skills for the benefit of others and to develop new ones. You could receive professional training across a variety of fields, gain practical knowledge and acquire valuable work experience to take forward in other roles and use for future employment.

West Sussex County Council (WSCC) has an assortment of volunteering opportunities which vary in terms of content, duration and time commitment. Examples of our volunteering roles include: enabling vulnerable groups to access services, providing respite and support for carers and families, and helping to enhance existing WSCC services for those in greatest need. Other volunteer roles focus on working to improve local environments, working alongside young people, preserving the countryside, and supporting work to prevent anti-social behaviour and crime.

What Do We Mean by ‘Volunteer’?

A volunteer is someone who has chosen to give their time for the benefit of others, on a short- or long-term basis, without the expectation of personal financial gain.

Volunteer roles can vary from working alone to working as part of a team, for one-day events or ongoing assignments.

Whatever your volunteering role, you will always have access to relevant training and preparation, support and guidance throughout.

Becoming a WSCC Volunteer

Getting Started

The first thing to do is decide which volunteering role or roles you are interested in. One way you can do this is by browsing the WSCC Volunteering pages online, which provide full details on a number of County Council volunteering opportunities. They also offer links to details of other opportunities available within WSCC services. Clicking on a role’s link will take you directly to the relevant WSCC service page.

Each opportunity on the Volunteering pages has a short summary of the proposed role. If you are interested in finding out more, you can follow the link to a one- or two-page ‘Role Description’ which fully outlines the purpose of the role, the skills needed to undertake it and the time commitment it requires. You should always read the description in detail before applying for a role.

Once you have decided which role you want to apply for, you’ll need to fill out a Volunteer Details/Application form and send it to the contact email or postal address listed in the advertisement. The forms vary in the level of information they require,
dependent upon the nature of the role, so be careful to fill out the correct one. To ensure this, use the link provided in the full role description.

Role descriptions for many of our volunteering opportunities can be found on the WSCC website at:
http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/living/jobs/working_for_us/developing_your_skills/volunteering.aspx

Interviews

Some roles may require a short interview prior to beginning them. We aim to ensure that all interviews are conducted in a fair and professional manner and recognise that people with disabilities may need support and/or assistance. If you have any special requirements, or if you have any queries about the volunteering opportunity or anything you would like to discuss further, please do not hesitate to contact the service advertising the opportunity.

What You Can Expect as a WSCC Volunteer

Equality

Our volunteering opportunities are predominantly open to applications from anyone aged 16 and above, although there are occasional exceptions to this.

We are committed to ensuring that no applicant or volunteer will be treated less favourably than another because of their race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, physical disability or medical condition, or their political, spiritual and religious beliefs.

We recruit and manage all of our volunteers in accordance with the WSCC Equality and Diversity Statement, and will always seek to make our volunteer roles accessible to all as much as is safe and practicable.

However, please be aware that we are not permitted to engage volunteers who are not eligible to work in the UK. Furthermore, if an applicant has worked overseas certain volunteer roles may require specialist paperwork beyond a Disclosure and Barring Service check (see DBS paragraph for full details); in this instance, WSCC could not cover the expense.

For further information on our equality policies, please go to:
www.westsussex.gov.uk/your_council/strategies_policies_and_public/policies/equality.aspx

Support

Every volunteer role will be supported by a WSCC line manager. The line manager is responsible for ensuring that volunteers are well prepared for the activities they perform and that their capabilities and skills always remain in line with the requirements of their volunteer roles.

You will have regular opportunities to meet with your line manager to discuss your activities and any adjustments which may be required. Your line manager will be your main point of contact with any work-related questions, suggestions or concerns.
You may also have a supervisor who will work alongside you. This could be a WSCC member of staff or another volunteer. Supervisors may give direction on the work to be undertaken, provide training or demonstrate how a task must be completed.

Each volunteer may also have a mentor. This could be a WSCC member of staff or a more experienced volunteer. Your mentor is there to provide advice and support regarding your volunteering role; they are someone you can take queries to which you may not wish to refer to your line manager. At times, your mentor may redirect you to seek advice from your line manager if appropriate.

**Health Questionnaires**

Before you begin volunteering we want to be sure that the proposed activities will not endanger your health or the health of others, so we ask you to fill out a Pre-Volunteering Health Questionnaire and bring this to your interview.

If the questionnaire does not identify any possible causes for concern, it will then be securely destroyed. If the health of a volunteer is considered to be a concern, this will be discussed with them to determine the suitability of the role. It may be that an adjustment can be made to the role to ensure the health and well-being of all concerned.

When being considered for a volunteering role, health is of secondary consideration alongside an individual’s skills, enthusiasm and commitment.

**Training**

We are committed to investing in our volunteers and to providing them with everything they need for their volunteering role.

All volunteers will receive training appropriate to their role. If you are attending a single volunteering session, there will be an information briefing at the beginning of the session; longer-term roles will have a formal induction before duties begin. These sessions include general information about the County Council and the service in which you are volunteering, relevant health and safety instruction, guidance on good practice (for example, advised dress), and a detailed discussion of the duties as listed in the Volunteer Role Description.

Some roles will require further training such as shadowing WSCC staff, carrying out duties with the support of staff or experienced volunteers, and learning skills via practical sessions. Refresher and extra training will also be provided as appropriate.

You may also be offered the opportunity to attend WSCC staff training courses, which are relevant to your volunteering role, free of charge.

You will also have access to a ‘volunteer learning record’, held by your line manager. These records will document any training sessions or refresher courses you attend and any new skills you acquire or update.

We will never ask you to carry out a task you haven’t been fully trained for or do not feel confident performing.
Well-Being and Safety

The well-being and safety of all WSCC staff and volunteers is of the utmost importance to us; we have a number of arrangements in place to attain this.

鲰 Contact Details

All volunteers are required to provide their line manager with a partner, family member or close friend’s contact details in case of an emergency.

鲰 Risk Assessments

As with our County Council employees, we carry out risk assessments for each volunteer role in order to identify and address any potential hazards. These risk assessments comply with current health and safety legislation and contribute to the information provided in your training sessions.

鲰 Health and Safety Training

Many County Council services have their own health and safety handbooks; they will make these available to you before you begin your role.

All volunteers will receive relevant health and safety training for each volunteering role they undertake. All the health and safety training you receive will be documented in your learning records. Each WSCC service will ensure every volunteer has the correct equipment and Personal Protective Equipment for their volunteering role.

In addition to the health and safety training you will receive during your induction, further briefings may be given at the beginning of each volunteering session and through shadowing staff and experienced volunteers. Refresher training will also be provided as appropriate.

Insurance

As a volunteer assisting in the delivery of WSCC services you will be covered by the County Council’s insurance policies, including Public and Employer’s liability policies and the Personal Accident policy. The Personal Accident policy provides cover for a permanent disability resulting from a non-negligent accident which occurs during the course of volunteering. In the event of a claim, volunteers who are aged 75 and over are covered by the Personal Accident policy at a reduced rate of 10% of the relevant sum for volunteers aged up to 75.

The policies can only apply if you are acting with the knowledge, support, supervision or direction of the County Council.

Refreshments

Volunteers are provided with free drinking water, tea and coffee throughout their volunteering sessions.

Certain WSCC services may also provide food. If WSCC staff are supplied with food, volunteers may expect to be offered food as well, but we would not normally provide substantial food at sessions or cover expenses for purchasing meals.
Expenses

We believe volunteering should not result in a volunteer using their own funds to participate so we offer reimbursement for ‘out of pocket’ expenses incurred through volunteering.

‘Out of pocket’ expenses refers to payments which have been made directly by a volunteer in order to participate in a volunteering session or carry out a volunteering duty, such as for travel.

We will not pay expenses for a session a volunteer has not attended. Volunteers can only receive expenses for sessions which have been agreed with their line manager; we can only reimburse expenses for extra sessions if your line manager asked you to attend them.

You will receive a full explanation on how to make a claim for ‘out of pocket’ expenses as part of your induction.

Further detail on expenses reimbursement can be found in our ‘Volunteer Handbook’ available at: http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/living/jobs_and_volunteering/volunteering.aspx

Career Taster Scheme

WSCC also provides ‘Career Taster’ opportunities to aid individuals in choosing a career and for those volunteers who specifically wish to gain experience for future employment. Further information about the Career Taster scheme is available at: www.westsussex.gov.uk/careertasters

References Requested by Volunteers

Once you have become a WSCC volunteer, we will be able to provide you with an academic or professional reference detailing the training you have received and any skills you have acquired or updated.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks (previously known as CRB checks)

Previously known as a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check can search your applicants’ details against criminal records and other sources, including the Police National Computer and the barring lists. The check can reveal convictions, cautions, reprimands and warnings, and is used to help determine suitability of an individual for a paid or voluntary role.

Many of our volunteer roles do not require volunteers to have a DBS check; however, some do.

Anyone working in paid or voluntary roles which involve direct and unsupervised contact with children or young people must have a satisfactory DBS check. If the role involves children and young people but takes place under supervision, a DBS check is not necessary.
With regard to roles working alongside adults, only certain roles require a DBS check; this is dependent upon whether the tasks involved fall within ‘Regulated Activity’. Regulated Activities include health care, personal care (for example, assistance with washing, dressing or eating), social care, assistance with monetary or legal matters and transportation related to health, personal or social care.

These regulations apply to anyone over the age of 16.

If the volunteer role you have applied for requires a DBS check, this will be stated in the role description or advertisement; the contact person will explain why the role requires a check.

DBS checks are processed on-line so you will need an email address to complete one. If you do not have an email address, your line manager can provide you with one and arrange for you to access email facilities at a library or other WSCC establishment.

As a WSCC volunteer, you do not have to pay for your DBS check.

If you already have a successful DBS check from a partner organisation (for example, a voluntary organisation which works with or provides a service to the County Council), you may not need to complete another one. If you share the certificate with us, we can confirm whether another check is necessary.

**Volunteer Agreement**

All WSCC volunteers involved in a longer-term volunteering role will have a Volunteer Agreement. This agreement states what you can expect from the County Council and what the Council expects from you in return and incorporates WSCC’s Code of Conduct. Each agreement will be tailored to the relevant role description and individual volunteer. The agreement is to be signed by the volunteer and their line manager.

The Volunteer Agreement is not a formal contract; you are free to leave your volunteering role when you wish, but we appreciate as much notice as volunteers are able to give.

**For More Information**

For more details on volunteering for WSCC, check out our [official handbook](#).

If you have any further questions or queries, please feel free to contact the Volunteer Development team by emailing Sharon.Hurr@westsussex.gov.uk or Joanna.Cooke@westsussex.gov.uk, or contact the WSCC service who is advertising the role.