

**Report to:** Executive Member for Cleaner,  
Greener, Safer

**Date:** 28<sup>th</sup> September 2011

**Report of:** Director of Environmental  
Services

**Report No:** EMC/26/11

**Contact Officer:** Sarah Schofield

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**Report Title:** Volunteer Policy and Procedures

**Non Confidential:** This report does **not** contain information which warrants its consideration in the absence of the press or members of the public

**Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to formalise the relationship between the Environmental Services Department and its volunteers.

**Recommendations:** The Executive Member is requested to approve the volunteer policy and procedures.

**Decision**

**Background  
Doc(s):**

**Signed:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Leader / Executive Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Monitoring Officer

**Date:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Bolton  
Council**

## **Environmental Services Department**

### **Volunteer Policy & Procedures**

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# 1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to formalise the relationship between the Environmental Services Department and its volunteers.

Volunteers have been involved in the Environmental Services Department over many years and are an important resource to Bolton Council, which recognises that the time, energy and skills offered by volunteers contributes to the achievement of the Council's aims.

There is now an increased focus on volunteering which is important community development and contributes to delivering more sustainable services.

This policy is intended to:

- Outline how the Department is committed to supporting volunteers and adopting best practice in volunteer management
- Ensure uniformity of service delivery across the Department
- Clarify the role of volunteers, their tasks and expectations
- Adopt a policy of fair and equal treatment of volunteers
- Add value, support and diversity to the work within the Department

This policy gives formal recognition to the importance of volunteers and ensures that:

- Volunteers are welcomed, receive a relevant induction and are valued
- Volunteers contributions are maximised by providing appropriate training and support
- More people are encouraged to volunteer
- More volunteers remain involved
- Volunteers are involved in appropriate activities through a suitable selection procedure, which may include references and Criminal Records Bureau checks.

This policy and procedure applies to all employees and volunteers working within or associated with the Environmental Services Department of Bolton Council.

## 2. Guiding Principles

Volunteers should not find themselves financially disadvantaged as a direct result of their voluntary involvement

Volunteers will not be used to fill vacant or temporary posts. Their activity should complement the work of paid staff, not be a substitute for it.

In the event of industrial action by paid members of staff, Volunteers will only carry out their normal duties

With the exception of a salary with terms and conditions, Volunteers will be treated in a similar way to paid staff.

Formal voluntary roles will have an associated task profile which has been created in consultation with the relevant Team within the Environmental Services Department

## 3. What is a Volunteer?

The definition of 'Volunteer' that this policy uses is from the volunteering code of good practice of the "*Compact on relations between government and the voluntary and community sector*" (November 1998):

*"an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives"*

Volunteers do not have a distinct legal status in the same way that paid staff do and are not covered by employment law. Care must be taken to avoid any circumstances which could be interpreted to indicate that Volunteers are employees.

## 4. Who can Volunteer?

**Parental Permission** - Members of the general public over the age of 16 can volunteer. People under the age of 18 are legally classed as vulnerable and this must be taken into account when involving them as volunteers. Parental responsibility extends to the age of 18, unless the person is married or is adopted before that age. In view of the fact that young people can seek paid employment from the age of 16, it may not always be appropriate to obtain parental/guardian consent for the activities of volunteers aged 16-18. Instead, volunteer co-ordinators should strongly encourage volunteers in this age group to discuss their activities with their parents/guardians.

**Age Limit** - With the exception of Volunteer drivers, there is no upper age limit provided that the potential Volunteer can meet the required recruitment criteria

**Refugees** - Refugees and asylum seekers are fully entitled to volunteer including those appealing against a decision to refuse them asylum and those who are registered with the International Organisation for Migration and awaiting return to their own country

**EU Residents** - There is no restriction on people from European Union (EU) or European Economic Area (EEA) countries coming to the UK to volunteer with the exception of those from Bulgaria and Romania who should check their eligibility to volunteer by contacting the UK Border Agency. The ultimate responsibility of all new and potential volunteers to check whether they are allowed to volunteer rests with the individual

**Non EU Residents** - People from outside the EU who have a visa to work or study in the UK may volunteer as long as they are still undertaking the activity stated on their visa. People on visitor visas are not allowed to volunteer in the UK.

**People on Benefits** - Claimants of Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA), Income Support and Incapacity Benefit may volunteer without their benefits being affected provided they receive no more than the reimbursement of out of pocket expenses. There is no hours limit in these three cases although JSA claimants must be available for and actively seeking paid work. Volunteers are advised to speak to a benefits advisor at the local Job Centre Plus office.

## 5. Why People Volunteer

People volunteer for different reasons and we need to understand these if we are to sustain and develop our volunteers.

Volunteers will:

- Be able to influence the services
- Feel good about doing something for others, while still benefiting themselves
- Be able to resolve issues which will benefit them and possibly others
- Meet like-minded individuals
- Be able to share their skills with others, regardless of whether they're working, already an active volunteer or retired with lots of life experience
- Be able to develop knowledge and skills to improve their chances of getting paid work
- Be able to gain recognition for their work, from us and from their community
- Be given networking opportunities to meet all kinds of people and professionals from every walk of life

## 6. Equality & Diversity

Bolton Council is committed to equality and diversity. Volunteers will not be discriminated against either directly or indirectly on the grounds of race, colour, age, nationality ethnic (or national) origin, sex, sexual orientation, marital status or disability.

Furthermore, difference is valued. Bolton Council recognises the value that the different backgrounds, skills, outlooks and experiences of its Volunteers bring to the organisation.

Just as employees, Volunteers are expected to adhere to Bolton Council's Equality and Diversity policy. Bolton Council's Comprehensive Equality Policy can be found on the Council's website at <http://www.bolton.gov.uk/website/Pages/EqualitiesandDiversity.aspx>

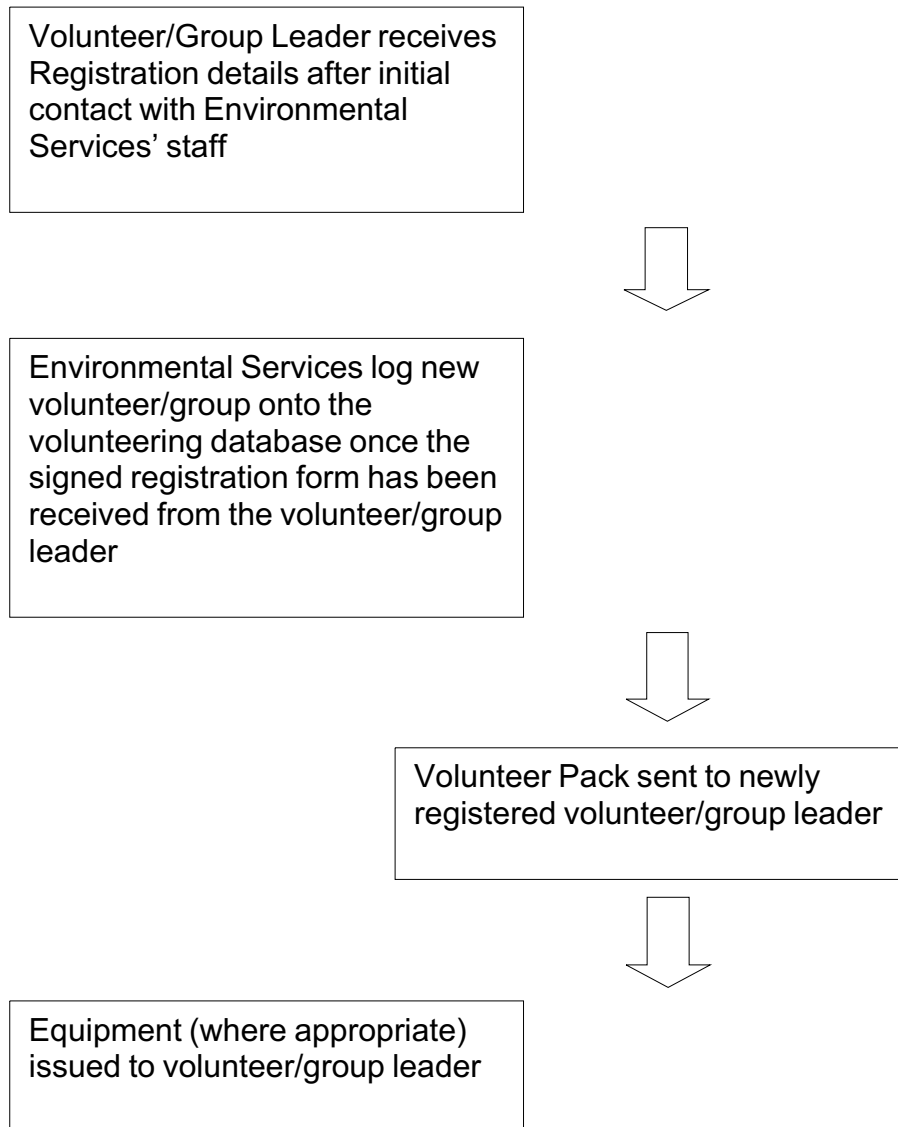
## 7. Types of Volunteers within Bolton Council's Environmental Services Department

<b>CASUAL</b>	<b>Casual Volunteer</b>	Volunteers whose details are entered onto the Casual Volunteer Database after a brief discussion/induction. Will include activity which doesn't involve a member of staff (Council or its Partners) e.g. Clean Ups, Park & Cemetery Watch
	<b>Activity Volunteer</b>	Volunteers involved in structured activity which involves a member of staff (Council or its Partners) e.g. Clean Up Events, Habitat Improvement Works
	<b>Event Volunteer</b>	Volunteers who help with public events
<b>FORMAL</b>	<b>Volunteer Ranger</b>	Volunteers who help with the management & development of major parks
	<b>Structured Group</b>	Volunteers who are part of a group, with specific agreements with the Council e.g. Friends of....Groups & Tenants & Residents Associations
	<b>Issue Specific Volunteer</b>	Volunteers who have an agreement with the Council to do a specific activity e.g. locking & unlocking park gates

Volunteering opportunities will be promoted through leaflets, posters, talks, local media, Bolton's Community & Voluntary Services (CVS), word of mouth and internal and external organisations' websites.

## 8. Volunteering Process

### 8.1 Casual Volunteering



### Registration

This pack will contain:

- A 'thank you letter and registration form from the Director of Environmental Services
- A volunteering safety checklist with relevant guidance



The registration form and volunteering safety checklist will need to be signed by the volunteer/group leader and returned to Environmental Services before volunteering activity can commence.

## **Volunteer Database**

The volunteer database will be managed by the administration team. All volunteers should be registered before activities commence. Volunteer details, activity and locations, will be entered onto the database.

## **Volunteer Pack**

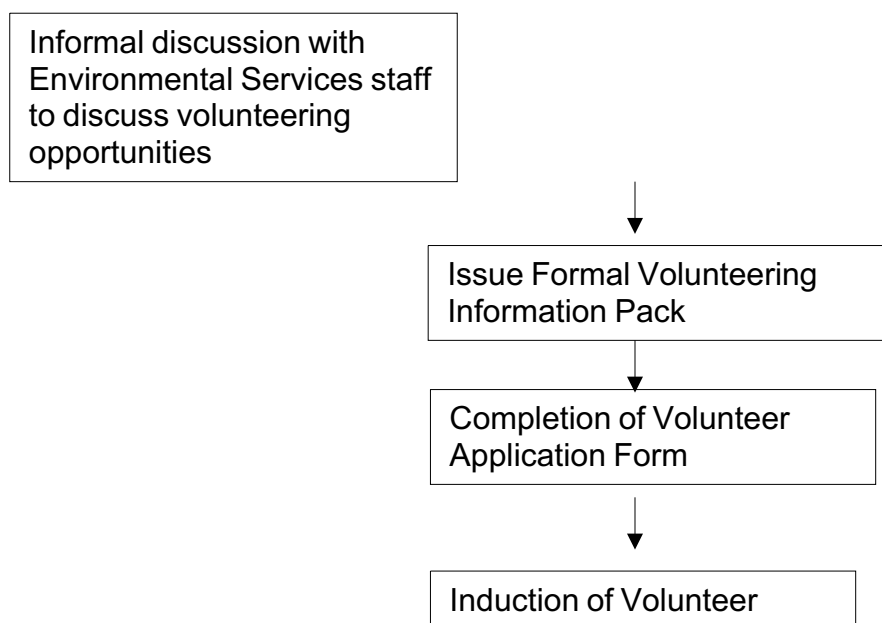
The volunteer pack will consist of:

- A letter from the Director of Environmental Services
- A copy of the safety checklist and relevant guidance
- An Environmental Services contact card (who to contact whilst the volunteer activity is being carried out)
- A Bolton Council Volunteering ID badge, which will authorise the named volunteer/group to carry out identified volunteering activity
- Promotional materials (where appropriate)

## **Issued Equipment**

Equipment relating to clean ups can be issued to volunteers. This includes litter pickers, gloves and bin bags. Volunteers are not issued with any other Council owned equipment.

## **8.2 Formal Volunteering**



## **Informal Discussion**

Before making a decision to proceed with an application potential volunteers should be encouraged to meet with the relevant Environmental Services member of staff Neighbourhood Services on an informal basis. This will ensure that they receive a general introduction to volunteering and an opportunity for their questions to be answered.

## **Formal Volunteering Information Pack**

If volunteers would like to apply for a formal volunteer vacancy after initial discussion, a Formal Volunteering Information Pack will be issued, highlighting current Health and Safety legislation, the need for confidentiality relating to information security, re-imbursement of out of pocket expenses, absence reporting and other relevant topics, which they are required to sign. This will also include an application form.

## **Applying for Formal Volunteer Opportunities**

All formal volunteers must apply for voluntary roles on the appropriate Volunteer Application Form. A Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check will be made on each applicant who will have direct access to children and other vulnerable persons within the community.

Any potential Volunteer considered to be unsuitable will have their offer of help declined but may be signposted to other, more suitable organisations or agencies

## **Formal Volunteer Induction**

All Formal Volunteers must be given basic training to enable them to carry out their role and will be encouraged to take advantage of further courses and workshops. Care should be taken to avoid offering training which is not connected to a Volunteer's role as this may be regarded as an indication of employment, thereby affecting the legal status of the Volunteer.

The relevant staff member within Environmental Services will ensure that all Volunteers are informed of the relevant aspects of current Health and Safety legislation, the need for confidentiality and information relating to security, re-imbursement of out of pocket expenses, absence reporting and other relevant topics as part of an personalised induction programme.

## **8.3 Neighbourhood Care**

The Council is aware that many residents elect to carry out voluntary maintenance of the public areas outside their properties e.g litter picking/grass cutting etc. The Council will provide relevant advice and guidance upon request.

## 9. Insurance

If a permanent member of Council staff is present at or has overriding control over activities and events associated with volunteering, then volunteers are insured through Bolton Council's Employers and Public Liability insurance whilst carrying out authorised voluntary duties. This insurance does not cover personal possessions, therefore Volunteers are advised to make their own arrangements and take normal precautions with their own belongings.

If a voluntary group is dedicated to improving an asset which is managed by Bolton Council, Environmental Services may reimburse any relevant insurance premium at the discretion of the Executive Member. However the designated group must primarily arrange the policy in their own name and provide evidence of such to the Council. If a voluntary group working on Council assets has their own public liability insurance, a copy should be sent to the Director of Environmental Services.

Bolton Community Voluntary Service (CVS) and the Council can provide contact details for specialist insurers who will advise on some of the voluntary activities that are not controlled by the Council.

## 10. Data Protection

Bolton Council will be subject to the 1998 Data Protection Act, when engaging with volunteers and as such must adopt principles of good practice in relation to personal information kept on volunteers.

Bolton Council will ensure that all personal data relating to volunteers is:

- Fairly and lawfully processed
- Processed only for specified and lawful processes
- Adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Accurate and up-to-date
- Not kept for longer than the purpose specified
- Processed in accordance with the rights of the data subject
- Secure from the point of collection through to disposal
- Not transferred to other countries without adequate protection of data subjects

### General Personal Data

Personal data must be kept about volunteers in order to fulfil legal and contractual responsibilities (i.e. contact details, information about the volunteer's suitability, etc.) and information in connection with placements for them (i.e. about their skills, experience and preferences). As such, Bolton Council is entitled to keep this data, but must process and keep it in a way that accords with the Data Protection Act 1998.

### Sensitive Data

Any information referred to as 'sensitive data' under the Act, which is held by Bolton Council in relation to ethnic monitoring, disability monitoring, and in-depth personal

information about people wanting to volunteer with children and vulnerable people (i.e. the personal information obtained at interview and results of CRB checks) is also subject to the rules of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Bolton Council may hold information in the form of manual volunteer files and or computerised information (a Volunteer Database), or both. Any information held will be subject to the rules, regardless of whether it is held on paper or on a computer.

## **11. Review**

This policy will be reviewed every two years.