

The Buckinghamshire Compact

**Code of Practice on
Volunteering**

BSP



Compact Code of Practice on Volunteering

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BENEFITS OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE ON VOLUNTEERING

For the Voluntary / Community Sector (VCS) and Statutory Sector:

- Improved recognition, value and understanding of the importance of volunteers
- Recognition that volunteering makes a major contribution to all aspects of life in the local community - particularly in health, social welfare, education and the environment.
- Actions and decisions taken in the community/voluntary and statutory sectors can affect community and voluntary activity. This code highlights the need for a consistent and appropriate approach from all agencies, which have an impact on volunteering.
- The voluntary/community and statutory sectors are committed to maintaining best practice in the promotion, development and celebration of volunteering.
- All signatories to this Code respect volunteers' independence and free choice.
- A coordinated and agreed Charter for Volunteers rights and responsibilities.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In November 1998, the Government published the 'Compact on Relations between Government and the VCS' to provide a framework for the relationship between the statutory sector and the VCS. Following the publication of the National Compact, 5 Compact Codes of Good Practice were published - on black and minority ethnic groups, community groups, consultation & policy appraisal, funding and volunteering.

The publication of the National Compact and Codes of Good Practice was a starting point for local Compacts and Codes of Practice to be produced and adopted. As a result of this the statutory sector (Buckinghamshire County Council, District Councils, Primary Care Trusts and Thames Valley Police) and the VCS in Buckinghamshire started work on a Compact and Codes of Good Practice for Buckinghamshire.

This Code sets out a shared vision of how public sector organisations in Buckinghamshire can support and promote voluntary action. It is based upon the National Compact Code on Volunteering.

Volunteering is an important way of increasing community involvement and can enhance employability by helping to develop skills and improve job prospects for people across Buckinghamshire¹. This is reflected in the Buckinghamshire Community Strategy. Volunteering has a long history within Buckinghamshire; it is supported across a wide range of our statutory, community and voluntary organisations in projects supporting issues like the environment, health education etc; and placements brokered in Buckinghamshire via our Volunteer Centres.

Further Information:

- The Home Office Active Community Unit (ACU) has responsibility for the development and implementation of the National Compact. Further information on the ACU can be found on the Home Office website - <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/> or by calling 020 7035 4413.
- Copies of the National Compact and Codes of Practice, including the National Code of Good Practice on Funding and Procurement can be downloaded from the national Compact website – <http://www.thecompact.org.uk/> or by contacting a member of the Compact Working Group on 020 7520 2561.
- A copy of the Bucks Compact can be downloaded from the Bucks Compact website – <http://www.bucksinfo.net/compact> or by contacting your Compact Steering Group representative.

¹ www.volunteering.org.uk

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1. Aim

- 1.1 The code builds upon and underpins the principles of the Buckinghamshire Compact. It aims to make a positive impact on the working relations between voluntary organisations, community groups and public bodies operating in the county.
- 1.2 This code of practice aims to improve the recognition, value and understanding of the importance of volunteers in the delivery of service provision across all statutory, community and voluntary sectors and the personal development of volunteers themselves.
- 1.3 It aims to set out a series of undertakings for the voluntary / community and statutory sectors in Buckinghamshire on good practice in volunteering. The Compact aims to enable and support more people getting involved in the varied forms of voluntary activity that are a vital part of active citizenship. It is a target of the Buckinghamshire Strategic Partnership's Community Plan to increase the number of people volunteering in our communities.
- 1.4 It aims to raise awareness that volunteering is not free, that cost benefits can not be achieved without investment in volunteering.
- 1.5 It aims to raise awareness that there is a cost of supporting volunteering and a need to allocate budgets for this.
- 1.6 The aim is for this code to be adopted and implemented by both the voluntary / community and statutory sectors in Buckinghamshire. The code is not legally binding, and there will be no consequences for organisations choosing not to sign up. It is a code of best practice which organisations should use for their and their volunteers' benefit.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 For the purpose of this code of practice the Buckinghamshire Compact agree the following definitions:
- 2.2 Volunteering has been described as "any activity or service that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups other than or in addition to close relatives), or to benefit the environment."²

² National Survey of Volunteering definition, Institute for Volunteering Research

- 2.3 In this context, partners are organisations that are working together to achieve a clear set of shared objectives. There is a clear understanding of the contribution of each organisation, which takes into account their differences and there is equal respect for the role and experience of all partners. In this context, partners are those organisations who have formally signed up to the Compact, **are operating under its principles, or adopt this code of practice.**

3. Scope of volunteering and community activity

3.1 The scope of volunteering and community involvement includes:

- a) Helping provide a service as a volunteer within a voluntary or community organisation, the public sector or a not for profit group;
- b) Taking part in running a voluntary or community organisation;(e.g. as a trustee, board or committee member)
- c) Serving as a non-executive member of a public body or participating in civic governance;
- d) Involvement in a voluntary initiative, usually as part of a voluntary organisation or community group, to improve the quality of life for people in a neighbourhood or community of interest;
- e) Being part of a group activity, within a neighbourhood or community of interest, providing a community service, or campaigning for a public cause;
- f) Enabling young people to develop as active citizens through community involvement;
- g) Employer supported community involvement;
- h) Offering career-based skills to a voluntary organisation;
- i) Helping develop public policy through involvement in consultation processes and campaigning;
- j) Volunteering through involvement in a faith congregation or community;
- k) Helping others in a formal role or an informal way.

4. Principles of Volunteering

The four principles fundamental to volunteering and community activity

Choice: Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual, including the choice to stop volunteering without pressure or guilt.

Diversity: The people of Buckinghamshire bring varying qualities, experience and expertise to the voluntary and community sector. Diversity is recognised, respected and valued. Volunteering should be open to all, no matter what their background, age, race, sexual orientation, faith, etc. It is recognised that social exclusion barriers can be overcome by skills, experience, confidence and contacts gained while volunteering.

Mutual Benefit: Volunteers offer their contribution unwaged but should benefit in other ways in return for their contribution to wider social objectives. Benefits that volunteers expect to gain include a sense of worthwhile achievement, useful skills, experience and contacts, sociability and fun, and inclusion in the life of the organisation and the wider community.

Recognition: It is vital that the value of volunteers' contribution is recognised by all involved, including statutory agencies, employers and voluntary organisations.

5. Undertakings by Statutory Sector partners

5.1 All statutory sector partners undertake to:

- Ensure all relevant policies do not adversely affect volunteering;
- Remove any barriers which may prevent people from volunteering, e.g. by paying all out of pocket expenses;
- Assess how volunteering and community activity within their organisation can contribute to achieving organisational policy and programme objectives. An initial internal assessment should look at:
 - a) What kind of volunteer and community activities support organisational policy objectives
 - b) Numbers of volunteers involved, amount of activity, and details of the diversity of people involved
 - c) Forms and extent of support for volunteering and community activity provided by the organisation
 - d) Any barriers preventing involvement by specific groups of people especially those around social exclusion;
- Increase staff awareness of volunteer contributions to the organisation's objectives;
- Ensure that sufficient safeguarding precautions have been taken. For example implement the recommendations of the Bichard Inquiry, where volunteers are to work with vulnerable groups (e.g. children, young people, vulnerable adults and other groups as appropriate). All organisation must have a vetting procedure set out in a policy which includes aspects such as:

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- a) Extensive safeguarding interviews
 - b) Criminal Records Bureau checks.
 - c) References including a five year address history;
- Adopt and implement policies which, ensure that local volunteering infrastructure bodies can rely on realistic sustainable long-term funding;
 - Recognise the infrastructure support provided by many national umbrella bodies for volunteers and community activists in their local affiliated or member groups;
 - Recognise that volunteering infrastructure bodies should be independent voluntary sector organisations;
 - Support a communications strategy **that recognises** volunteer contributions to raising the quality of life in a **local area**, and support activity motivating more people to become involved in volunteering;
 - Support initiatives to provide accessible information about volunteering opportunities at local level. This should include a variety of methods such as local media and Internet technology;
 - Seek ways in which partners can work with community and voluntary sectors to address how detailed demographic information on volunteering and community activity can be collected for comparison with other surveys and research;
 - Work with local employers to encourage and support their staff **to volunteer**;
 - Where a statutory partner directly manages volunteers, it will follow the undertakings in section 6.

6. Undertakings by the Voluntary and Community sector partners

6.1 All voluntary and community sector partners undertake to:

- Recognise the importance of high standards and effective management of volunteers;
- To raise awareness that volunteering is not free, that cost benefits can not be achieved without investment in volunteering;
- Those responsible for recruitment, induction and management of volunteers, whether paid staff or volunteers themselves, should:
 - Have this work recognised as part of their role,
 - Receive appropriate training and support;
- Identify a senior named person to be responsible for volunteer involvement, and for monitoring and reporting on it as required;
- Ensure appropriate records are kept of how volunteering is funded, and the benefits this produces;
- Ensure that sufficient safeguarding precautions have been taken. For example implement the recommendations of the Bichard Inquiry, where volunteers are to work with vulnerable groups (e.g. children, young people, vulnerable adults and

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other groups as appropriate). All organisation must have a vetting procedure set out in a policy which includes aspects such as:

- Extensive safeguarding interviews
 - Criminal Records Bureau checks.
 - References including a five year address history;
- Recognise that, as part of the reciprocal relationship volunteers should get fair treatment and be given thanks and recognition for their contribution. They should get training and support according to the resources of the organisation with which they are involved;
 - Encourage and enable development of skills and gaining of qualifications where appropriate through relevant accredited bodies;
 - Assist potential volunteers to find volunteering opportunities that fit their needs, interests and abilities;
 - Develop systems for referring surplus volunteers, or those unsuited to their needs, to other organisations, to ensure no volunteer's potential is wasted. This can be done via the volunteer centres in Bucks as listed in section 10;
 - Remove the existing cultural and financial barriers which may prevent people from volunteering, e.g. by paying all out of pocket expenses.

7. Charter of Volunteers rights and responsibilities

7.1 The Volunteers' Charter

- Partners of the Buckinghamshire Compact commit to adopting the Volunteers' Charter below and will use it as a basis for developing good practice within their own organisations:

7.2 Volunteers' Rights

- To be given a clear idea of their duties and responsibilities within the organisation and the skills etc that they need to fulfill them i.e. a task description and person specification;
- To be given copies of all relevant policies and procedures;
- To be given the name of the person in the organisation who will look after their interests and who will offer them support and supervision on a regular basis;
- To be given appropriate induction;
- To be assured that any information given in confidence to the organisation is kept confidential;
- To be given the same protection under health and safety regulations and public liability as paid employees;
- To be given appropriate opportunities for training and skills development;

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- To not be exploited. Volunteers should not:
 - Be used to replace paid workers
 - Have unfair demands made on their time
 - Be asked to do something which is against their principles or beliefs;
- To be given the chance to play a part in decision making within the organisation;
- To be respected and listened to;
- To be assigned to projects that meet their interests and needs;
- To do meaningful and satisfying activities;
- To not be out of pocket through doing voluntary work. Each organisation should make it clear what expenses they are to cover and how they are to be claimed;
- To be given information of situations arising that may adversely affect their position as a volunteer;
- To be able to take a break from or cease to volunteer.

7.3 Volunteers' Responsibilities

- To accept the organisation's agreements, policies and procedures;
- To do what is reasonably required of them, to the best of their ability;
- To treat confidential information obtained while volunteering in a confidential manner (except where there is a statutory duty to pass on such information);
- To recognise the right of the organisation to expect quality of service;
- To recognise that they represent the organisation and therefore need to act in an appropriate manner at all times, in accordance with policies and procedures;
- To honour any commitment made and to give as much notice as possible if a commitment can not be met;
- To undertake appropriate training (including Health & Safety issues);
- As far as possible, to give notice of holidays and other commitments;
- To share suggestions for changes in working practices;
- To advise the organisation of any pre-existing or subsequent convictions and cautions that might impact upon the organisations activities;
- To be open and honest about issues affecting their volunteering, and advise the organisation of any other relevant matter(s) which might impact on their volunteering role;
- To recognise that their volunteering role may need to be reviewed and modified.

8. Promoting Volunteering

8.1 All partners agree to promote the status and image of volunteering and community involvement. Ways in which this can be achieved include:

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- Promotion of volunteering events, such as Volunteering Awards, to secure greater media coverage, and a higher public profile for volunteering and community activity;
- Developing partnerships with organisations that promote volunteering or deploy volunteers;
- Developing and promoting innovative programmes to encourage volunteering, including developing opportunities for disabled and marginalized people;
- Use a combination of newsletters, adverts, posters and the internet to communicate volunteering information, ensuring organisations without Internet access are not excluded;
- Support children and young people to volunteer and encouraging them to get involved where appropriate.

9. Employer Supported Volunteering

9.1 Any partner that employs staff can encourage employee volunteering by the following:

- Ensure that a work:life balance policy is in place and being implemented;
- Consider offering employees (including temporary employees) an opportunity to volunteer during work time. This may range from a few hours a month to longer-term secondments, with suitable approval processes in place;
- Produce guidelines on what resources the organisation will provide (e.g. match funding) to support employees who volunteer;
- Identify volunteering and community activities compatible with the organisation's corporate aims. The local volunteer centres detailed can assist with this. Volunteering activities can be identified through accessing the following web address:
<http://www.yearofthevolunteer.org/>
<http://www.do-it.org.uk;>
- Incorporate the option of voluntary and community activity into staff development policies.

10. Volunteer Centres and Agencies in Buckinghamshire

Volunteer Centre Chiltern & South Bucks, (a service of Voluntary Action)

C/o South Bucks District Council
Capswood, Oxford Road
Denham
Bucks

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UB9 4LH

Email: vb@vacsb.org.uk

Opening Hours: M - Thur: 9.30-1.00

Volunteer Centre Wycombe District,

11 Priory Road

High Wycombe

Buckinghamshire

HP13 6SL

Tel: 01494 451 700

Fax: 01494 523 247

Website: www.volunteerfocus.org.uk

Opening Hours: M - Fri: 9.30-3.00

Volunteer Centre Aylesbury Vale District, (a service of Vale Volunteers)

8a Temple Square

Aylesbury

Buckinghamshire

HP20 2QH

Tel: 01296 3374546

Fax: 01296 718871

Email: volunteering@valevolunteers.org.uk

Website: www.valevolunteers.org.uk

Opening Hours: M - Thur: 9.00-4.00 F: 9.00-3.00

Aylesbury Youth Action

Queens Park Centre,

Queens Park,

Aylesbury,

HP21 7RT

Tel: 01296 421149

Email: aya@bucksnet.co.uk

Website: www.aylesburyyouthaction.co.uk

Wycombe Youth Action

46 Mary St

High Wycombe

HP11 2HE

Email: info@wycombeyouthaction.co.uk

Website: www.wycombeyouthaction.co.uk