

Kent County Council

VOLUNTEERING POLICY

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http://www.kent.gov.uk/community_and_living/volunteering.aspx



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WELCOME

Welcome to volunteering for Kent County Council

Thank you for your interest. Each day volunteers help us help the people of Kent. We recognise that everyone who volunteers will be looking to gain different things from volunteering. We hope that amongst our diverse services you will find an opportunity that interests you, giving you the chance to meet new people and learn new things.

You could become a school governor, a computer buddy in a library, help look after the Public Rights of Way network, support young people with Duke of Edinburgh's Awards, have a friendly chat with older people who use our day care centres, or assist with a wide range of other activities. By volunteering you will be joining the thousands of Kent residents who already volunteer to support Kent County Council services and contribute over 16,000 days of time per year.

In return for your time, energy and skills we will support you. As outlined in Kent's Volunteering Charter, volunteers will benefit from induction and training. We also work with partners in the public, and voluntary and community sectors in Kent to promote opportunities and to acknowledge the amazing contribution volunteers make to our communities.

Our commitment to volunteering

Volunteers make **a real difference** to the community, making the county a better place to live, work and enjoy. Volunteers are also **essential** in relationships with partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Some of our volunteers have pursued careers and now want to give something back. Others see volunteering as a way of getting new employment skills or to reintegrate themselves into their local community. Whatever your motivation or background, the overall effect of volunteering is to **improve** the lives of the people of Kent, our communities and our countryside.

Who is this policy for?

This policy is for anyone who has accepted an agreed volunteering role with Kent County Council. We benefit daily from volunteers' time, energy and skills and this document outlines the principles on which these invaluable relationships are based. It also gives basic information on volunteering with us.

The volunteering relationship is based on trust and does not involve the obligations associated with employment. No payment, other than the reimbursement of agreed out of pocket expenses is made by KCC.

Recruitment

We welcome and respect the breadth of experience, knowledge, skills and dedication that volunteers bring. All potential volunteers will be asked to complete our *Volunteer Application Form*. Interviews are then carried out to ensure that applicants are suitable for the role.

Volunteers are asked to provide two references. One of these, depending on the service with which you are volunteering, may need to be from someone that you have had an official relationship with e.g. last employer, college tutor, teacher, doctor, social worker or religious minister. A second reference may be from a neighbour or friend. Referees should have known you for at least **one** year and should be from two people to whom you are not related.

We base our selection on **skills, life experience** and the **ability** of each applicant to fulfil the role. Kent County Council is committed to demonstrating best practice by promoting equality and valuing diversity in our policies and practice.

If a volunteer role involves working with or supporting children, young people, or vulnerable adults, that person will be required to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

Checks for volunteers are free, as long as the volunteer is only paid **reasonable** out of pocket expenses and not supporting a family member.

We welcome volunteers of all ages, although if you are under 18 you may be asked for parental or carer consent.

Volunteering with Kent County Council

Getting Started

Welcome to the team! We want to make sure you have everything you need to get started so we'll provide you with an induction and access to information relevant to your role. Your staff contact will usually be the staff member who manages the area of work in which you volunteer.

Equality and diversity

As a major employer and provider of a wide range of services, Kent County Council will challenge inequality, discrimination and disadvantage for everyone who lives in, works in and visits Kent. Our commitment to equality and diversity is reflected throughout our policies and practices.

What volunteers can expect from us

It is important to us that you get the most out of volunteering for Kent County Council and that the relationship is mutually beneficial. Our commitment to volunteers:

- to introduce you to the organisation and provide you with a staff contact
- to offer equal opportunities to everyone who wants to volunteer, treating everyone with dignity and respect
- to match your skills and life experience with the right role wherever possible, listening to your motivations and aspirations
- to offer appropriate training and support for your role
- to listen to what you have to say, encouraging two-way communication
- to reimburse any reasonable out of pocket expenses
- to apply our complaints procedure should there be a problem
- to ensure your health, safety and welfare as a volunteer
- to provide access to trained members of staff, to support, guide and advise you
- offer fair, honest and timely feedback on your volunteer work
- to provide information about Kent County Council's work, policies and procedures.

As a volunteer you will:

- aim for high standards of efficiency, reliability and quality in your volunteering
- support, respect and adhere to our organisational policies, guidelines and management decisions including all aspects of health and safety, data protection, and our Equality and Diversity Policy Statement
- act responsibly and within the law
- have the best experience by getting involved and most importantly enjoying your volunteering
- let us know if there are any changes in your personal circumstances that may affect your volunteering
- let us know if you are unable to fulfil your volunteering commitment, or if you no longer wish to volunteer with us
- return your identity card, car parking permit, if applicable, along with any other Kent County Council equipment before, or on, your last day of volunteering.

Your volunteering

Health and safety

We are committed to ensuring your wellbeing and safety while you are volunteering and, in turn, expect our volunteers to contribute to maintaining a safe working environment. As a volunteer you must:

- take reasonable care for your health and safety and that of others who may be affected by your actions or omissions.
- comply with all relevant instructions and procedures relating to health and safety (<http://knet/ourcouncil/Pages/health-and-safety.aspx> – a hard copy should be provided, if volunteer does not have access to a computer provided by Kent County Council)
- follow our Health and Safety Policy: (<http://knet/ourcouncil/Pages/health-and-safety.aspx>) and measures put in place by Kent County Council
- report accidents/incidents or dangerous circumstances to a member of staff
- be aware of actions to take in an emergency and who you should contact for support.

ID cards

As one of our volunteers, you may be required to carry a photo ID card while working with us, especially if you are working in the community.

Data protection and confidentiality

We will take care to protect your information as part of our data protection responsibilities. As a volunteer, we expect you to protect any personal or confidential information to which you may have access.

Expenses

Volunteers may request reimbursement of any reasonable out-of-pocket expenses. Reimbursements must be authorised by your staff contact in advance and receipts or tickets will be required.

If you are currently receiving any benefits volunteering should not affect your entitlement. However, for the latest information we recommend that you contact your local Jobcentre Plus office and get their booklet *volunteering while getting benefits*:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/volunteering-while-getting-benefits-leaflet>

(manager to provide hard copy of leaflet if required).

Insurance

We have appropriate types of insurance in place to cover our volunteers. These include employers' liability insurance, personal accident insurance and public liability insurance. This insurance does not cover your personal belongings. Volunteers who use their own vehicles must ensure their insurance policies specifically provide cover for business use.

Induction and training

We want to ensure that all our volunteers are happy and confident in their role. You will be offered an appropriate induction including information about the volunteering environment and any equipment you may be using in your role. Volunteers will be required to complete our e-induction (this maybe covered within volunteer induction). If you have any problems accessing the e-induction please make your staff contact aware.

You will have access to relevant training or information to develop your skills and knowledge.

Resolving your concerns

If you have any problems or complaints about your volunteering, please talk to your staff contact immediately. We take the concerns of our volunteers seriously and will make every reasonable effort to resolve any issues.

Whistle blowing

We are committed to the highest possible standards of openness. If employees and others working with us have concerns regarding any aspect of our work we encourage them to come forward and voice their concerns. In some instances, concerns may need to be expressed on a confidential basis.

Gifts and hospitality

The giving and receiving of gifts may give the impression of favouritism and could raise expectations. Volunteers must not give or receive personal gifts or offers of hospitality from contractors, clients, staff or outside suppliers as this could comprise you personally and Kent County Council.

Exit interviews

We recognise that volunteers will leave us at some point. If you want to stop volunteering we would appreciate at least two weeks notice of your intention to leave, although we realise that in some cases this may not be possible.

All volunteers will be offered an exit interview with their staff contact. This is your opportunity to tell us how the volunteering experience has been for you, so that we can make improvements in the future.

In cases where a one-to-one interview is not possible, an email or hard copy questionnaire will be provided.

Equalities monitoring form

We are committed to reflecting the diverse make-up of the community of Kent. To help us achieve this, and to ensure that our policies and procedures are not discriminatory, we monitor applications from our volunteers. The information you provide is confidential and will not form part of the recruitment process. It will greatly assist us if you provide as much information as possible, but you are not obligated to do so.

Further Information

We value greatly the contribution of volunteers and staff. KCC recognises your contribution as a volunteer. This is why we have produced the following policies and procedures:

- Health and Safety Work Policy and Guidance
- Smoking in the Workplace
- Drugs & Alcohol Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy Statement
- Whistle blowing Policy
- Electronic Communications Guide
- Gift and Hospitality Guide
- Complaints Procedure
- Lone Working
- Information Security Policy.