



St Helens Borough Council

Volunteering Together at St Helens

Volunteer Leave Guidance

Introduction

This guidance has been developed to provide further information about the Council's Volunteer Leave. It applies to all employees of St Helens Council.

Our Vision and Values

The Council has co-designed a clear vision for workplace culture and worked together with employees to identify values and behaviours for everyone. These will be at the core of how we work together to deliver our services. Employees will be empowered to deliver new ways of thinking and new ways of working, encouraging innovation and creativity in a learning environment.

Our vision, values and behaviours are underpinned by our Bonds for Working Together at St Helens which outline what employees can expect from working at the Council and what is expected of them.

[Our Culture, vision, values, behaviours and Bonds for Working Together at St Helens](#)



Volunteering Together at St Helens

Volunteering within the community supports our vision of 'Working together for a better borough with people at the heart of everything we do by improving people's lives together and creating distinct, attractive, healthy, safe, inclusive and accessible places to live, work, visit and invest'. It supports our 6 priorities outlined in our Borough Strategy and the Council is committed to actively encouraging and promoting volunteering as an opportunity to contribute to our community.

Our Ways of Working supports flexibility and enables participation in volunteering around existing work commitments. Volunteering benefits the Council by supporting our workforce to build and develop relationships, enhance their skills, knowledge, experience and add personal value to fulfilling activities. Creating new ways to foster team spirit by volunteering together for the benefit of the Borough.

Benefits to the employee:

- Participating in new experiences
- A learning opportunity to develop professional and personal skills
- Working in a different environment
- Fostering new relationships with the voluntary sector

Benefits to the organisation receiving the volunteer:

- Access to high quality volunteers with varied skills
- Better services for deprived and vulnerable groups

- Contributing to an issue they care about and support
- Providing an insight into the diverse needs of the local community
- Enhance their health and wellbeing
- Gaining an opportunity to 'give something back' to the local community
- New talent and energy from willing volunteers
- Improve relationships between the council and residents
- Increase community cohesion, health and wellbeing and offer alternatives to traditional support services.

Benefits to the Council:

- Enable closer engagement with the local community and support delivery of our priorities – Priority 6 Be a Responsible Council
- Improve staff engagement and well-being
- Opportunity to learn from insights gained in supporting the voluntary sector
- Developing the skills and capability of our workforce
- Support the changing expectations of the psychological contract which will help to attract and retain high performing employees.

What is volunteer activity?

Voluntary activity can be defined as:

'any activity that involves spending time[...] doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives' (National Council for Voluntary Organisations).

Where can I volunteer?

You can volunteer for any organisation that is a registered charity, recognised voluntary organisation or will be in response to a community need, a local crisis or need for local emergency aid within St Helens Borough which demonstrates positive social or environmental benefit.

Who can volunteer?

Volunteering is open to all Council employees and a request for time off for volunteering can be made by the employee to their line manager.

Time off for Volunteering

You can take up to 2 days paid time off each year (pro rata for part time staff). You will receive your normal day's pay for the volunteer leave.

Volunteer leave can be used flexibly, for example one day at a time or half days but cannot be carried over from one year to the next. All requests for time off to volunteer will be considered based on the volunteering principles and where possible will be granted. It should be noted that there is no automatic entitlement for paid time off for volunteering.

Volunteering Principles

The following should be considered when applying and or authorising time off to volunteer:

- Volunteer activity should support delivery of one or more of our 6 Council Priorities as outlined within the Borough Strategy.
- Any voluntary work must take place in St Helens Borough.
- There should be a benefit both for the Council and to the community group, the charity organisation concerned or the wider community.
- The volunteering activity should support the learning, development and wellbeing needs of the employee.
- The activity must not disrupt the work performance of the individual, team, or service.
- The activity must not disrupt or adversely affect the effective operation of the Council or service delivery.
- The activity must be non-political and must not carry any risk of bringing the Council into disrepute.
- There should be no potential conflict of interest with the volunteering activity and the individual's role or responsibilities of the Council.

Responsibilities

Employees are responsible for:

- Finding opportunities to volunteer that meet the Volunteering Principles.
- Discussing their request for time off for volunteering with their manager.
- Completing the Volunteering Form, accessible via MyView, and seeking authorisation.
- Enjoying the experience and being a great ambassador for St Helens Council whilst completing their volunteer activity.
- Sharing their experience by completing the Volunteering Reflections Form, accessible [via this link](#).

Managers are responsible for:

- Having a conversation with their teams about the benefits of volunteering.
- Giving due consideration to all requests for time off to volunteer. Ensuring that requests meet the Volunteering Principles and are responded to in a timely manner.
- Supporting individuals to ensure that they have a positive volunteering experience.
- Following up with individuals to ensure that their reflections are captured, and experiences are shared with the team.

How to apply

A request for time off to volunteer can be made through MyView, via the MyForms section, under 'Leave Management'. The form is called 'Staff Volunteering within Voluntary and Community Organisations'. This will need to be authorised by your manager prior to taking time off to volunteer.

Team Volunteering

Teams may wish to volunteer together to assist their team development whilst contributing to projects or activities across the Borough. Team volunteering should meet the Volunteering Principles and can be approved at the discretion of the grandparent manager.

Other Considerations

Reimbursement of expenses associated with volunteering should be agreed in advance with the host organisation.

Health and Safety

You will need to abide by the health and safety procedures of the host organisation. The Council will not be liable for any damages or injuries that occur whilst volunteering for another organisation.

- Where appropriate, health and safety risk assessments be undertaken by the relevant organisation and should be communicated prior to any volunteer work commencing.
- Any Health and Safety Training relevant to the volunteering tasks must be completed before undertaking the voluntary work.
- Where Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is required as identified in the risk assessment, this will be provided by the relevant organisation.

Insurance

It is your responsibility to ensure the voluntary organisation's insurance policy provides adequate cover for you. You are advised to check that the organisation you are volunteering with has adequate liability cover, in particular:

- Employer Liability – covering injury to employees and volunteers arising out of activities of the voluntary organisation; and
- Public Liability – covering injury or damage to property of third parties arising out of the activities of the voluntary organisation or the voluntary activity.

You will not be covered under the Council's Insurance Policy for your voluntary work. The Council will not accept any liability for you when volunteering for an external body and for the activities or decisions you undertake in such a placement.

However, if the Council enters into agreements with voluntary organisations on your behalf, for example as a group or team initiative, your manager will confirm with the voluntary organisation that sufficient Employer Liability and Public Liability cover is in place and that Council staff are covered for the time they are volunteering, via the voluntary organisations insurance provider.

Evaluation following volunteering

Following any volunteering, you are requested to share your experience by completing the [Volunteering Reflections Form](#).

The reflections form allows us to capture the benefits of volunteering for individuals and for the organisation. The reflections captured will inform an annual report on volunteering, which will inform the continuous development and improvement of policies.