

Volunteering with Midlothian Council

Report by A Lang Strategic Service Redesign Manager (Services with Communities)

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is for Council to note the adoption of the Volunteering with Midlothian Council Policy. The volunteer policy forms one of the foundation stones of Services with Communities.

2 Background

- 2.1** During the 2016 inspection of learning and development in our communities, evidence was gathered in relation to volunteering. It highlighted the significant contribution volunteers are making in Midlothian's communities. Volunteer Midlothian are the lead support service ensuring standards and support for volunteers across Midlothian.

In order to improve, reduce risks and expand volunteering within the Council a cross directorate review of our internal use of volunteers was requested by the Chief Executive seeking to establish a consistent approach to volunteering within the Council.

The working group chaired by Alasdair Mathers (Communities and Performance Manager) undertook the following actions to review and improve volunteering in Midlothian Council.

The Council working group worked with Volunteer Midlothian to:

- Map current volunteer activity within the Council, i.e. volunteer opportunities offered by the Council.
- Undertake an analysis of the current benefits experienced from volunteer activity.
- Map procedures and processes for offering volunteering opportunities.
- Consider good practice from elsewhere.
- Examine the key roles and functions required to support effective volunteering.
- Produce information on key areas for staff to be able to implement or improve their existing volunteer opportunities. These included recruitment, expenses, support and access to training. The tool kit should be as straightforward as possible in order to reduce the resources required, while also giving consistent support to volunteers.
- Investigate appropriate mechanisms to record volunteering in Midlothian.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Resource

The working group consisted of 10 representatives from across the Directorates with a mixture of those who do and those who do not currently use volunteers. The group met 8 times over an 11 month period. The review identified significant contributions to service delivery already being achieved by the use of volunteers. These took place in a range of settings from parental volunteering in schools, environmental volunteering with landscape management and the countryside rangers, ageing well activity programmes for older people, volunteers in care homes, adult learning, youth and children's work volunteers.

There is a time resource implication for Council staff in recruitment, record maintenance and providing appropriate support to the volunteer, up to and including the end of their volunteering period.

There is a resource required to create and maintain the recommended register of volunteers ensuring PVG and other regulatory requirements have been met. Where needed there will also be a resource required to process travel costs.

To ensure the processes are manageable with current resources, work has been undertaken with the Employment and Reward Manager to make processes as efficient as possible within an estimation of maintenance for approximately 50 volunteers per year. A smaller number of volunteers may require to undertake a PVG, currently these costs are covered by the local authority.

The process also requires the staff member and manager creating the volunteer opportunity to undertake risk assessments and secure permission for the volunteer opportunity taking into account the possible requirement to meet travel and PVG costs within existing budgets. The manager should not approve the volunteer advert if these cannot be met from within existing budgets.

In order to create momentum and have volunteering as a shared endeavour across Council. A commitment for action has been included as an appendix within the policy which requires the Council to:

- Secure a champion for volunteering.
- Hold an annual council volunteer recruitment open day.
- Provide taster volunteer opportunities.
- Increase opportunities for family friendly and youth volunteering with the Council.
- Celebrate volunteering through recognition schemes.
- Give volunteers the opportunity to contribute to service redesign and quality improvement.

The role of the champion will be to promote volunteering within and out with the Council, review progress, remove barriers and promote good practice and lessons learned.

3.2 Risk

Formalising the process of volunteering could lead to a bureaucratic volunteering approval / registration process which could in turn lead to the reduction of the number of volunteering opportunities. Work has been

undertaken to ensure this is not an unintended outcome of the process and testing of the model will take place.

The Volunteering with Midlothian Council Policy will ensure a consistent approach towards interviews, checks, registration, training and it will reduce potential risks including GDPR requirements. It will also reduce risks for vulnerable groups as PVG checks and other safety checks through centralisation.

3.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☒ Community Safety
- ☒ Adult Health, Care and Housing
- ☒ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☒ Improving Opportunities in Midlothian
- ☒ Sustainable Growth
- ☒ Business Transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

3.4 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

Enhancing volunteering opportunities will contribute to work towards all three of the Community Planning Partnership's top three priorities for 2018-19:

- Reducing the gap in learning outcomes.
- Reducing the gap in health outcomes.
- Reducing the gap in economic circumstances.

3.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The new volunteer workflow will enable the Council to analyse the costs and benefits of volunteering and support the growth of volunteering appropriately including analysis of equalities information.

3.6 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Key elements of our current and future approaches for volunteering will support preventative work in relation to health, wellbeing and positive outcomes.

3.7 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The working group engaged with a range of stakeholders including the lead agency for supporting Volunteering in Midlothian. The draft volunteer policy has also been presented and discussed at Midlothian Negotiating Committee of Teachers (MNCT) and Corporate Joint Working Group (CJWG).

3.8 Ensuring Equalities

Midlothian Council has a duty to ensure volunteering is open to all and barriers are removed in relation to those from protected characteristic groups including those affected by poverty. The new work flow ensures improved equalities tracking data.

3.9 Supporting Sustainable Development

Working with Volunteers is one of the foundation stones for expanding the service with communities approach. Working with volunteers can enhance services and add value to the services offered.

3.10 IT Issues

Use of the Council's ITrent system will be required to register volunteers who commit to a regular volunteering role. GDPR regulatory requirements will apply to data held about any volunteer.

4 Summary

The attached policy sets out the Council's corporate approach to working with and supporting volunteers whilst improving quality and reducing risks.

5 Recommendations

Council is asked to:

- Note the new Volunteering for Midlothian Council Policy.
- Nominate a Champion for Volunteering.
- Support the Commitment for Action (Appendix 1 of the volunteer policy).

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