

Employer Supported Volunteering Policy

September 2024

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1. Introduction and Aims

The employer supported volunteering scheme has been developed in collaboration with Bury Voluntary, Community and Faith Alliance (Bury VCFA), the local infrastructure organisation of the voluntary, faith, community and social enterprise sector in the Borough.

Through Bury's LET'S Do It! approach the council is committed to making Bury a place where people are inspired, supported and empowered to volunteer. Volunteering plays a key role in the health and wellbeing of local communities and supports the LET'S principles – where everyone is able to play their part in local communities and works together in a way that recognises and celebrates the assets and strengths of our communities and our residents. In addition, it also gives colleagues a chance to have new experiences and helps to develop skills which can be brought back into the workplace.

This policy sets out one means by which the council encourages and enables staff to support this cause.

The Policy sets out the breadth of what “volunteering” covers, the benefits of volunteering and how volunteering enables staff to use their strengths (skills and interests) to connect to the ‘Local’ aspect the LET'S Do It Strategy by making a difference in neighbourhoods and communities within the Borough.

2. About Volunteering

There are an estimated 26,000 volunteers in Bury who give over 131,000 hours of their time a week to support local communities – that contributes an estimated £63m to Bury's local economy every year.

There are 4 core values to volunteering, set out in Bury VCFA's Volunteering Strategy:

- Volunteering is diverse
- Volunteering is about freedom of choice
- Volunteers are engaged and supported
- Volunteers are valued and recognised

People volunteer for many reasons - to harness a passion, to develop new skills, to make friends and connections, or to use existing skills and expertise to help a voluntary organisation and give something back to the local community. Whatever the reason, volunteering can have a huge impact on health and wellbeing, building strength in communities and bringing people from different backgrounds together.

The types of volunteering and the way people volunteer is just as diverse. Volunteering time can range from helping out at a community group to providing

professional skills to an organisation. Volunteering can be carried out on an individual basis or as part of a team.

Some examples of volunteering opportunities are:

- Environmental activities e.g. 'Friends of' groups in parks and maintenance activity
- Wildlife conservation e.g. balsam bashing and community litter picks
- Working with people and families e.g. from befriending schemes to supporting a community foodbank or pantry
- Supporting culture and sporting projects e.g. coaching or stewarding
- Supporting Borough wide community events e.g. Estate days/clean ups
- Working with local community groups e.g. to help raise funds and awareness through stalls and promotional materials
- Administrative and technical support, e.g. being a trustee or providing specific technical skills from engineering to finance

Volunteering benefits the individual giving their time and energy; the volunteer-involving organisation; and the wider community. From reducing isolation and providing a sense of purpose, to providing additional resource to meet local priorities, volunteering has at its heart the focus on improving outcomes for local people.

The employee volunteering scheme aims to contribute to this and to give something back to the borough. The council will support this by:

- Releasing employees from normal duties for up to three days with pay each leave year (pro-rata for part-time staff) to undertake volunteering activities within the borough or supporting residents of the borough in activities outside of the borough
- Encouraging employees to volunteer in their own time too
- Broadening volunteering boundaries
- Encouraging volunteering to be used for development
- Supporting employees to source volunteering opportunities within the borough – or continue with existing volunteer placements.
- Reviewing and revising the scheme where appropriate or necessary.

3. Scope and Volunteering Conditions

The Bury Council policy allows staff to volunteer for up to three days per annum (pro rata for part time employees) in works time. For council employees this is the equivalent to 22 hours 12 minutes (22.2 Hours) for full time staff during each leave year (1st April to 31st March).

Employees can use their entitlement flexibly, for example one day at a time, half a day or a couple of hours.

These guidelines apply to all directly employed council employees. The guidelines do not apply to NHS Bury GM, school support staff, teachers, agency staff, casual staff or contractors.

Duties associated with school governance, and public duties, for example acting as a magistrate, election candidacy, support at polling stations and trade union activities are covered by the council's local conditions of service and/or separate HR policies and are therefore not eligible volunteering activities under this scheme.

This policy allows supported volunteering under the following conditions:

- Time taken to volunteer will not disrupt or adversely affect an individual or team
- There are no conflicts of interests in relation to the placement and the employee's substantive role
- Activities benefit the environment, individuals (other than close relatives), charities and community groups within the borough of Bury
- The placement must ordinarily be with an organisation based within the borough of Bury and, in most circumstances, take place during an employee's usual working hours
- Activities should ideally be with an organisation registered with Bury VCFA. However, all requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- Activities undertaken are with organisations which are 'not for profit'
- Management have approved the employee's request to volunteer as part of the scheme and organised cover arrangements if necessary.
- Employees cannot carry over any unused entitlement to the next leave year. Any remaining entitlement will be lost at the end of the leave year.
- In exceptional circumstances the Director of People & Inclusion will have discretion to waive these conditions and grant paid volunteer leave.

4. The role of a manager

Where possible, managers are expected to support volunteering activities. Managers are encouraged to discuss and share information around volunteering in their one-to-one meetings and employee reviews.

Managers are expected to demonstrate flexibility for cover arrangements in order to facilitate employees to give something back to the local community whilst ensuring service delivery will not be affected.

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

5. The role of an employee

Employee's may request volunteering time through the council's employee self-serve system iTrent. All requests must be approved by their line manager before attending any volunteering events.

Employees can find the latest volunteering opportunities through the council's intranet page and through the staff e-mails.

Whilst volunteering, the code of conduct still applies, and employees are expected to:

- Respect the privacy, property and confidentiality of others.
- Report any problems they experience to their manager and Bury VCFA if appropriate.
- Aim to fulfil the commitment they have made and inform their named contact in the voluntary organisation if they are unable to attend.
- Act in a professional way, recognising they are representing the council while carrying out the volunteering activities.
- All employees must inform their line manager of any non-attendance following volunteering approvals.

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.

6. Applying for Volunteering Leave

Once an employee has found a volunteering event they'd like to take part in, they will need to submit their request the employee self-serve system iTrent.

Employees must follow the instructions below to submit their requests through iTrent (Employee Self-Serve System):

- Log into employee self-serve iTrent
- Click on 'My time' tab
- Select other absence
- Select 'Bury Volunteering Leave' > 'Volunteering'
- Under Notes, include the details of the event you are volunteering for including date, time and event name
- Click 'Save' – this will send the request through to your manager for a decision

Once the volunteering request has been submitted, the employees line manager will receive the request for approval or rejection. Reasonable requests for volunteering

leave that meets the criteria will be approved. However, the request could be declined if:

- There are health and 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; or
- There is potential conflict of interest with your roles or the Council's interests e.g. political campaigning.

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 to appeal.

7. Legal Considerations

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; and
- any expenses the organisation will cover.

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.

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 Organisation (NCVO) has further information on [volunteers' legal status](#).

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