

# Volunteering Handbook

for people volunteering with Central  
Bedfordshire Council

and information for our Volunteer Support Managers



# Volunteering for CBC

## Introduction

### Welcome

A warm welcome to Central Bedfordshire Council. We are delighted that you have chosen to volunteer your time and skills in supporting our vision to make Central Bedfordshire a great place to live and work.

We hope you find your time with us rewarding and enjoyable, while using this as an opportunity to develop or learn new skills and meet new people.

Activities undertaken by volunteers like you provide valuable additional support to our service users and communities so it's important that you feel valued in your role.

We have developed this volunteering handbook to let you know about the important information that you will need, but should you need further guidance, your volunteer support manager will be able to help you.

### About us

Central Bedfordshire Council is a unitary council with 59 elected councillors, who are elected every four years. As a unitary council, we are responsible for delivering and commissioning a wide range of services. Our purpose is to represent and serve the communities of Central Bedfordshire and we have a statutory responsibility for maintained schools within Central Bedfordshire.

This handbook supports our plan for 'community resilience', enabling residents of all ages to help themselves either on a paid or voluntary basis to complement the services that the Council provides.

For more information about us and the services we provide, you can visit our website at: <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/local-government-in-central-bedfordshire/statistics-and-census-information/about-central-bedfordshire-council.aspx>

## Before you can start Volunteering for CBC.....

The below image sets out the steps that the Volunteer Support Manager will undertake before you can start volunteering for us. We expect you are currently at the Clearance stage, so we hope to welcome you on board soon.

### **Volunteer Role Profile, Advertising and Selection**

The Volunteer Support Manager will prepare a Volunteer Role Profile to set out the skills and attributes that the ideal volunteer should possess before advertising the role.

When applications are received in response to an advertised Volunteer Role, the Volunteer Support Manager meets informally with those who closest match the role requirements to find out more about the individual, their training needs and what they can bring to the role. The Role Profile will provide a benchmark for the discussion.

Following the discussion feedback will be provided by the Volunteer Support Manager.

### **Risk Assessments and Safe Working Procedures**

The Volunteer Support Manager must ensure that Risk Assessments and Safe Working Procedures have been carried out and completed for all common volunteer activities and those specific to the individual role. In many cases, these may be assessments and procedures which apply to paid staff in the service area.

### **Clearances**

The Volunteer Support Manager must obtain 2 satisfactory professional or academic references (one of which is current/most recent) for volunteers who will be joining CBC.

Some roles may involve activities with vulnerable groups, so will also require receipt of satisfactory safeguarding checks i.e. DBS Disclosure and Barring Service Check.

All clearance checks are of no cost to the volunteer and must be undertaken before Volunteering can start.

### **Agree a start date**

On receipt of satisfactory clearances, the Volunteer Support Manager and the Volunteer will have a discussion to agree a start date and time.

## While you are volunteering for us...

### About the role of a volunteer

As a volunteer, you have kindly chosen to give your time and skills freely and without expectation of financial reward. This means that you will not be paid a salary for the volunteering work you do and you will not enter into a contract of employment for the role.

Your volunteering role will be complementary to that of our paid staff.

### Your volunteering hours

You can choose to accept or decline any volunteering hours that may be offered to you. This means that the amount of time and when you are willing to volunteer for us is always your choice.

Your volunteer support manager will usually plan ahead for their activities, so they would be grateful if you could let them know, if possible, which days and times you are normally willing to volunteer.

Your actual volunteering hours will be agreed in advance between you and your volunteer support manager.

### If you are under the minimum school leaving age

So that your volunteering doesn't affect your homework, education, time with your family, friends and your wellbeing, you will only be able to volunteer for us between the hours of 7am– 7pm and for no more than 2 hours on any term time school day or Sunday.

### Your contact

You will be allocated with a volunteer support manager who will oversee the volunteering activities that you carry out. Your volunteer support manager will be your first point of contact and they will keep you up to date with any changes or news that you need to be aware of.

If there's anything you're not sure of, or if you have any questions you should speak with them. You will be provided with their contact details during your introduction.

## Your introduction and welcome to CBC

When you begin volunteering for us, your volunteer support manager will arrange an introduction for you. Here's what you can expect to cover in your introduction....



## Helping you to settle in

Within the first three months of beginning your role, you are encouraged to meet with your volunteer support manager to reflect upon your experiences to date.

Your meeting will be an informal conversation which will give you the opportunity to discuss how you are settling into the role. Together, you will identify any further training or other support that you may need.

## Training

We want to be sure that you will be carrying out your volunteering role safely and effectively. Your volunteer support manager is responsible for making sure that you receive any relevant training linked to activities you will be undertaking in your role.

Your training may be in the form of a demonstration, briefing, explanation or as part of an assessment.

## Use of equipment

We will provide you with the necessary tools and equipment to fulfil your volunteering activities. You must only use the tools and equipment as instructed and must not use them if you have not been trained, re-trained or briefed on how to do so.

Our equipment will be serviced regularly but sometimes faults or defects can occur. It is important that before using any equipment (which may include IT equipment, machines or power tools, for example) that you conduct a visual check of its condition. For some equipment, you may need to complete pre-use checklists. If you notice any fault or defect you must not use the equipment and you must report the issues immediately to your volunteer support manager.

Your volunteer support manager will ensure that the appropriate risk assessments are in place and that you are made aware of the precautions in place which must be followed.

## Your conduct

We require our volunteers to treat everyone else fairly and with respect during the course of volunteering. You must be mindful that bad behavior could present a negative image of the Council.

It is important that no one is discriminated against, victimised, bullied or harassed because of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

If you believe this type of behaviour is happening, you should report it to your volunteer support manager or their direct manager.

Should you behave unacceptably it can result in us withdrawing you from the volunteering role. If you also hold a paid role with us, the disciplinary process may also be applied in serious and exceptional cases.

## If you are unable to attend your volunteering activity

If you are unable to attend your planned volunteering activity we would be grateful if you would let your volunteer support manager know as soon as possible. If your volunteer support manager is aware, they will be able to make arrangements to cover the activity.

## If you have a problem

We hope your volunteering experience with us is an enjoyable one, but recognise that there may be times when a problem arises.

If you have a problem you should raise it directly with your volunteer support manager who will aim to resolve your problem. If you feel the matter is not satisfactorily resolved, or you feel the need to escalate your concern you should raise your problem with their manager whose decision will be final.

### If we identify there is a problem

If there are concerns about your contribution, ability or conduct, your volunteer support manager will discuss them with you so you have the opportunity to explain.

There may be times when your volunteer support manager identifies that with the necessary training, mentoring or support you will be able to fulfill your volunteering role but this may not always be the case.

If no resolution can be found your volunteering arrangement can be withdrawn without notice.

### Using your vehicle

If you will be using your own vehicle during the course of your volunteering activity, you are responsible for ensuring that your vehicle is appropriately maintained with valid road tax, MOT (if required) and insurance documents (incorporating cover for business related driving) covering you.

You must also ensure that you are appropriately licensed for the vehicle you are driving and that no restrictions have been placed upon you which prevent your lawful use of the vehicle.

You must notify the insurer of your vehicle how you will be using your vehicle. Your volunteer support manager may ask you to provide evidence of these arrangements from time to time.

For clarity, the term *'using your vehicle during the course of your volunteering activity'* means travelling between sites to carry out volunteering work during the hours you are volunteering. Your journey from home to your *regular* volunteering work location is not 'for the purposes of your volunteering activity' as it is a personal journey, unless you are travelling from home to a location which is not regularly associated with your volunteer role (e.g. attending a training event at a different location).

### Access to information

While you are volunteering for us, you may have access to or become privy to confidential information and therefore will be required to undertake our Data Protection course. You must not discuss or disclose confidential information that

relates in anyway to us, with anyone. By doing so, this is likely to be a breach of the Data Protection Act and you will be liable.

If you believe there to be inappropriate behaviours and practices happening within the Council, you should read our Confidential Reporting Policy so that you understand how you should raise these particular concerns.

You can view the policy at:

[http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Confidential%20Reporting%20Policy%20-%20Whistleblowing\\_tcm6-65272.pdf](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Confidential%20Reporting%20Policy%20-%20Whistleblowing_tcm6-65272.pdf)

## Health and Safety

Your volunteer support manager is responsible for ensuring that appropriate risk assessments and safe working procedures are in place for your volunteering work. As a volunteer you are expected to follow all health and safety processes in the same way as paid staff.

It is important to discuss with your volunteer support manager any special requirements you may have to protect your health, safety and wellbeing. This may include disclosing any disability or medical condition which may require additional precautions to be considered.

Your Volunteer Support Manager.....



In order to help us prevent accidents and to meet our statutory requirements, you must ensure you report **all** accidents or other incidents which occur during the course of your volunteering work. Your volunteer support manager will cover the



Council's arrangements for reporting of accidents and incidents (including violence and aggression) during your introduction.

## Insurance

You will be covered by our Employer Liability Insurance and Public Liability Insurance while you are undertaking volunteer work which we have instructed and authorised you to do. This means that you are covered against accidents, diseases or injuries that may occur due to negligence on our behalf. If you are authorised to drive one of the council's fleet vehicles, you will be covered for business related journeys.

## Gifts and Hospitality

It is acceptable for you or your family to receive items or gifts of small value in appreciation of your volunteering activity.

However, in cases of hospitality or gifts with a value in excess of £25 you should politely decline them and let your volunteer support manager know about the offer made to you.

## Media

You should be aware that social networking websites are in the public domain and therefore can be seen by most people. When you are using social networking sites you should refrain from making any negative comments or references to the Council, or providing details of its service providers and service users.

Any communication with the media should not be made without prior discussion and agreement with your volunteer support manager.

## Share your ideas

We are always seeking ways to improve what we do and how we do it and as a volunteer, your ideas and suggestions are valued by us.

If you can think of ways we can improve something we do, you are encouraged to share your thoughts for improvement with your volunteer support manager.

## Obligation to offer and accept

We are not making a commitment to offer you volunteering hours or volunteering work and you can choose to accept or decline any offer of these.

This means that no obligation exists on either our volunteers or ourselves.

## Ending an arrangement

If you decide that you no longer wish to volunteer for us, you can let your volunteer support manager know of your intentions at any time, with or without notice.

Although you are under no obligation to give any notice, we would appreciate as much notice as you are able to give so that we may find a suitable volunteer replacement.

If you have decided to end your volunteering arrangement because you are unhappy with any aspect of your volunteering role, please share this information with your volunteer support manager or their direct manager so that they can discuss this with you. This will help us identify where changes or improvement can be made for other volunteers.

If we end your volunteering arrangement, we will always aim to give you as much notice as possible, however, this may not always be possible.



**Central  
Bedfordshire**

**A great place to live and work**

**Contact us...**

by telephone: 0300 300 8000

by email: [customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

on the web: [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Write to Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House,  
Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ