

Volunteer Policy

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Author	Jessica Whitehead – Volunteers Officer Tel: 03000 030 612 jwhitehead@leevalleypark.org.uk
Sponsor	Victoria Yates – Head of Human Resources Tel: 03000 030 647 vyates@leevalleypark.org.uk
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1. Background

The Volunteer Policy sets out the principles and practices that the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (Authority) will adopt to ensure all volunteers are treated fairly and that it meets with its legal obligations.

The Authority has adopted the National Council for Volunteering Organisations (NCVO) definition of volunteering as:

“Volunteering is when someone spends unpaid time doing something to benefit others. Helping your close friends or relatives isn’t volunteering. But doing something to the benefit the environment (and through that, other people) is. Volunteering can be formal and organised by organisations, or informal within communities. It should always be a free choice made by the person giving up their time”

Volunteering plays a key part of the continued transformation of the Lee Valley Regional Park. The vision for the Authority is to be a world class leisure destination for nature, sport and discovery. The dedication of our registered volunteers continues to grow year on year through a range of mutually beneficial volunteering opportunities and quality volunteer management.

2. Purpose

This policy is designed to illustrate the Authority’s commitment to volunteering and its volunteers. To outline the Authority’s intention to treat all volunteers with fairness and ensure consistency throughout decisions made relating to our programme. This document will explain what volunteers should expect from the Authority and inform them of where they can find support if something goes wrong. It is also an important tool in educating internal and external stakeholders of the role that volunteers play within the Authority and why.

This policy will outline how volunteering relates to our business plan as well encompassing the following key points defined:

- Volunteer recruitment
- Equality, diversity and inclusion
- Volunteer role accessibility
- Volunteer induction and training process
- Volunteer expenses
- Supervision and support process for volunteers
- Health and safety for volunteers
- Volunteers' role in confidentiality and data protection
- Problem solving and complaints procedures for volunteers

Our values

- **Environmentally focused:** reducing our carbon footprint and delivering nature-based solutions by applying the principles of sustainability and nature conservation in volunteering
- **Community centred:** working with communities across the region and actively promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- **Commercially driven:** maximising investment and delivering additional income streams to underpin a resilient budget position
- **Innovative:** at the leading edge of new thinking and developments in sport, leisure and conservation
- **Empowering colleagues:** through continuous professional and personal development
- **Collaborative:** with partners and stakeholders to deliver the greatest possible outcomes

1. Volunteer recruitment:

- (i) Match the Authority's business needs with volunteer support through:
 - a) Work with all departments within the Authority to constantly identify new opportunities to meet changing needs and business priorities
 - b) Ensuring each department's capacity can support the volunteer programme by identifying gaps and matching these with existing skill sets of existing and new volunteers
 - c) Reviewing our recruitment processes to ensure new volunteers have the right skill set where possible to serve our business needs.
- (ii) Continually improving awareness and increasing access to volunteering opportunities for both the Authority and its managed venues through advertising
- (iii) Seek to raise the current ratio of volunteers to staff
- (iv) Enable volunteers have the opportunity to communicate what they are looking to gain from their volunteering e.g. give something back to their local community or gain experience that may help them into paid work
- (v) Encourage staff to pursue volunteering opportunities which support communities across the Region by:
 - a) Actively creating volunteering opportunities and then promoting and encouraging staff to pursue those opportunities as part of a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme
- (vi) Actively seek opportunities for joint partner programmes for volunteer activities through:
 - a) Advertising partner organisations volunteer programmes at our open spaces and venues

- b) Provide opportunities for companies to contribute to the Authority's work through their CSR activities. Actively promote the involvement (including sponsorship of sites) of 'corporates' through presentations and visits. 'Corporates' represent a good opportunity for volunteering as part of their corporate 'social responsibility' programmes.

2. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:

- (i) Continue to develop a volunteer programme that encourages Equality, Diversity and Inclusion including raising awareness of the Authority's positive approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
 - a) Ensure the Authority's Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy is accessible to all
 - b) Ensure volunteers from all backgrounds and ethnicities are represented
- (ii) Consulting with volunteers and staff as well as keeping up to date with the latest research and practices
- (iii) Identifying areas where further joint working with specialist organisations such as Sense.
- (iv) Promoting the Volunteer Strategy and programme to the Global Majority and other Hard-to-Reach groups.
- (v) Aim for volunteers to be representative of our community.

3. Volunteer role accessibility

- (ii) Provide our staff and volunteers with training on how to ensure that as far as practicable we can adapt our roles to make them accessible to as many volunteers as possible
 - a) Referring to the Authority's Health and Safety policies, risk assessments, safeguarding and relevant staff for guidance
- (iii) Work with individuals, local authorities and partner organisations to find new ways to reduce barriers into volunteering and support volunteers with specific needs
- (iv) Continue to research and update role descriptions on an annual basis or as and when necessary to improve accessibility including any changes to the language used and the places advertised

4. Volunteer induction and training process

- (i) Volunteers will receive an appropriate level of induction and training before taking part in volunteering
- (ii) Volunteers are made aware of Health and Safety and where to seek help when needed

5. Volunteer expenses:

- (i) All volunteers are entitled to claim for reasonable out of pocket expenses relating to travel to and from their home and their place of

- volunteering including as any other travel relating to their volunteering activities throughout the day
- (ii) Volunteers are encouraged to use public transport or car share wherever practicable to minimise their environmental impact

6. Supervision and support process for volunteers

- (i) Volunteers can expect to volunteer within a safe, friendly and supportive environment
 - a) The Authority will review the operation and function of the existing staff team, to ensure there are no capacity issues.
 - b) Staff who work with volunteers will receive training from Volunteer department on how best to supervise and support volunteers
 - c) Staff who work with volunteers can approach their line manager, the Volunteer department, Human Resources and the Authority's Health and Safety provider for advice and support to ensure they are providing the right level of supervision to volunteers
- (ii) The Authority will maintain the enthusiasm and commitment of our existing volunteer base by ensuring individuals and groups are rewarded for their dedication, endeavour and contribution
 - a) Constantly review and examine our reward and recognition activities
- (iii) Wherever practicable provide volunteers with opportunities to gain experience relevant to progressing their career, including the areas in which the Authority or its partners may be able to help them find employment
 - a) Staff who work with volunteers can approach their line manager, the Volunteer department, Human Resources and the Authority's Health and Safety provider for advice and support on how to provide these kinds of experiences in a safe and meaningful way that will also benefit the Authority

7. Health and safety for volunteers

- (i) Volunteers will be made aware of the importance of Health and Safety from the point of registration and throughout their time volunteering with the Authority and the venues that are managed on its behalf. More information can be found in the Volunteer Handbook.
- (ii) All registered and inducted volunteers are covered by the Authority's Employers & Public Liability insurance
- (iii) Staff will ensure that role descriptions, risk assessments are in place and updated on a regular basis in line with any changes. Staff must ensure all volunteers who carry out these roles are made aware of any changes.
- (iv) The Authority has a Safeguarding Policy in place and each volunteering role is checked by a Safeguarding Officer to determine whether a DBS check is necessary to take part within that role.
- (v) Staff will ensure the appropriate levels of staff supervision are in place
- (vi) Volunteers have the right to refuse to take part in any activity that they are not comfortable doing
- (vii) Staff and volunteers are made aware of how to report accidents, incidents and near misses

8. Volunteers' role in confidentiality and data protection

- (i) The Volunteer department works closely with the Authority's legal team to ensure that we have a robust and up-to-date Volunteer Privacy Policy and that any updates are communicated out to all staff and volunteers
- (ii) Staff and volunteers who handle personal data will receive training in data protection
- (iii) Staff and volunteers are made aware of the importance of confidentiality as part of their induction

9. Problem solving and complaints procedures for volunteers

- (i) All volunteer feedback both positive and negative is recorded appropriately
- (ii) The Authority has a Volunteer Problem Solving Policy which is referred to in the Authority's Volunteer Handbook which also includes a Code of conduct for volunteers.

3. Responsibilities

The Head of Human Resources is responsible for the delivery of the Policy and the Volunteers Officer is responsible for the overview, monitoring and evaluation of the Volunteer Policy.

4. Legal Considerations

1. There is no legislation in relation to working with volunteers (although there is case law which provides guidance). As an organisation using volunteers we have a duty to keep abreast of changes in good practice and ensure these are conveyed appropriately. Working with organisations such as National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), local volunteer centres and holder of the Investing in Volunteers Award (IiV) the Authority is seen as maintaining the highest standards of volunteer management.
2. Set out below are some suggestions (derived from the case law) to reduce the risk for the Authority of creating a legally binding contract with volunteers. It may not be realistic to avoid all of the potential risk factors, but removing some of the indicators of a contractual relationship should be possible:
 - (i) Avoid making payments to volunteers that could be construed as wages. Payments to cover actual expenses should be clearly identified as such and ideally reimbursed against receipts.
 - (ii) Remove or, at least, minimise perks that could be seen as consideration.
 - (iii) Reduce obligations on the part of the volunteer. Giving a volunteer the ability to refuse tasks and choose when to work will point away from the existence of a binding contract.
 - (iv) Avoid using language that makes the arrangement sound contractual and adopt flexible language, such as "usual" and "suggested".

- (v) Treat volunteers fairly by dealing with problems and grievances and good communication between the parties should reduce the likelihood of disputes with volunteers.

5. Relevant Policy & Procedures

There is a Volunteer Strategy that is directly linked to this policy and a Volunteer Handbook that supports the overall volunteer programme. The volunteer programme is managed through process and procedure that is part of the Quality Management System process and there are relevant procedures available to all staff working with volunteers via the Authority's intranet (Compass) and the Authority's Corporate and Visit web sites. There is also support in the form of a guide for staff who manage volunteers and an e-learning module which is available to all staff.

6. Policy Implementation

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the Volunteers Officer and staff who work with volunteers. The policy will be published on Compass for all staff and training will be provided for those working directly with volunteers. The policy will also be available on the Lee Valley Visit and Authority Corporate websites.

7. Monitoring & Evaluation

1. The effectiveness of this policy will be measured against the following targets:
 - Volunteer hours
 - Number of active volunteers
 - Monetary value of volunteering
 - Non-riparian volunteer percentage changes
 - Global majority volunteer percentage changes
 - Ratio of volunteers to staff
2. The following Performance Indicators are reported via the Authority Scorecard to the Members:
 - Usage
 - Customer Satisfaction
 - Complaints
 - Compliments
 - Regionality
 - Health and Safety Audit

8. Review

The policy will be fully reviewed every 3 years or sooner if any legislation comes into place or changes.

9. Glossary of Terms

Some of the terminology used in this document may be unfamiliar so this glossary has been attached to clarify some new terminology.

- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** – Groups of volunteers who are attached to a company or organisation undertaking a single day of volunteering activity. Normally funded by the company and undertaken on a normal working day. Used also as team building days or also called community days.
- **Diversity** – In this context means the variety of people that you have within your volunteering force and will include ethnic diversity, age diversity, gender diversity, disability diversity and community diversity. The essence is not to discriminate against any level of diversity within an organisation.
- **Global Majority** – NCVO defines this term as “...a shortened version of the term ‘people of the global majority’. It is used to refer to all ethnic groups except white British and other white groups, including white minorities. This includes people from black, Asian, mixed, and other ethnic groups who are often racialised as ‘ethnic minorities’”.
- **Hard-to-Reach** - terminology used by the government and volunteering organisations to describe any person or group who may not have access to general information due to language or technical barriers. This includes many Global Majority communities, people with disabilities or young or old sections of the community.

10. Appendices

There are a several companion documents to this policy:

- Volunteer Strategy
- Volunteer Handbook
- Staff guide to working with volunteers