Introducing the WSCC Volunteers’ Handbook

Introduction

Welcome to all West Sussex County Council (WSCC) Volunteers. It’s great to have you as part of the team.

This handbook is designed to give you the information you’ll need as a volunteer, and direct you where to go with any further questions.

Whilst relevant to all County Council services, the information in this handbook is not intended to be comprehensive; individual services may occasionally differ in their requirements and implementation. Any such deviations will be covered by the service in the Role Description or in your training.

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

We will do everything we can to ensure your volunteering experience is positive, enriching and enjoyable.

What You Can Expect from WSCC

Equality

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.

For further information on our equality policies, please go to: www.westsussex.gov.uk/your_council/strategies_policies_and_publi/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. This could be a WSCC member of staff or another volunteer who works alongside you. Supervisors may give direction on the work to be undertaken, provide training or demonstrate how a task should be completed.

You 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.
If you have any problems or concerns regarding your volunteering role, it is important that you voice them. In this instance, you are encouraged to meet with your line manager to discuss them. If you do not feel this discussion has satisfactorily dealt with your concern, you may wish to begin the County Council’s complaints procedure as detailed at the link below:
www.westsussex.gov.uk/your_council/get_in_touch/comments_compliments_and/our_complaints_procedure-1/corporate_complaints_procedure.aspx

Training

As a WSCC volunteer, you will receive training appropriate to your 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 will include general information about the County Council and information specific to 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 courses, which are relevant to your volunteering role, free of charge.

You will also have 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.

Well-Being and Safety

❖ 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.

❖ Risk Assessments
As with our County Council employees, we carry out detailed risk assessments for each volunteer role in order to identify and address any potential hazards. These risk assessments are in line with current health and safety legislation and contribute to the material used in your training sessions.

❖ Smoking Policy
It is against the law to smoke in buildings and in public/work vehicles. You are free to smoke whilst driving your own vehicle but should consider whether you are carrying other WSCC volunteers before doing so. You cannot smoke in your own vehicle if you are transporting service users. You must not smoke in the vicinity of anyone receiving services from the County Council.

Some volunteer workplaces may have a designated smoking area. If your workplace has not designated an area then you may smoke anywhere, so long as smoke does not enter buildings or food preparation areas through open windows, and you are not close to where flammable materials are stored or where a no smoking sign is displayed. All waste products from smoking should be disposed of properly.

So long as you meet these criteria, you are free to take reasonable smoking breaks during a volunteering session.
**Health and Safety Training**

Many County Council services have their own health and safety handbooks/pocket books; 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 record.

The health and safety requirements will differ from role to role but could include:

- Manual handling (the correct way to lift, carry and move loads).
- Handling hazardous substances as stated in the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH*).
- Maintaining hygiene standards.
- Provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other equipment. (PPE could refer to gloves, aprons, safety helmets, goggles, hearing protection or high-visibility clothing.)
- Correct usage of supplied equipment.
- Knowledge of how to manage potential environmental hazards such as weather, temperature, ventilation etc.
- Details of the provision of First Aid.
- Fire and evacuation information.
- Procedures for working alone.

(*Full details on COSHH can be found at: [http://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh.](http://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh.))

Your WSCC service will ensure you have the correct equipment and PPE for your volunteering role. If it is not disposable, this equipment remains the property of the County Council and must be returned at the end of each session or, if the Council has loaned it to you, when you conclude your volunteering role. Once we give you your PPE, it is your responsibility to take care of it and store it correctly. If you have any problems with your PPE, you should report it to your line manager.

Health and safety training will take place 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. Following your training we ask you to commit to working safely, to take reasonable care for your own health and safety and not to put others at risk through your actions or omissions.

If you are concerned about a health and safety issue related to your volunteering role, you should refer it to your line manager immediately.

**Insurance**

As a volunteer assisting in the delivery of WSCC services you will be covered by the County Council's insurance policies, including Public Liability Policy, Employers’ Liability Policy 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: they will receive 10% of the relevant sum for volunteers aged up to 75.

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

**Refreshments**

You will be provided with free drinking water, tea and coffee throughout your volunteering sessions.
Certain services may also provide food: if WSCC staff are supplied with food, volunteers will be offered food as well. However, WSCC services do not normally provide substantial food at sessions nor cover expenses for purchasing meals.

**Expenses**

WSCC offers reimbursement for certain ‘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. These could be payments for travel, equipment and, in special cases, childcare.

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 of how to make a claim for ‘out of pocket‘ expenses as part of your induction. All volunteers are entitled to claim for expenses, but we request that you do not discuss your expense claims with other volunteers.

If a volunteer is discovered to have made a claim in error, they will be asked to return the expenses.

❖ **Travel**

If you use public or private transport to attend a volunteering session or to carry out a volunteering duty, you are eligible to make an expense claim.

We request that all volunteers limit their claims for travel as much as is practical and reasonable and that they use the lowest cost mode of transport available whenever possible. For example: using a bicycle in place of a car, walking in place of riding a bicycle, and only taking second class train travel.

We would not expect a volunteer who lives within manageable walking distance of the location where the volunteering takes place (‘manageable’ being relative to the individual), or who has a free travel bus pass, to make a claim for travel. If you have a reduced rate travel pass, your expense claim should only be for the sum you paid.

❖ **Public Transport**

If you make a claim for travel by public transport, you must provide proof of purchase (tickets/receipts) with your expense claim.

If you have a travel pass which covers a set period of time, you will receive reimbursement for one day of the travel pass cost for each day you use it to attend volunteering duties. For example, a weekly pass which costs £14 would result in £2 reimbursement for a day spent carrying out volunteering duties.

We offer discount rail cards under the ‘EASIT’ scheme which provide a 20% discount on some Southern Rail travel journeys. These cards are available for use by County Council staff, agency staff and volunteers. As a WSCC volunteer, you can obtain a discount card free of charge from WSCC libraries on presentation of a passport photograph. If you use the rail card for a booking, you must carry it with you on the related journey. If you make an expenses claim for a journey where you have used your rail card, the amount you claim must reflect the discounted cost.

The EASIT discount rail cards are issued on the understanding that volunteers will only use them for journeys taken either to or from the location their volunteering sessions take place or for other travel necessary to their volunteering duties. The rail cards are not to be used for personal journeys.

For more information on the EASIT scheme, go to [http://www.easit.org.uk](http://www.easit.org.uk).
Private Transport
If you are using your own vehicle for travel to or from volunteering sessions or to carry out volunteering duties, you are eligible to make an expenses claim:

- Car and van drivers can claim 45p per mile regardless of engine capacity. (If transporting other volunteers, you may increase your claim by an extra 5p per passenger per mile).
- Motorcyclists can claim 24p per mile regardless of engine capacity.
- Cyclists can claim 20p per mile.

The private transport expense rates are in keeping with HMRC’s thresholds and will be reviewed thereby on a regular basis. Any changes to these rates will be relayed to you by your line manager.

We do not currently reclaim VAT for volunteer expenses, so it is not necessary for you to collect fuel VAT receipts.

Parking
We ask that you aim to find free parking whenever possible, but parking costs can be claimed if no free parking is available. You must provide a ticket or receipt with your claim.

Child Care and otherDependants
Under special circumstances, you can make an expenses claim to cover the cost of engaging care for children or other dependants. This type of claim only applies if your line manager asks you to volunteer at short notice or states that your attendance at a session is essential, and agrees that your attendance at the session necessitates you engaging care and making a claim.

To be eligible for this claim the paid care must come from a registered child care provider or a registered sitting service or agency; claims must be accompanied by a formal dated receipt. However, you should be aware that if you already receive benefits for your children or dependants, you may find the amount of your benefit entitlement is reduced after receiving a reimbursement for care expenses. If you have any concerns regarding your benefit entitlement, please contact your local Benefits Agency, Citizens Advice Bureau or Inland Revenue.

You should always let your line manager know you will need to engage paid care to attend a volunteering session before paying for care and making a claim.

Protective Clothing and Specialist Equipment (PPE)
PPE will usually be provided by the service in which you volunteer. If you are asked to purchase any protective clothing or equipment in order to undertake volunteer duties safely, it must be to relevant ‘British Standard’; you may then make a claim for the cost. This must be accompanied by a formal dated receipt.

All expense claims must be submitted within three months of the related volunteering duty.

Identification Cards
Some WSCC services provide their volunteers with identification cards. If you are given an I.D. card, please take good care of it.

When undertaking volunteering duties, certain volunteering roles will require you to wear your I.D. card at all times. You will be instructed regarding the use of I.D. cards in your volunteering role during your introductory training.

Please note: volunteers are not eligible for any WSCC staff discounts via use of an Identification Card.
References Requested by Volunteers

If you require an academic, professional or character reference, your line manager will be able to provide you with one. This could detail the training you have received and any skills you have acquired or updated.

Your Commitment as a Volunteer

Availability for Volunteering

The Volunteer Role Description will state the number of sessions you are expected to participate in and how long each session is. We ask that you make every effort to undertake these sessions.

Volunteering hours could involve mornings, afternoons, evenings or any days of the week. The role description will specify what constitutes a session within your role.

Some roles will ask you to state your general availability for a six-month period or for however long the role is expected to last; other roles will ask for your availability over a shorter period. You can also state specific dates when you are unavailable.

We aim to give you at least one month’s advance notice before a volunteering session is scheduled; however, due to the nature of certain roles, some volunteering sessions may not be confirmed until closer to the time.

Certain projects (for example, Public Rights of Way construction projects) will list individual tasks for the subsequent six-month period allowing volunteers to notify their line manager which tasks they wish to take part in.

We ask that you attend all your agreed volunteering sessions unless you are unwell or an exceptional circumstance occurs. We also ask that you give reasonable notice for any changes you later wish to make. If you are unable to attend a session, you should let your line manager know as soon as possible to allow time to find another volunteer.

If you do not attend a volunteering session and have not advised an appropriate member of staff that you will not be present, you will be contacted as part of our pastoral care. If you continually do not attend allocated volunteering sessions without informing an appropriate member of staff, you will be asked to meet with your line manager to review your availability to undertake volunteering duties.

Should you realise you are unable to attend your volunteering duties on an ongoing basis, you will need to meet with your line manager to discuss if alternative duties can be allocated, or whether a break in volunteering may be possible until you are able to resume your duties, or if you need to withdraw from your volunteering role.

We are open to requests for long-term leave from your volunteer role with a view to resuming it when you return, but we cannot guarantee it will still be available.

As well as fulfilling your agreed volunteering sessions, we ask that you commit to attending all training sessions relevant to your role and all meetings with your line manager, for which mutually convenient dates will be agreed.

If you have any queries or concerns about your volunteering hours, you can discuss them with your line manager.

Whether you are in a position to give a little time or a lot, your contribution is highly valued.
Driving whilst Volunteering

❖ WSCC Driving Policy

When driving on behalf of the County Council, you must follow the WSCC driving policy. Your line manager will provide you with a copy of the policy.

If you are undertaking driving as part of your volunteering duties, you must offer full disclosure regarding points on your licence and any pending prosecutions before you begin volunteering and throughout the time you drive on behalf of the County Council.

To drive County Council vehicles with more than nine seats (including yourself as the driver), you must be aged 21 or above, have a D1 category on your driving licence and have passed a WSCC minibus test in order to comply with legislation and the WSCC driving policy. There are no age restrictions for driving vehicles with fewer than nine seats.

It is against the law to use a hand-held mobile phone whilst driving; the use of hands-free phones while driving is not prohibited by law, but the Department for Transport’s road safety advice recommends that employers do not ask their staff to make or receive calls while they are driving. Accordingly, WSCC policy is that volunteers must not use the hands-free function on their mobile phones when driving on our behalf.

❖ Driving Licences and Insurance Cover

Depending on the nature of your role, you will need to take action regarding driving licences and insurance cover.

The table below indicates the three possible actions you may need to take and the circumstances under which you will need to take them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Volunteer drives own car to travel to volunteering duties</th>
<th>Volunteer drives WSCC vehicles as part of volunteering duties (e.g. transporting Day Centre user)</th>
<th>Volunteer drives own car as part of volunteering duties (e.g. delivering books to WSCC service users)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both parts of driving licence to be given to line manager for photocopying</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquire confirmation from insurers that you are insured when driving to volunteering sessions</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquire and give copy of confirmation to line manager that you are insured when driving your own vehicle as part of volunteering duties</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

✓ - REQUIRED  ❌ - NOT REQUIRED
When engaged in a volunteering role which requires you to present both parts of your driving licence for photocopying, you should repeat this process every six to twelve months so long as you continue in that role. Your line manager will inform you whether you need to do this on an annual or biannual basis.

When engaged in a volunteering role which requires you to present confirmation that you are insured to use your own vehicle to carry out your duties, you should repeat this process annually or at any time your insurance cover changes so long as you continue in that role.

If you are driving a County Council vehicle to carry out your volunteering duties, you will be covered by WSCC insurance.

Access to West Sussex County Council Information Technology (WSCC IT) Facilities

Certain volunteer roles will require access to the WSCC IT network. If this is necessary for your role, your line manager will arrange it. In order to use our IT facilities, you are required to sign an agreement saying you will comply with the relevant parts of the WSCC Acceptable Use of IT Facilities Policy. This agreement is signed electronically by clicking the appropriate button whenever you log on. (See http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/idoc.ashx?docid=bfe74a98-7e5a-4010-b2c0-acf034c796d9&version=-1 for the full policy)

WSCC reserves the right to monitor use of all its internet connections; these are corporately owned, therefore no automatic right to privacy exists in relation to activities conducted through them. WSCC internet connections must not be used in any way which could negatively impact the County Council’s reputation. Access to WSCC IT systems is given via protected usernames and passwords.

If you are using WSCC computer facilities, please remember the following:

- Do not share your username and password with anyone else. If you share these details with someone and they use the internet connection inappropriately, you could be held to account for their actions.
- Do not make any downloads and please keep personal use of the facilities (such as email or social networking) to a minimum.
- Only use WSCC-approved software and corporately encrypted USB memory sticks on County Council computers; other memory sticks must not be used.
- When using a WSCC computer or carrying out County Council business on a personal computer do not leave the computer switched on and unattended. Computers should be locked – particularly if you are in a public location.
- Do not leave laptops in vehicles due to the risk of theft which could also result in loss of data. WSCC laptops are not covered by WSCC insurance when left in a vehicle.
- If, as part of your volunteering role, you are using your own computer to connect to the WSCC network (locally or remotely), the computer must meet the WSCC standards for security configuration.
- When you finish your volunteering role, you must return any WSCC IT equipment you have used to the County Council.

Confidentiality

Some volunteer roles will include access to privileged and/or sensitive information. This information must be treated in absolute confidence. All personal information is covered by the Data Protection Act, which requires that this information be protected. Data protection and confidentiality rules apply equally to volunteers and employed staff.
Confidential information may only be shared with WSCC staff and volunteers who also require the information to carry out their roles.

Information accessed via the WSCC network as part of a volunteering role must not be passed directly or indirectly to people who do not have the right to view it. Passing this information on without being authorised to do so may be treated as misconduct.

There may be specific situations in which confidential information is shared with others but this will stem from a direct instruction from your line manager. Your training will specify what information is considered confidential.

If your volunteering duties involve access to confidential information, once you have completed your training you may be required to sign a ‘Confidentiality Clause’.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a process of protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect or harm. All volunteers who come into contact with vulnerable groups have a duty of care to safeguard, protect and promote their welfare.

Should your volunteering role involve contact with vulnerable groups, you will receive extensive training on safeguarding and child protection.

During your time as a WSCC volunteer, whatever your role, should you become aware of any safeguarding issues you must disclose them to your line manager immediately.

Health

If your health undergoes any changes whilst you are volunteering for a WSCC service, you must inform your line manager so that we can continue to ensure your safety whilst volunteering.

Should you develop a condition which could negatively impact your ability to carry out your role or your well-being whilst doing so, you will have a review meeting with your line manager.

All reasonable adjustments will be made to enable you to begin or continue volunteering duties, but there may be occasions when we cannot allow you to undertake or persist in your chosen role. Should this happen, you may wish to have another discussion with your line manager to determine an alternative volunteering role you would like to do instead.

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

DBS checks are the new name for Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. DBS is short for the Disclosure and Barring Service, an organisation which checks for any crimes a person may have committed and any times when they have been involved with the police.

If at any time during your span as a volunteer you are notified or become aware that you may be subject to new police proceedings, or that you have been referred to the DBS, you must inform your line manager as soon as possible. This circumstance does not automatically mean you can no longer volunteer, but the continuation of your role would have to be considered.

If you take a break from your volunteering role which exceeds three months and the role required you to undergo a DBS or CRB check, the DBS process will have to be repeated. (As with the initial DBS/CRB check, WSCC will cover the cost of this.)
Should you wish to apply for an additional or alternative volunteering role which requires a DBS check, and you have already undergone a check for your current role, you may not need another one. This will be dependent upon whether your existing check was at an appropriate level.

**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, incorporating the WSCC Code of Conduct. Each agreement will be tailored to the relevant Volunteer Role Description and individual volunteer. The agreement is to be signed by the volunteer and their line manager.

The Volunteer Agreement is not a legal contract; it is more a statement of understanding between you and us. You are free to leave your volunteering role when you wish.

**Leaving Your Volunteering Role**

You are free to leave your volunteering role at any time. However, we ask that you give as much notice to your line manager as you reasonably can to avoid possible impact on the service in which you have been volunteering.

When you have left us, we must retain your information (such as application forms, learning records and general contact details) for six years after your volunteering role finishes. If your role involved working with vulnerable adults or children, we have to retain them for 30 years by law. However, if you are aged 65 or over when you leave, your file need only be retained for six years.

There may be times where we feel it appropriate or necessary to withdraw a volunteer role and/or reallocate a volunteer to another role elsewhere. This could be because the associated project has come to a close or changes in the nature of the role or the volunteer’s health mean it is no longer suitable. Legal reasons could also be a factor if there is a conflict of interest or if criminal proceedings are being brought against the volunteer. Misconduct or persistent inappropriate behaviour in the face of advice may also result in the withdrawal of a role. Should reallocation or withdrawal of a role be appropriate, your line manager will discuss it with you first.

When you leave a volunteer role we may ask you to fill out an evaluation form or invite you to an evaluation meeting with your line manager. These evaluations are an excellent opportunity for both volunteer and line manager to identify aspects that worked particularly well and discuss potential areas for improvement. By participating, you are helping us to improve our volunteer engagement and helping us to ensure we are fully supporting our volunteers.

**Thank You**

Thank you for choosing to become a WSCC volunteer. We are very happy to supply any further information you may need and sincerely hope you enjoy your volunteering experience with us.

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.