



Volunteering in Local Government

Volunteer Management

Contents

1. Executive Summary	3
2. Introduction	5
3. Volunteer Strategies	7
City of Edinburgh Council’s Volunteer Strategy—Partnership Working	7
Dumfries and Galloway Council’s Volunteer Strategy—Community Engagement	7
Bournemouth Council Volunteer Strategy—Review	8
4. Volunteer Policies	9
Brighton Hove City Council Volunteer Policy	9
Moray Council Volunteer Policy	9
5. Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers	10
Wigan Council—The Community Book	10
Frog—Social Media Platform	10
‘Do-it’ – Digital Advertising Platform	11
Domestic Gap Years – City Year UK	11
Employee Volunteering Schemes	12
6. Reward Systems	13
The Time Credits Model	13
Young Scot Rewards	14
7. Volunteer Management Systems	15
Bournemouth Council - Better Impact Volunteer Management Software	15
Manchester City Council - Team Kinetic Volunteer Management Software	15
8. Managing Risk	17
Volunteer Management Framework	17
Volunteer Agreement	18

1. Executive Summary

This report brings together examples of volunteer management in local government. The examples are drawn from a variety of sources including research reports, articles and council websites. The aim is to demonstrate how volunteering can contribute to existing and enhanced service delivery and ultimately improved outcomes for communities.

The review highlighted that volunteer management has evolved in line with the changing policy context. As councils are increasingly focussing on community engagement and participation, they have also begun to take a more strategic approach to volunteer involvement in service delivery. This is evident by the number of recently introduced [Volunteer Strategies](#) and [Volunteer Policies](#) as seen in Edinburgh City Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council.

Technology has played a significant part in the way councils have transformed their approach to the [recruitment and retention](#) of volunteers. An increasing number of councils are using online platforms to attract citizens to volunteer. Technology has also minimised a lot of the administrative burden that was traditionally associated with volunteer management. As a result of adopting [Volunteer management software](#), councils such as Bournemouth and Manchester City Councils and have seen a significant increase in the number of volunteers involved within services as well as improved relationships with partnership organisations.

In order to meet the increasing demand for volunteers several councils, such as Chorley Council and Cambridgeshire County Council have adopted [reward systems](#) to attract and retain volunteers. These systems are often built on a time-based currency that allows volunteers to earn rewards for each hour volunteered. Other reward schemes include Young Scot Rewards which allow young people to take part in activities and earn one-off rewards based on their particular interests. Reward systems offer an opportunity for volunteer managers to show volunteers their appreciation while at the same time increase participation in local businesses and activities.

The forms of volunteering have also evolved over time. Recent trends include [employee volunteering schemes](#) which allows council employees to take a couple of days a year to volunteer in their community. There are also an increasing number of models of full-time volunteering schemes such as the [City Year UK](#) model which allows school leavers to dedicate a whole year to volunteering.

The final section of this report covers [risk management](#). The increased involvement of volunteers in service delivery inevitably increases the risks associated with volunteering, however there are a number of processes that can be put in place to minimise such risks including [volunteer frameworks](#) and [volunteer agreements](#). Considering where there are potential risks and how these are going to be managed will allow the best possible conditions for both volunteers and the services that they are involved in.

This report is structured around the main themes that have been discussed above and sets out a number of examples of volunteer management which will hopefully be of interest to other councils working with volunteers.

2. Introduction

The changing political and demographic climate is driving local authorities to transform the way that they deliver services. The Christie Commission and legislation such as the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 are shifting the focus from a state that is delivering services to a state that empowers and enables communities. A potential opportunity arises in this shift to upscale the involvement of volunteers in the delivery of existing and enhanced services.

The number of volunteers has remained relatively stable in Scotland over the last 10 years. The latest Scottish Household Survey, published in 2017, revealed that 27% of adults in Scotland offered their time to volunteering activities in the past year. Compared to other European countries a very low percentage of people report a lack of interest as the reason for non-participation in formal or informal voluntary activities (16%) while the biggest reason is time (28.6%).¹ This suggests that people want to volunteer in their local communities if only the conditions and opportunities are right.

Increased involvement of volunteers in public services is raising questions as to what roles they should undertake and how these roles differ from roles undertaken by paid staff. However, there is strong evidence suggesting that future challenges such as increasing life expectancy and mobilisation requires collaboration across organisations, sectors and communities. Complex issues cannot be solved by any one service or organisation but will likely be the result of the contribution of many different actors.²

In this complex climate the boundaries between public, private and the voluntary sector are blurring. At a local level, there is a unique opportunity for councils to work together with social enterprises and the voluntary sector to improve outcomes for communities. This is an opportunity that many local authorities are already harvesting with evident benefits for both services and volunteers considering the many positive outcomes associated with volunteering such as increased social trust and advanced social inclusion.³

The aim of this report is to bring together examples of how councils have approached volunteer management. Based on desk based research this report brings together good

1 http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_scp21&lang=en

2 <https://www.lgiu.org.uk/briefing/local-authorities-the-catalyst-for-bottom-up-systems-change/>

3 <https://www.unv.org/sites/default/files/2015%20State%20of%20the%20World%27s%20Volunteerism%20Report%20-%20Transforming%20Governance.pdf>

practice and innovative examples from local government and beyond. It is not written as a comprehensive guide but rather as a signposting document that brings together information from a range of sources. We hope that this will encourage and enable the reader to see the value that volunteering can bring to local government and ultimately the communities that we are all part of.

3. Volunteer Strategies

Volunteer involvement will be more successful if the work is supporting the organisation's overall strategic outcomes and objectives. A strategic approach to volunteering also demonstrates the value of volunteers to people inside and outside the organisation.

Some local authorities have chosen to develop a separate volunteer strategy but volunteering can also be part of an existing strategy. The important part is that those who are responsible for managing volunteers are part of designing the strategy and that the strategic outcomes are part of the wider planning process. The examples included in this report are just a few that illustrate what a potential volunteer strategy might look like.

City of Edinburgh Council's Volunteer Strategy—Partnership Working

The City of Edinburgh Council's Volunteer Strategy focuses on partnership working between the council and the voluntary sector. The Strategy focuses on a series of outcomes and identifies

actions and additional support required to enable the conditions for volunteering to flourish. The strategy is linked to the four high level outcomes in the CPP's Single Outcome Agreement (now replaced with the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan).



Dumfries and Galloway Council's Volunteer Strategy—Community Engagement

Dumfries and Galloway Council's Strategy is built around five established principles that guide the approach to volunteering. The Strategy has involved a lot of engagement with stakeholders including feedback from volunteers, communities, individuals and community groups, benchmarking and experience from other councils. The Strategy also includes an action plan that sets out how the council will achieve these outcomes.



Bournemouth Council Volunteer Strategy—Review

This review of the Bournemouth Borough Volunteer Strategy highlights the benefits that a volunteer strategy can bring. The Strategy has positively impacted volunteering in the Council through increasing the number of services that now view volunteering opportunities as a way to supplement service delivery, increasing the number of volunteers within the Council and the quality of volunteering opportunities as well as introducing a support structure for staff that manage volunteering opportunities.



4. Volunteer Policies

A volunteer policy differs from a Volunteer Strategy in that it helps to define the volunteer's role in the organisation and how they should be treated. The volunteer policies below are just a few examples to help illustrate what a volunteer policy in local government might look like.

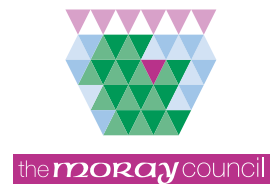
[Brighton Hove City Council Volunteer Policy](#)

The Policy is a toolkit and booklet that is used to support the volunteer strategy. The toolkit includes the council's commitment to volunteers, the volunteering relationship, and other policies such as training and health and safety.



[Moray Council Volunteer Policy](#)

Moray Council Volunteering Policy clarifies and simplifies the approach to involving volunteers in the work of Moray Council. The policy sets out a corporate framework for Council services when engaging with and managing volunteers and encouraging volunteering. It also includes best practice guidelines.



5. Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers

A recent study showed that 36% of potential volunteers experienced barriers to volunteering due to a lack of response to their application or lack of clarity and understanding about the role.⁴ Marketing of volunteer opportunities plays an important role in recruiting the most motivated but also a diverse group of volunteers.

There are many different ways that councils can recruit and advertise volunteer vacancies. The most common way is to advertise through the local volunteer centre or online through online platforms such as Do-it or CharityJob. It is important to remember that although volunteer recruitment is partly dependent on the individuals' motivation and ability to access suitable volunteering, it is also driven by a lot of other factors including the state of the economy, demographics and education. The examples below aim to illustrate the wide variety of opportunities there are to engage volunteers in service delivery in the longer term.

Wigan Council—The Community Book

The Community Book is a free, online directory that connects residents with local services, activities and events in their community. The search engine allows citizens to match themselves with volunteer activities and groups based on their skills, knowledge and talents. The Community Book also allows citizens to add comments and star rate their experiences with a particular community group or volunteering activity.



More information: [The Community Book Website](#)

Frog—Social Media Platform

Frog is a national online platform, used to signpost people to local help and support. It was founded in 2016 by Cal, who experienced his own recovery from drug and alcohol addiction. Frog brings together service providers that support health and wellbeing and sign posts individuals to formal and informal



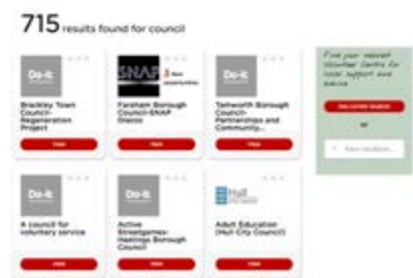
4 <https://www.economicchange.co.uk/top-tips-for-achieving-excellence-in-volunteer-management/>

support such as council services and community groups. The Frog network worked with Stirling Council to develop a Community Platform that can be used by other local Authorities. The result was a dedicated site for each local authority area within the Frog platform.

More information: [Frog Net Official Website](#), [Frog Net Local Authority Testpad](#)

'Do-it' – Digital Advertising Platform

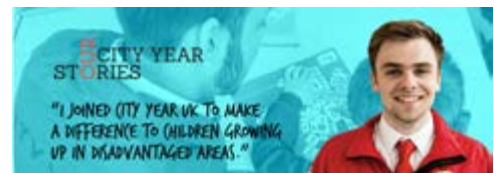
'Do-it' is the UK's national volunteering database, with over 1 million volunteering opportunities and over 200,000 people volunteering every month. The aim is to modernise volunteering and social action through the use of new and emerging technology. For the first two years the platform was entirely volunteer run. The Do-it platform is used by a range of councils across the UK to advertise existing volunteer opportunities.



More information: [Do-it Official Website](#)

Domestic Gap Years – City Year UK

City Year UK is based on similar models from America where younger or older individuals take a whole year out for fulltime volunteering. The City Year model challenges young people to tackle educational inequality through a year of full-time volunteering in schools. The volunteers act as a mentor and give one-to-one tailored support to students that are at risk. In addition to the positive outcomes for the students involved in the programme it is also an opportunity for the volunteers to develop leadership skills and increase their employability status.



In 2018 the organisation is to give financial support to 170 young people volunteering in 23 schools in three areas—London, West Midlands and Greater Manchester. The impact of the programme so far is that 92% of the volunteers are in full-time education or employment within three months of completing their City Year. The students involved in the programme have overall a 10% faster progress in maths, two thirds reduction in negative behaviour and a walking bus, which includes volunteers walking children to school, reducing late arrivals by 86%.

More information: [City Year Official Website](#)

Employee Volunteering Schemes

Employee volunteering schemes allow employees to take a specified amount of time off each year to volunteer in a community setting. In addition to the positive contribution to communities, employee volunteering has been linked to increased leadership skills, team building, improved staff recruitment and retention, reduced sick leave and increased staff morale. An increasing number of councils in England and Scotland are supporting volunteering schemes and below are just two examples.

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council - Sandwell Exchange

The Sandwell exchange scheme allows council employees to take up to 18.5 hours per year to volunteer, however this must be matched hour for hour with the employee's own time. All volunteering activity must also meet one or more of the Council's key priorities. Examples include a group of staff from the audit team who spent a day digging over a very overgrown allotment for a health and wellbeing charity and a member of staff who ran cricket coaching courses at 2 local primary schools.



More information including a toolkit for managers: [Sandwell official website](#)

North Ayrshire Council

Employees of North Ayrshire Council are granted paid time to attend all types of volunteering events up to a maximum of 14 hours per employee per calendar year.



More information: [North Ayrshire Volunteering Policy](#)

NORTH AYRSHIRE
COUNCIL

More Information and Case Studies

For more ideas of how to match volunteers with volunteer opportunities, Nesta have compiled a list of innovative examples which can be accessed below.

[Nesta—Innovative ways to match volunteer opportunities](#)

6. Reward Systems

The Time Credits Model

What: This is a reward system for volunteers that matches volunteer hours with credits to use on local activities.

Where: It is used in England and Wales by a number of councils including Haringey, Lancashire County, Westminster, Cambridgeshire County, West Norfolk and Kent County.



It has been developed by a social enterprise called Spice. A time credits programme usually has a specific outcome focus such as mental health, substance recovery, housing, homelessness, community social action, social isolation, active ageing or independence. So far almost 35,000 people have earned Time Credits, and approximately 450,000 Time Credits have been issued across England and Wales.

Case studies

Chorley Council

Chorley Council invested £210,000 in Spice Time Credits over three years. The investment covers implementation and coordination of the Spice System as well as staff time such as officers working with community groups. Between 2012-2015 the use of time credits involved the establishment of 62 organisations, 1,189 volunteers (50 percent never volunteered before) and 26,232 hours of volunteering. It has been used in meals on wheels, lunch clubs, clean up days and by using volunteering as a step to get back to work.



More information: [LGA Case Study](#)

Cambridgeshire County Council

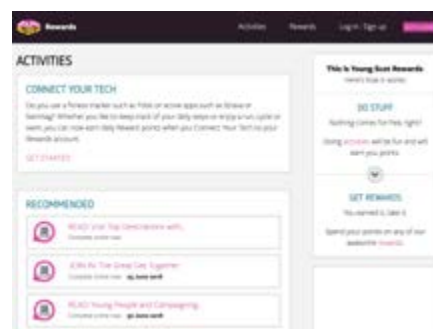
The Cambridgeshire Time Credits have been running since 2014 in partnership between Cambridge City



Council and CHS housing group for the past four years. The programme prioritises older people, strengthening families and skills and employment. The external organisations involved in the Time Credit programme include charities, children's centres, community groups, schools and sheltered housing schemes. The programme was awarded the MJ award for excellence in community engagement. Over 1,700 volunteers have given 50,000 hours which equates to five years and eight months since it launched.

Young Scot Rewards

Young Scot Rewards lets young people collect points for taking part in activities and earn one-off rewards and experiences. Activities range from online activities such as taking part in scientific studies to attending summits on climate change or peace to trying out volunteering by taking part in a team challenge with Saltire Awards. Rewards are tailored to cater to different interests and include attending TedxYouth talks, enter competitions to win laptops and other technology or take part in courses delivered in the community.



More information: [Young Scot Rewards Website](#)

7. Volunteer Management Systems

There is a range of volunteer management software available and choosing the right system should be based on defined system specifications unique to an organisation and purpose. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) have compiled a good list of [functionality to consider](#) before choosing a system and a list on [how to evaluate systems on the market](#).

Most software suppliers will offer a free trial which can be a useful way of testing out different software. The two software solutions included in this report are just two examples to highlight how volunteer management software can add huge value when upscaling the involvement of volunteers within council services.

Bournemouth Council - Better Impact Volunteer Management Software

Bournemouth Council use the cloud based volunteer management software Better Impact. The system enables the council to monitor volunteer shifts and store information on each volunteer opportunity. This allows the volunteer coordinator to observe volunteer opportunities and to identify new areas of work for volunteers. For example, different areas can use Bournemouth Litter Squad saving the Council a great deal of time by supplying litter picking equipment to volunteers to keep the area clean. Using volunteer management software has also significantly improved the recruitment process since it allows potential volunteers to see detailed descriptions of each of the roles. Most services are trained and are system administrators. At the moment 28 volunteer opportunities and over 200 volunteers are registered on the system.



Manchester City Council - Team Kinetic Volunteer Management Software

Manchester sports development is a department that sits within Manchester City Council. Before the software was put in place the council had around 10 volunteers, and this has now expanded to 5000 volunteers. The average hours delivered by the volunteers are 9 hours a day which has a huge impact on the ground.



Key activities

- The volunteer management software is used internally with staff developing and posting volunteer opportunities.
- As the system developed the Council encouraged external organisations to register and offer their own opportunities. By involving external organisations, the Council reduced internal workload which meant staff had more time to promote the service.
- Involving external partners in the volunteer management system means that the Council is now working with large partner providers such as British Cycling.
- Communication was traditionally only by phone. With the new volunteer management system mass communication through texts or email is now possible within seconds.
- There are also automatic updates on social media sites which means volunteers often join the system that way.

More Information and Toolkits

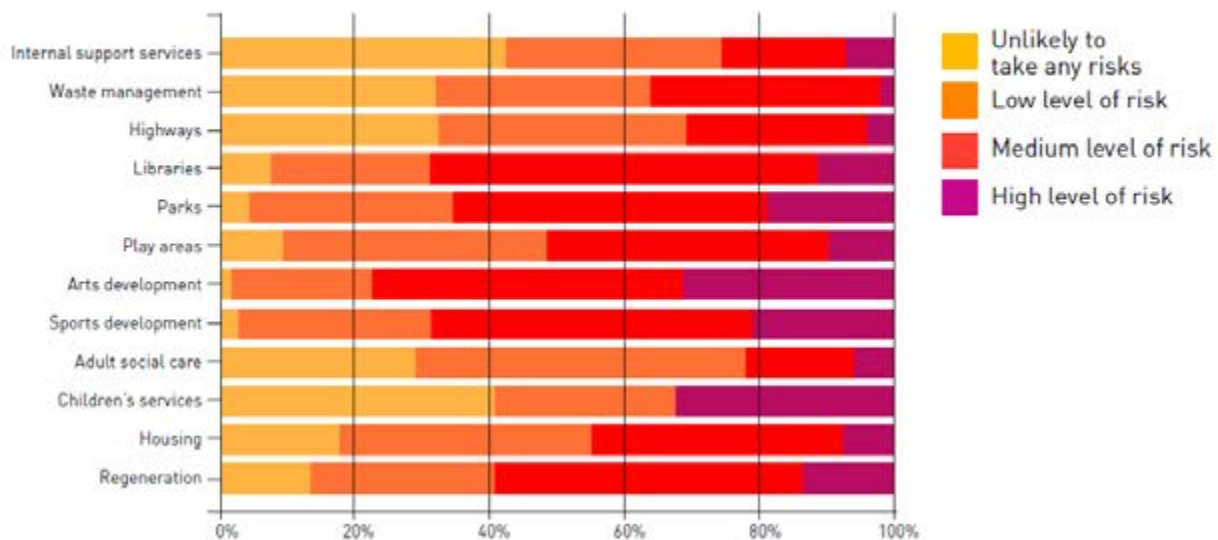
[Volunteer Hub—Volunteer Management Software](#)

8. Managing Risk

As core services are more and more reliant on volunteers, risk management becomes increasingly important. A recent research report conducted by LGiU⁵ found that councils still perceive community involvement as a large risk, particularly within certain services (See Figure 1). Risks that are often associated with volunteers include substandard performance causing harm, volunteers exceeding boundaries or authority, volunteers providing misleading advice, breach of confidentiality, theft or fraud and finally volunteers misrepresenting the organisation. This is reasonable considering the potential damage this may cause to the organisation's credibility and reputation.⁶ This section aims to provide some examples of how to mitigate such risks but it will not cover legal obligations.

Figure 1

How much risk are you willing to take in getting the community involved in the following services?



Volunteer Management Framework

Below is a summary of components that could be covered by a volunteer management framework to minimise risks.

⁵ <https://www.lgiu.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Risk-and-Reward.pdf>

⁶ <http://smallcharityweek.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Risk-Toolkit-Volunteers.pdf>

- It is important to send out automated reminders to volunteers of when they are due to volunteer, reminding them to reply if they cannot make it. It is important to have the option of different forms of contact.
- Have a clear problem-solving procedure in place.
- Start by asking questions like: Does the volunteer require any training? Is the volunteer feeling unfulfilled in their current role? Is the volunteer suffering from burnout or unable to cope with the demands of the role?
- A volunteer agreement can be very helpful for defining boundaries and expectations. A signed document will help to defend an organisation's position in the event of disagreement however it does not imply any contractual obligations on either part.
- To manage the risk of potential no shows, add floating volunteers and volunteers to take on lower priority tasks that can step in and take over other work.

Volunteer Agreement

A volunteer agreement is not a legally binding document but can serve as a way of formalising the commitment between the council and the volunteer. The two examples included below demonstrate what a volunteer agreement might look like.

[Volunteer Agreement—Oxford City Council](#)

[Volunteer Agreement—Bristol City Council](#)

The Point of No Return

If you have done everything possible to provide the volunteer with support and the problem still cannot be resolved have an exit meeting. An exit meeting enables an open conversation with the volunteer to make sure that you are clear about why they have to leave. NCVO have compiled a [checklist](#) on how to conduct an exit meeting.

More Information

[NCVO – If Volunteering Goes Wrong](#)

[The institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England: Risk Toolkit](#)

[Report: Risk and Reward: Local Government and Risk in the New Public Realm](#)

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