

Appendix A

Employee Supported Volunteering Policy

May 2022

Section	
1	Introduction to the policy
2	Scope of the policy
3	Volunteering activity
4	The Time Available
5	Applying for Leave
6	Responsibilities
7	Legal Considerations

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In support of the Borough Plan and to realise the Council's ambition of a stronger and deeper connection between the Council, our employees, and our community, the Council encourages organisations to promote employee volunteering activities which benefit both our communities and employees themselves. Leading by example, we will provide the tools and support necessary for our employees to pursue volunteering opportunities - working with residents and partners to establish and highlight activities which support our goals.
- 1.2 In addition to the valuable contribution volunteering provides our communities it also gives employees a chance to have new experiences. This can help to develop skills, support wellbeing and provide a valuable insight into our communities which can be brought back into the workplace.
- 1.3 This policy provides the information for those who wish to take paid volunteer leave which meet the criteria in Section 3. Undertaking public duties is not covered by this policy. Additionally, managers are encouraged to support employees who volunteer outside of work (and outside of the scope of this policy), acknowledging the positive contribution this can have on our communities and their individual development.
- 1.4 Volunteer opportunities in Haringey can be found by going to the following link:
<https://www.haringey.gov.uk/community/voluntary-sector>

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to Council employees who are not directly employed by schools. It enables employees to take paid time off to undertake volunteering during their normal working hours but it cannot be used to 'claim back' any time spent volunteering outside of these hours. This policy does not apply to agency workers or contractors.
- 2.2 Voluntary activity can be defined as: 'any activity that involves spending time[...] doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives' (National Council for Voluntary Organisations).
- 2.3 Central to this definition is that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. Whilst employees will be in receipt of their contractual pay when volunteering (in line with this policy), they must not receive payment (apart from claiming expenses) from the organisation where they choose to volunteer. The Council strongly encourages employees to take up the opportunity provided by this policy.
- 2.4 The Council recognises the benefit of giving time to help local communities and Haringey as a whole. Employees can receive time off in addition to the main provisions of this policy for certain public service activities. Further information on the allowances provided for those who volunteer for Public Services can be found on the Human Resources intranet site.

3. The Volunteering Activity

- 3.1 Volunteering leave must meet the three broad criteria set out below. When requesting paid volunteer leave employees must ensure these criteria are met before applying.
- 3.2 The volunteering opportunity must:
- contribute to an individual's personal development
 - support Haringey through contributing to the objectives of the Borough Plan and/or supporting our social value objectives.
 - benefit the organisation, either directly or by building the knowledge and experience of the workforce.
- 3.3 Volunteering activity will take place within the London Borough of Haringey.
- 3.4 Individual volunteering can cover a number of activities such as care work, conservation projects and fundraising. Opportunities do not necessarily need to be related to an employee's current role or skills, they can be a chance to try something new. Alternatively, employees may want to put their expertise to use (for example those from Digital Services, Legal) to help those who may not usually have access to specialist skills. Employees may also have skills or hobbies outside of work that would be beneficial.
- 3.5 Individuals are encouraged to find volunteering activities for themselves, and we will also use internal communications to highlight opportunities available. Council services such as the Community Hubs or Rough Sleeping Service may also welcome additional volunteers and these internal opportunities should also be explored.
- 3.7 Teams are encouraged to volunteer for projects as this will enable those who may not normally provide front line services to connect more with the local community and will assist in their team development. Team volunteering should also fulfil the three criteria and can be approved at the discretion of the Head of Service, taking account of organisational and service priorities.
- 3.8 Any expenses (e.g. travel/equipment costs) to be claimed as a result of volunteering must be agreed and raised with the 'host' organisation, the Council will not reimburse any expenses incurred. However, employees will be allowed reasonable access to Council resources e.g. printing and stationery to support their approved volunteering activity.
- 3.9 The council reserves the right to decline any volunteering activity if it has cause for concern. But specifically, we will not support:
- Volunteering activity that has or appears to be driven by any political or extremist view;
 - Any volunteering activity that presents itself as potentially bringing the council into disrepute.
 - 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.

4 Time Available

- 4.1 Up to 3 days paid leave per rolling year is available to undertake volunteering work – pro rata for part time employees.
- 4.2 Employees can use their volunteer leave flexibly, for example one day at a time, half a day or a couple of hours. If less than half a day is needed, then the employee must return to work when they have finished, and the time taken will be deducted.
- 4.3 Employees will not be credited for time spent volunteering outside their normal working time unless an exception is agreed by the relevant Assistant Director.
- 4.4 Any leave not taken cannot be carried over, exchanged or used against anything other than volunteer work.

5 Applying for Leave

- 5.1 Approval for leave rests with line managers. Before submitting any request this must be discussed with the line manager, detailing how the opportunity meets the criteria.
- 5.2 Reasonable requests for volunteer leave that meet the criteria will be approved. However, the request could be declined if:
 - There are health & safety concerns
 - The criteria are not met clearly e.g. no apparent benefit to the organisation and/or individual
 - There are concerns of the impact on the delivery of team/service objectives
 - There is a potential conflict of interest with the employee's role or the Council's interests e.g. political campaigning
 - The timing of the leave would have a detrimental impact on the business needs of the department. In these circumstances the employee and line manager are encouraged to identify revised dates for the volunteering leave.
- 5.3 If an individual feels that their request has been rejected wrongly then they can ask for a review by outlining their reasons in writing and sending this to the manager of their manager within 10 working days. Following this review there will be no further right of appeal.
- 5.4 Line Managers will record the leave on SAP as "Volunteering leave"

6 Responsibilities

- 6.1 Employees are trusted to use this time for its purpose, any suspected instances of misuse will be investigated in accordance with the Council's disciplinary procedures. As representatives of the Council their actions will directly reflect on the organisation. As a result, all employees must act in line with the Employee Code of Conduct whilst using volunteering leave. Any concerns with an employee's conduct whilst volunteering will be investigated in line with the relevant Council disciplinary procedures.
- 6.2 It is the manager's responsibility to be satisfied that the employee has considered and accepted any risks associated with the proposed volunteering activity - the Council will not be liable for damages or injuries that occur whilst volunteering. It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that the host organisation has its own Public Liability Insurance in place as required. The host organisation is responsible for ensuring any required safeguarding checks are processed and in place prior to the start of the volunteering activity.

7 Legal Considerations

- 7.1 Volunteers do not have the same rights as an employee or worker; they may have a volunteer agreement provided to them which explains:
- the level of supervision and support offered
 - what training will be received
 - whether a volunteer is covered under the organisation's insurance
 - health and safety issues
 - any expenses the organisation will cover.
- 7.2 The volunteer agreement is not compulsory, although it may set out what is expected it does not form a contract between the volunteer and the organisation. As a result, volunteers are not covered by employment legislation but, as members of the public, they are covered by relevant legislation such as health and safety and data protection laws.
- 7.3 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 Concerns that volunteers may have in relation to the governance of the organisation, health and safety, data protection or harassment can be referred to external agencies. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has further information on volunteers' legal status.

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