



# Volunteering Code of Practice

## Introduction

### *The Cumbria Compact*

The Cumbria Compact is an agreement between Voluntary and Community sector and the Public sector in Cumbria. It explains how they plan to work together, and contains a number of principles and commitments.

### *The Volunteering Code of Practice*

This Code of Practice sets out good practice for organisations working with volunteers.

It is recognised that volunteers are an essential component to many services that are currently delivered within Cumbria and that it is vital that they are both recognised for the contribution they make, and at the same time, are adequately supported in their roles.

## Definition of Volunteering

Volunteering is 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. (**Volunteering England**)

## Scope and scale of Volunteering in Cumbria

There are volunteers in both the Public and Voluntary and Community Sectors. They undertake a wide variety of volunteer roles reflecting a range of time commitment, for example:

- Participating in environmental or conservation projects
- Running local community groups, such as Carer & Toddler groups
- Fundraising or providing other support (such as administration support) for a Voluntary and Community Sector Organisation (for example Age UK day care)
- Giving advice (for example, Citizens Advice Bureau advisers)
- Assisting or providing emergency services (for example, RNLI, Mountain Rescue, Special Constables, Fire and Rescue Service and First Responders)
- Working with young people (for example, Scout and Guide leaders or in a youth club)
- Befriending adults with learning disabilities
- Running a sports club
- Mentoring ex-offenders
- Leading or advising an organisation (for example as a village hall trustee or school governor)
- Providing professional expertise (for example volunteering through ProHelp or Reach)

This is not an exhaustive list but gives a good idea of the range and scope of volunteering activity.

The scale of volunteering is vast and as an example, scouting volunteers in Cumbria contributed the equivalent of around £1.6 million per annum. A “Quality of Life Survey” undertaken by Cumbria County Council on 2006 revealed that 35% of those questioned had “given their time, without pay, to a charitable, religious or volunteer organisation” during the previous year.

## **Principles of Volunteering**

There are four principles fundamental to volunteering:

### ***Choice***

Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual, including the choice to stop volunteering without pressure or guilt.

### ***Diversity***

Volunteering should be open to all, no matter what their race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origins, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, financial resources or disability, whilst ensuring roles are appropriate and compatible with the skills of the volunteer. However, a specific role may have particular requirements, for example an enhanced level Criminal Records Bureau check may be required to enable a volunteer to work with vulnerable people.

### ***Mutual Benefit***

Volunteers offer their contribution and skills unwaged but should benefit in other ways in return for their contribution. Benefits that volunteers should expect to gain include a sense of worthwhile achievement, useful skills, experience and contacts, sociability and fun, access to training and inclusion in the life of the organisation and the wider community.

### ***Recognition***

It is vital that the value of volunteers' contribution is recognised by all involved. There are various ways to demonstrate how an organisation values its volunteers:

- Saying thank you
- By providing a parking pass
- Putting on social events
- Giving certificates
- Providing references
- Involving them in decision-making
- Including items about their achievements in newsletters
- Opportunities to gather information for evidence based qualifications

## **Local volunteering infrastructure**

Within Cumbria there exists a large number of organisations that work with volunteers, including specialist organisations for young people, such as Cumbria Youth Alliance, V Involved Team and the Princes Trust Team.

Many organisations recruit volunteers directly, whilst others use the network of Volunteer Centres or through Cumbria CVS. In addition to these Centres there are other brokerage services (for example ProHelp and Reach who place volunteers who have specific professional skills with appropriate Voluntary and Community sector organisations and the V Involved Team that recruit 16 to 25 year olds into volunteering opportunities).

The CVS Volunteer Centres to meet the following strategic objectives defined by Volunteering England:

### ***Brokerage***

The volunteer centres hold information on volunteering opportunities. They provide potential volunteers with accessible support and advice in matching individual skills and interests to appropriate volunteering opportunities.

### ***Marketing***

Marketing and promotional activities aimed at stimulating and encouraging interest in voluntary and community activity. The volunteer centres will market and promote volunteering through local and national events and campaigns.

### ***Good practice development***

Promoting and actively supporting good practice when working with volunteers.

### ***Developing volunteering opportunities***

Working creatively, in partnership with other agencies, to develop volunteering opportunities and stimulate volunteer participation.

### ***Policy response and campaigning***

Identify and lead on policy development concerning proposals or legislation that might have an impact on policy or campaign issues.

### ***Strategic development of volunteering***

Inform regional and national thinking; develop local strategies ensuring that volunteering has a place in local planning.

## **Commitments to support Volunteering**

### **In supporting this Code, all organisations working with volunteers undertake to:**

- Identify a named person within their organisations to be responsible for volunteer involvement, and co-ordinating support. Ensure this person receives full training and is adequately supported in their role.
- Ensure that each volunteer has appropriate support, supervision and training.
- Make sure that the contribution of volunteers is given adequate recognition and publicity.
- Ensure that no volunteers are unfairly disadvantaged on the grounds of race, religion, disability, etc
- Carry out Criminal Records Bureau checks if appropriate to a volunteer's role.
- Ensure that volunteers are matched to suitable roles.
- Work together to create and maintain a modern and dynamic volunteering infrastructure.
- Encourage volunteers to claim for out-of-pocket expenses to ensure that volunteers who wish or need to claim expenses do not feel disadvantaged.
- Encourage the involvement of volunteers in ongoing decision-making and ensure their inclusion in internal communications.

### **In supporting this code, Voluntary and Community Sector organisations undertake to:**

- Promote volunteering opportunities, ensuring that recruitment is achieved on the basis of equality of opportunity and that all volunteers are subsequently managed sensitively and appropriately.
- Ensure that the sector has appropriate resources and procedures to support and train volunteers and volunteer co-ordinators / managers.
- Encourage the use of full cost recovery in relevant bids, to enable and develop volunteering, and recognise the financial contribution.

**In supporting this code, Public organisations undertake to:**

- Consult the sector so that development and implementation of legislation/regulation, guidance and policies take account of the ways they may affect volunteers and volunteering activities.
- Work to actively reduce barriers to volunteering resulting from regulation and policies.
- Recognise that it is legitimate for voluntary and community organisations to include the costs of enabling greater access to volunteering in relevant applications for funding. e.g. co-ordination costs, volunteer travel and training, equipment and or building adaptations.
- Work with the Voluntary and Community Sector to expand the public perception of volunteering by improving the profile, status and range of volunteer activity.
- Work to effectively tackle discrimination to ensure that volunteering is open to all.
- Support staff who wish to volunteer, for example, through employee volunteering schemes.
- Adopt policies to help ensure that specialist volunteering infrastructure can develop realistic sustainable long term funding.

# **Cumbria Compact Volunteering Code of Practice Appendix 1 - The Volunteer Charter**

All signatories to the Code will observe and promote the Volunteer Charter.

## **Volunteers' Rights**

- To be given a clear description of their role as a volunteer and responsibilities within the organisation.
- To be given the name of someone in the organisation that will look after their interests whilst they volunteer, and who will offer them appropriate induction, training and support and regular supervision.
- To be assured that any information shared with the organisation is kept confidential and is in compliance with the data protection act.
- To be given the same protection under health and safety regulations and public liability as paid workers.
- To ensure that there are clear problem solving procedures
- To be offered opportunities for training and skills development, appropriate for their role and tasks as a volunteer.
- Not to be exploited – volunteers should not:

Be used to replace paid workers  
Have unfair demands made on their time  
Be asked to do something which is against their principles or beliefs

- To be given the chance to play a part in decision making within the organisation.
- To be paid out-of-pocket expenses such as travel and lunch whilst doing voluntary work.
- To be able to take a break from or cease to volunteer.

## **Volunteers' Responsibilities**

- To accept the organisation's aims and objectives and work within agreed policies and procedures.
- To do what is reasonably requested of them, to the best of their ability.
- To treat information obtained whilst volunteering in an appropriate confidential manner and adhere to the organisation's confidentiality policies.
- To recognise that they represent the organisation and therefore need to act in an appropriate manner at all times.
- To honour any commitment made, to the best of their abilities, notifying the organisation in good time should they be unable to keep that commitment e.g. for holidays.
- To be willing to undertake appropriate training as necessary for the voluntary work undertaken.
- To recognise the right of the organisation to expect quality of service from its volunteers.
- To share suggestions for changes in working practices with the Volunteer Organiser.

## Appendix 2 - Useful Contacts

For further information about the Cumbria Compact, please contact:

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Jozi Brown  
Senior Representation Officer  
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27 Spencer Street  
Carlisle  
Cumbria  
CA1 1BE  
Email: [JoziB@cumbriacvs.org.uk](mailto:JoziB@cumbriacvs.org.uk)  
Tel: 01228 512513

### County Volunteer Co-ordinator:

Judith Holmshaw on 01228 512513 or e-mail: [judithh@cumbriacvs.org.uk](mailto:judithh@cumbriacvs.org.uk)

### Volunteering England

Regents Wharf  
8 All Saints Street  
London  
N1 9RL

Email: [volunteering@volunteeringengland.org](mailto:volunteering@volunteeringengland.org)

Website: [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)

On-line information sheets available include:-

- Definitions for volunteering
- Health & Safety
- How to say thank you
- Monitoring and evaluating a volunteer programme
- National statistics on volunteering
- Problem solving procedures
- Screening and CRB checks
- Types of insurance policy which cover volunteers

### Useful Websites

- [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)
- [www.investinginvolunteers.org.uk](http://www.investinginvolunteers.org.uk)
- [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)
- [www.timebank.org.uk](http://www.timebank.org.uk)
- [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk)
- <http://www.vinspired.com/>
- [www.charitycommission.gov.uk](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk)