

# Employer Supported Volunteering: Guidance for Line Managers

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Volunteering is defined as any activity which involves spending time, unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives, or to benefit the local community or environment.
- 1.2 As a borough, a high proportion of Barnet's residents volunteer on a regular basis and encouraging more people to volunteer is an important part of the Barnet Council's approach to meeting the opportunities and challenges of the years ahead, with people becoming more involved in their local communities.
- 1.3 The Council recognises that volunteering brings many benefits to the Borough for the volunteers themselves, for local communities and local voluntary organisations. As part of our commitment to encourage more people to volunteer, the Council wants to show leadership and put in place opportunities for Council staff, should they wish to, to volunteer within the borough through a formal Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) policy.
- 1.4 The Council acknowledges that some staff already volunteer within the borough. This policy will provide an opportunity to better support those who are already volunteering within the borough, and to enable those interested in volunteering with local organisations to do so by offering a brokerage opportunity to match interests with available opportunities.
- 1.5 Participation in the scheme by teams or individuals is not compulsory and there is no obligation to take part – it is an opportunity which staff may take up if they wish to do so. Whilst the scheme is open to staff on an individual or team basis, the added benefit of the policy – if participation is carried out on a team basis – is to help bring teams together through shared volunteering activity.

## 2. Policy Summary

- Barnet employees will be able to take up to 2 days of paid volunteering leave per annum, pro rata for part time employees.
- The policy is not compulsory and employees will not be required to take the 2 days if they do not wish to do so.
- The policy is restricted to volunteering with organisations based in Barnet for the benefit of Barnet residents.
- All volunteering leave must be agreed in advance by Line Managers. Volunteering will be recognised in Barnet's staff appraisal system.
- The Council will provide a brokerage service, via an organisation called Groundwork, to source local volunteering opportunities for teams or individuals who wish to participate (if required).

### 3. Scope

- 3.1 All directly employed Council staff. This policy is an employee related benefit; it does not cover temporary or agency staff or employees of other organisations delivering services on behalf of Barnet, elected members or, residents. This excludes staff employed by Barnet Homes and CAPITA. However, the brokerage service alone is available to all those interested in volunteering within the borough.
- 3.2 The scheme is in addition to, and is not a substitution for other existing Council schemes covered in Section 6 (Public Service) of the Council's Special Leave Policy, which includes:
- Membership of Public Bodies and School Governors
  - Annual Training with H.M. Forces and Territorial Army
  - Jury Service and Justices of the Peace

### 4. Benefits of the Scheme

- 4.1 The scheme has the following potential benefits for the Council:
- Increased staff morale
  - Learning and development opportunities and opportunities for team building
  - Increased levels of staff recruitment and retention
  - Opportunity to meet Barnet's corporate objective of making staff more engaged with the place the work
  - Opportunity to increase community capacity in Barnet to achieve better outcomes for residents, in line with objectives set out in the Corporate Plan and Community Participation Strategy
- 4.2 The scheme has the following potential benefits for staff
- Increased satisfaction with working at the Council
  - Opportunities to take on new roles, develop wider networks and build transferrable skills
  - Opportunities to engage with Barnet as a place, outside of normal day job
  - Established benefits of volunteering, such as increased wellbeing and social connections
- 4.3 The scheme has the following potential benefits for the local Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS):
- More resources available to increase capacity and enhance service provision
  - Opportunities to raise profile of VCS amongst Council staff and make links to the Council
  - Opportunities to benefit from skills of Council staff

### 5. Types of Employee Volunteering Opportunities

- 5.1 There are a number of different types of volunteering activities available under this scheme, including the examples shown below.

#### **Models of Volunteering**

- 5.2 Different models of volunteering are set out below. These enable the Council and managers to support employees to participate and to achieve different outcomes.

5.3 *Team volunteering*

Team volunteering is often a one-off group event, which usually involves a practical task e.g. clearing a local park or painting a community hall. Team volunteering opportunities are excellent for teambuilding and motivation and can often be carried out in a single day.

5.4 *Individual volunteering*

Where individuals choose their own volunteering opportunity and carry it out either in their own time or using their volunteering leave. Individual volunteering can take place as virtual volunteering where an individual might complete desk research or online monitoring. Individual volunteering can take place as skilled place volunteering where skills are developed through practical challenges.

5.5 *Pro bono volunteering*

This involves using professional skills such as legal, accounting, proposal writing or marketing expertise to support community organisations and is a great way to provide valuable services and create impact. Pro bono volunteering can take place as team or individual opportunities.

6. **Brokerage Service**

6.1 The Council has contracted [Groundwork London](#) to provide a volunteering brokerage service to staff as part of the scheme. For those wishing to volunteer but do not have opportunities lined up, the brokerage service will identify opportunities that exist locally from VCS groups within Barnet; help the Council to achieve its objectives set out in the Corporate Plan; and meet the interests of employees.

6.2 There will be a dedicated page on the Groundwork website, where staff can access the brokerage service. On the dedicated webpage, there will be a registration forms and opportunities to consider. Referrals and connections will be made via Groundwork and the organisation will then be in touch directly to arrange the volunteering. The diagram below illustrates the Groundwork brokerage process.

Groundwork Brokerage Process
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Groundwork receive an inquiry from an individual or group at the Council</li><li>2. Groundwork will collect information on the interest of the group or individual, available dates and times etc.</li><li>3. Groundwork will send through opportunities which are matched to the interests indicated in the form.</li><li>4. Once a match is found Groundwork will put the organisation and group or individual in touch to discuss further details</li><li>5. Groundwork will provide support and manage the communication between the organisations and the volunteer(s)</li></ol>

6.3 All team or group volunteering opportunities should use the brokerage service, whilst individuals can opt to use the brokerage service if they do not have access to existing opportunities.

## 7. Application Process

### 7.1 *For team activities*

All team volunteering activities should be sourced through Groundwork and managers should ensure that team members voluntarily agree to take part.

7.2 Once a team activity has been identified and contact has been made via Groundwork an Employee Volunteering Request Form (attached) must be completed and sent to the team leader's line manager.

### 7.3 *For individual activities*

It is recommended that early discussions take place between individuals and their line managers as far in advance as possible, about their plans to participate in voluntary activities or events.

7.4 Employees can apply to their line manager for permission to participate in the scheme. There is an expectation that managers would approve applications unless there would be severe implications on service delivery. Managers should work with staff to identify areas in which the volunteering opportunity contributes the employee's personal or continuing professional development.

7.5 Once the employee has identified a volunteering activity and made contact with the organisation (either through Groundwork or individually), they must complete the Employee Volunteering Request Form (attached) and send to their manager.

7.6 If an employee currently volunteering with an organisation operating in Barnet and would like to take advantage of the ESV benefit, they will also need to complete the Employee Volunteering Request Form.

7.7 All requests should be considered fairly and reasonably. Whilst the Council will endeavor to agree such requests, as a manager, you are entitled to turn down requests should they be deemed unreasonable or will prevent current work demands from being met.

7.8 The line manager would need to consider the application against whether:

- The volunteering opportunity is a valuable one for the Council, the Employee and the community
- The production of the organisations appropriate insurance documents (provided through Groundwork if using brokerage service)
- The volunteering opportunity and the organisation are appropriate. Inappropriate activities would include;
  - Party political activity
  - Activities which are wholly or mainly intended to promote a religion (although other volunteering with religious groups may be permitted)
  - Any activity which negatively impacts on the Council's business
  - Any activity which creates a conflict of interest in the employee's council role
  - An activity where the primary beneficiaries are not from Barnet.

## 8. Health and Safety

- 8.1 Where volunteering activity involves an element of risk to staff, line manager shall satisfy themselves that volunteers have considered, evaluated and accepted the risks. Responsibility to undertake the risk assessment lies with the voluntary organisation.
- 8.2 The Council is only responsible for the health and safety of volunteers working within its own services or undertaking and not for any with outside organisations.

## 9. Insurance

- 9.1 The Council's insurance only provides cover for staff undertaking activities within its own services, businesses and undertakings. During the times that Council staff are undertaking voluntary work for a charity or organisation, they would have to be covered by the charity or organisation's employer liability insurance. Therefore approval of any volunteering opportunities will be subject to the employee providing copies of the appropriate insurance documents from the outside organisation.
- 9.2 Employees who give the benefit of their professional advice e.g. financial advice, must personally ensure that they are not in breach of any professional conduct rules that they must comply with and that they have professional indemnity insurance for the advice that they are giving or that they are covered by the insurance of the organisation they are volunteering for. The Council will not provide this professional indemnity insurance.

## 10. Use of Council Resources or Equipment

- 10.1 In preparing for volunteer placement, it is anticipated that it will be necessary to use some of the Council's time and equipment, within reason. As a guide, it is suggested that employees may use the following office facilities, in their own time, for the purpose of arranging volunteering:
- Up to 5 brief local rate telephone calls;
  - Up to 25 pages of photocopying or printing.
- 10.2 Should employees require further equipment or facilities above this limit, they will need to discuss and agree this with their line manager.

## 11. Further Information

- 11.1 For clarification of any points contained within this policy, please contact either;
- **Liz Hammond**, Lead HR Consultant, 0771 7158793, [liz.hammond@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:liz.hammond@barnet.gov.uk)
  - **Sara Elias-Bassett**, Community Participation, Engagement and Strategy Lead, 020 8359 5320, [sara.elias-bassett@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:sara.elias-bassett@barnet.gov.uk)

