



Volunteer Strategy for Halton Borough Council

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1. Introduction

Volunteering is the natural human moral response to helping others. It tends to operate at three levels: within a community, within an organisation and at the personal level. All local authorities make use of volunteers in a variety of ways. As a consequence, they recognise its important role as a catalyst in helping a community function in a more effective way. Within communities, volunteering can promote cohesion and a sense of belonging ownership and the ability to influence decision-making at a local level. In an organisation, volunteering is a vital means of support in the delivery of services and activities and in this respect serves to enhance people's lives and choices.

For the individual volunteer, it provides a sense of satisfaction, enhances self-esteem and enables social contact and an exchange of experience, knowledge and skills. It can if desired, offer pathways into education, training and employment and at the same time offer support for or even exit routes from long-term health issues. It is also important to highlight the link that exists between volunteering and such areas as: peer group interests, local support networks and individual learning programmes. In combination these will enable individuals to self-advocate and take more responsibility for their own health.

This strategy aims to provide the necessary structure to:

- Improve the quality and diversity of volunteering within Halton Borough Council (HBC)
- Increase the number, age range and utility of local volunteering
- Centralise all volunteering activity for HBC through a single portal
- Offer volunteers access to appropriate support structures such as supervision, training and development etc.
- Enhance Council engagement with the entire concept of volunteering

2. Definitions

Volunteering is not easy to define, at one end of the extreme, volunteering can be highly visible as when lending support to a good cause in the voluntary, community or public sector. At the other extreme, it can also be covert as in the role of the carer, where the term volunteer may never arise, yet carers provide a vital service to individuals without financial gain.

In addition volunteering can be either formal or informal. The former refers to activities that are structured and planned through an organisation. This can be: a small community group consisting entirely of volunteers, a local authority such as Halton Borough Council, a national or voluntary organisation. Informal volunteering generally refers to diverse mutual help and co-operation between individuals within communities. This can vary from babysitting for a friend to gardening for an elderly neighbour.

Although this strategy focuses on formal or organised volunteering, it will become necessary during its lifetime to examine informal developments too and where possible to make links between both.

The definition of volunteering adopted for the strategy is:

Volunteering involves freely giving time, enthusiasm and assistance, all of which in turn can result in measurable benefits to the volunteer, another individual, group, organisation, community, society or the environment. Benefits must have outcomes that are measurable and the volunteer in offering their services must be exercising their own free will and not motivated by financial gain.

The strategy will promote volunteering within HBC as an activity quite distinct from paid employment. In certain situations volunteers will work alongside other volunteers toward carefully defined goals. In others, they will work together with paid staff, where they will provide an additional value to the work already being carried out by council employees. An important distinction must be made between the separate yet complementary roles of voluntary and paid staff. This is necessary in order to avoid volunteering being viewed as a substitute for paid employees and volunteers being viewed in the workplace as a threat to current job roles. Thus volunteers must not replace paid staff. Instead they represent an additional resource that can bring a fresh perspective, focus and stamina to a department, office or group. Volunteers may also provide a means of accessibility for service users who otherwise would feel or remain excluded from local or council activity.

NOTE

It should be noted that this Strategy does not cover those employees of HBC that undertake volunteering activities in addition to their paid employment. However issues related to this activity will be reviewed by the Corporate Work Life Balance Group as part of the 'Working Flexibly for You' Strategy 2007 - 2010

3. The Concept of Active Citizenship

A common theme is the personal fulfilment individuals can experience when engaged in voluntary work. This stems from association with like-minded individuals, commitment to a common cause or issue and the enhanced self-esteem that comes with helping others. Many organisations within the borough of Halton would not exist without volunteers serving on their management committees, raising funds or delivering services.

Nonetheless, although it is clear that there is considerable activity within HBC that is as a result of volunteering, there is still a strong sense that more should be achieved. In order to ensure that volunteering within the Council is given the necessary status and reach it's true potential, volunteering within the Council has to be 'made over' in order to be seen in a better light. In particular, it needs to be seen as an important human resource, a way of getting things done and a means of enabling citizens to play an active part in their community or area of interest. At the same time, it must engage the needs and aspirations of the volunteers themselves. HBC fully endorses this combined approach.

In the current shrinking economic climate the Government continues to promote active citizenship, as a means of getting individuals more involved in their local communities. This not only includes more traditional ideas of community building, but also aims to increase the number of those who volunteer to be part of the democratic process such as magistrates and school governors. Volunteering is high on the political agenda and is regarded as important by all three major political parties. Over the next three years £117m will be invested in youth volunteering through the charity 'V'.

Other programmes such as: 'Volunteering For All' and 'Goldstar' emphasise best practice in volunteering and specifically target those groups least likely to volunteer (people with disabilities and long-term illness, those with no formal qualifications and people from black and minority ethnic communities). The Office Of The Third Sector also fund Volunteering England and the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation – both organisations that develop guidance, good practice examples and support to organisations and practitioners involved in mentoring and befriending.

4. Principles and Benefits of Volunteering

Four basic principles are central to effective volunteering. These are:

- Choice: the decision to act as a volunteer must be freely made by each individual.
- Diversity: Volunteering should to be promoted within all sections of Halton society, regardless of background, age, gender, sexual orientation, race culture ...etc.
- Reciprocity: Volunteers offer their time and skills, but must be able to benefit in other ways in return – for example training, work experience, enhanced self-esteem, qualification ...etc.
- Recognition: It is important to recognise the value of the work volunteers do. They need to be given a higher profile locally because of their important contributions to Halton, its community and local economy. Volunteers need to be congratulated with regular profiles of their work in the media.

The benefits stemming from volunteering activity are threefold. They help individual volunteers in a variety of ways, assist organisations making use of their skills and have a positive impact socially through networking in the local area.

- Individual volunteers: Have an opportunity to act as an ambassador within their own community. Gain a sense of worthwhile achievement a better understanding of and ability to contribute to the life of the community. Feel part of the local community, gain sociability and have fun. Develop a sense of pride and belonging due to their having ‘made a difference.’ Learn useful skills and knowledge (which can be accredited) and knowledge all of which can contribute to future employment. Can undergo considerable personal development that can add structure and meaning to previously routine daily life. Increase self-confidence, through improved physical and mental health.
- Organisations that use volunteers such as voluntary and community groups and public sector services: Are able to deliver a wide range of services and have a bigger footprint into the community. Receive input and stimulation from a cross section of society, giving them a greater understanding of service user’s needs, communities and groups that might benefit. Are more closely integrated into their local community to the extent that they feel they can enhance and add value to services and activities. This can include the provision of services that might not otherwise be possible such as chaperone and befriending services that require extensive local knowledge and interest.

- The community: Gains a more active citizenship. Receives an increase in the level of social activity. This in turn can significantly increase harmonious living, reduce crime, lower unemployment, increase participation and provide a greater understanding between different cultures and communities. Has services, help and support provided to a wide range of people at a minimal cost. A consequence of this is better representation of local opinion at decision-making levels ensuring that communities have a better chance of getting what they require.

As a consequence of the positive experiences gained through volunteering with local voluntary and community groups, the individual becomes better at representing themselves as well as others. This has the important effect of enabling them to take greater responsibility for their own health.

In addition to improving individual health outcomes, volunteering can also act as a springboard for getting marginalised groups such as: the long-term unemployed, individuals with no qualifications and ethnic minorities, back into education and employment.

5. Vision (National, Regional and Local)

5.1 A National Context for Volunteering

Within Central Government policies, volunteering has become more important. It is frequently seen as one of the most suitable means of delivering the kind of community involvement and engagement that is crucial in such policy areas as: regeneration, health, neighbourhood renewal, education and social cohesion. This view is reiterated in the Local Government White Paper (2006) – Strong and Prosperous Communities that identifies the importance of volunteering.

Local Area Agreements (LAAs) are seen by Central Government as a crucial way of expanding its agenda for local democratic renewal. Through LAAs localities are given more control to determine priorities and deliver outcomes in their areas. LAAs enable partners to pool funding streams and target resources where they are needed most. Central to this initiative are LAAs working with the voluntary and community sectors in order to append a powerful neighbourhood emphasis to any local programme. This is reflected in the mandatory targets set by Central Government around both formal and informal volunteering.

National Indicator 6 outlines the need for participation in regular volunteering; high levels of volunteering are one sign of strong, active communities. Volunteers are vital in supporting the range of activity undertaken by third sector organisations and within the public services. Local government has an important role to play in creating a culture in which individuals are able to contribute to their communities by volunteering. Whilst National Indicator 7 outlines the need for a thriving third sector; a vibrant, diverse, and independent third sector is a vital component of a fair and enterprising society. It can help communities to be more cohesive and inclusive, and help individuals to have more say over issues that affect them.

The Volunteering Code of Practice, introduced under the National Compact agreement in 2001, is aimed at improving the relationship between government/local government and the voluntary/community sector as a way to improve volunteering.

5.2 A Regional Context for Volunteering

Regional infrastructure organisations, which support and develop volunteering, are in the process of developing links while investigating the concept of partnership working. Some examples of key players are:

- Sport England whose volunteers run local clubs and activities for all ages
- Student volunteering representing further and higher education
- Timebank – the London-based marketing ad campaign charity for the whole of the volunteering sector
- Business in the Community (BITC) – an organisation that forges links between the private sector and the volunteering sector.

Regionally these initiatives can have an important impact. For example, there is wide acceptance of the fact that London won the bid to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic games due to its volunteering programme and its determination to leave a lasting legacy for the voluntary and community sector. On a smaller scale, the benefits of regional programmes can have a lasting impact on both local communities and individuals. The results can be a marked increase in life choices for many thousands of people.

5.3 The Current Reality of Volunteering In HBC

The aim of the strategy is to create a volunteer service for HBC that would be the envy of other local authorities because:

- Volunteering helps people to help others in the community by providing necessary training and making use of individual expertise and experience.
- It values the skills that are already in abundance within HBC
- It enables people to move easily from employment, unemployment, retirement, education and local interests to becoming a volunteer.
- It provides HBC with a central information portal that signposts volunteering opportunities.
- It provides a positive experience for volunteers.

Values underpinning these statements are:

- People should have the opportunity to volunteer. Volunteering is an inclusive activity.
- People have a talent that can be used to enrich someone else's life.
- Volunteering benefits the volunteer and those that are supported by volunteers. It is a shared experience.
- Volunteering can empower people to acquire new skills and knowledge and contribute to the development of local communities
- Volunteering can bring about change for individuals and for communities

Work to achieve this vision of volunteering will be developed through a number of strands of work identified in the action plan

5.4 What is working well and what are we proud of in HBC?

- Currently there is a large range of volunteering opportunities already available within HBC and a large pool of volunteers willing and able to get involved.
- There is excellent community cohesion and the general feeling is that HBC recognises the importance of volunteering, frequently stresses it in terms of Public Relations (PR) and that overall this adds value to whatever area of volunteering is under the spotlight.

- Informal volunteering is extensive, despite limitations on resources, funding and the lack of a proper framework. Much of what is already effective volunteering happens without involvement from agencies. It consists of people wanting to help others in their area either as informal carers or as part of what they feel is their moral duty to assist neighbours, the elderly, the disabled and the sick. Halton can be proud of the fact that it has a significant number of individuals who feel this way, particularly among its most deprived wards.
- Volunteers themselves within the Halton area are of a high quality and there has already been some attempt to develop this skill base by making it easier to get volunteers into the workplace.
- In the area of sport, there are particularly good opportunities for individuals to do volunteer work with young people.

5.5 Challenges and issues

- Halton like most other local authorities consists of different communities – Runcorn and Widnes are just two examples. Within each there are smaller communities where a sense of belonging is such that there can be real fear of attempting to operate within a different community which may be adjacent or further away. Some considerable thought will need to go into promoting volunteer opportunities for HBC in order to access individuals who may be keen but are socially isolated.
- The concept of volunteering needs to be carefully marketed to ensure that the role is seen as an attractive one, where inherent benefits are through appropriate support and training are provided. This should help to boost recruitment by reinforcing the idea that volunteering is the expected ‘norm’ in HBC. The modern tendency toward social mobility has the negative effect of eroding the previous generation’s closer links with place, family and neighbours. A way around this is to package the whole concept of volunteering in such a way that it is seen as not just an exciting and moral thing to do, but also a way of creating links in the community that can make the whole process self sustaining. Volunteer activity needs to be reported in a positive, celebratory way, possibly with regular features in the local media and on the Internet. This would help to enhance both its image and improve its popularity.
- In some areas within HBC the process for volunteering is not formalised and there will be inherent difficulties in trying to formalise and regulate volunteering within the Authority. It is important that procedures and policies for recruiting volunteers, ‘Equal Opportunities’ and other protective legislation apply equally to volunteers as employed council workers. Necessarily there is a large investment in staff time to recruit, supervise, assist and manage volunteers. This would need to be formally recognised. In

addition, ways of valuing and rewarding (not necessarily monetary) volunteers will be required. This would make it easier to maintain existing volunteer levels and help stimulate interest from additional individuals

- How can the necessary outcomes be measured? An evidence based outcomes framework will need to be developed which incorporates outcomes for not only the volunteers but the services and service users they are supporting
- Providing a consistent approach to volunteering in HBC will involve the difficulties implicit in managing change, especially where individual attitudes and well-established methods and approaches will need to be reappraised. This can cause conflict and so will need to be managed sensitively. It will involve assigning value to current approaches and looking at ways of demonstrating value in the future. It is important to explore the development of a 'hub' as the central point of contact, information and signposting for potential and actual volunteers. This will prove an important means of extending the pool of volunteers. This latter role is important because at present there is a tendency to overuse the same group of regular volunteers.
- A common fear among employees is that if there is an increase in volunteers within HBC there will be a decrease in the number of paid workers to accommodate this. Connected to this is the misuse of volunteers. Placing them in areas where they have little or no specific interest/ experience or where they could intimidate employed staff or indeed those service users they are supposed to help. This can cause resentment and fear among existing paid staff. Secondly, taking on volunteers often with a considerable breadth of skills and experience, can greatly add to the value of a service but again at the cost of causing resentment among potential employees of similar age and with equal experience and skill.
- Protective legislation can have both a positive and negative effect on potential volunteers. Positively, it is designed to reinforce their employee, civil and statutory rights to ensure they are protected in the same way as council employees. It is also designed to protect vulnerable individuals from abuse. However, volunteers understandably, can be frightened by the implications of legislation and by the official forms they are required to complete. This particularly can be a daunting prospect among older volunteers who are used to a more informal approach with a 'lighter-touch'. For example the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check process along with the impending introduction of the Independent Safeguarding Authority process can be a daunting prospect for such individuals and can act as a disincentive for volunteering within HBC.

- It is important to ensure that where there are services being run by volunteers, that they are given appropriate support and equipment to do this effectively.

5.6 Hopes and Opportunities

- It is recognised that volunteering is an important means of improving services to communities as well as the communities themselves, by stressing the importance of the strong social conscience already present in Halton. Volunteering by its nature tends to improve networking within communities. Word quickly spreads that things are getting done and this can help to sustain interest and higher levels of volunteering. The clear message is that **volunteers can get it done!**
- With a high level of strategic support it should be possible to get more people back into work, simply because volunteering offers experience and in many cases the opportunity to obtain qualifications while on the job.
- Volunteering is a very socially rewarding experience and as a consequence can help to broaden individual horizons enabling people to network more effectively. It can also offer people a level of responsibility and autonomy both of which can serve to enhance self- esteem. Further, volunteering is often visible at local level and is an excellent way of empowering local people to make noticeable changes in the way things are done in their community.

The ultimate hope is that volunteering will become a 'natural' part of HBC's culture. Thus currently an individual goes to the job-centre either physically or on-line if they are looking for employment. Similarly they would go to the Hub if they were seeking information on what the local possibilities are for doing some voluntary work. Indeed, both areas don't have to be mutually exclusive and eventually may simply be seen as alternative ways of contributing to: personal development, family, community and society.

6. Recommendations for the Implementation of the Strategy

The following recommendations suggest the direction of the work necessary to implement the strategy.

6.1 Volunteering Stakeholder/Strategy Group

The greatest priority for developing enhanced volunteering within the Authority is the creation of a strong volunteering stakeholder group. Recommended that:

- A volunteer strategy implementation group (SIG) is established whose remit would be;
 - to develop, and provide guidance on, a policy on volunteering
 - to carry out a survey of all volunteering activity within HBC and develop a 'map' of possible volunteering activities
 - to develop interfaces between the Authority and individuals via the community and voluntary sector

Ownership of the strategy clearly belongs with identified stakeholders. The membership of the new group should reflect the major stakeholders within the Authority. Key community organisations such as Halton Voluntary Action, Halton Healthy Living programme, Reach for the Stars/Health Trainers should be invited to join the group and membership of the group should include volunteers

6.2 Volunteering should be visible and valued

Recommended that:

- The Volunteer strategy implementation group should develop a volunteering marketing and promotion strategy for the Authority. The way we market volunteering in the Authority will affect the way it is perceived.
- Promotion of volunteering by employees should be further developed within the Authority.

6.3 Good volunteering practice should be promoted

Volunteers should be well managed to ensure that they are not taken advantage of. This will help enable HBC to engage volunteers more effectively. Recommended that:

- The strategy implementation group draws on good practice to develop a volunteering policy
- Core volunteering impact measures should be agreed by the implementation group to help assess the benefits of volunteering;
- A volunteering survey should be conducted to establish a baseline for volunteering activity within the Authority

6.4 The volunteer experience should be positive

If volunteers are to be recruited and retained then the people managing them need to have the skills to develop effective volunteer programs based on good practice. Recommended that:

- Appropriate staff are offered volunteer management training
- Best practice in improving the volunteer experience is shared between the authority and other agencies involved in volunteering activities.

6.5 Accessible volunteering : Pathways from volunteering to employment

Volunteering may be especially beneficial for groups at high risk of social exclusion but these groups may also need the most support to volunteer. Recommended that:

- Volunteering Strategy Implementation group examines the appropriateness of the development of a volunteering “hub” within the Authority.

7. Monitoring and Review

HBC is a best value provider that is fully committed to the continuous improvement of its services. This is achieved through the regular monitoring and reviewing of its policies and procedures. The SIG will report the level of volunteering within HBC on an annual basis. It will also undertake to monitor the Volunteering Strategy and related Action Plan and report on a regular basis. SIG will undertake to review the Volunteering Strategy in 12 months and then carry out future reviews as appropriate.

As previously stated earlier in this Strategy an evidence based outcomes framework will need to be developed in order to be able to review the outcomes of the strategy's implementation and the contribution it is making towards the requirements of the national performance framework and the LAA.

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Tel: 020-8613-7113
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The bigger picture
Warrington Volunteer bureau
Web: tracy@thebiggerpicture.org.uk
Tel: 01925-637-609
5. National Centre for Volunteering
Regents Wharf
8 All Saints St., London N1 9RL
Tel: 0171-520-8900
6. Employee Volunteering
Policy and Guidelines, 2005
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Web: www.westsussex.gov.uk/volunteer
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137 Shepherdess Walk,
London N1 7RQ
Tel: 020-7566-8650
Email: information@bitc.org.uk
9. From Barriers to Bridges
For Everyone Who Works With Volunteers
A guide for volunteer involving organisations
Web: www.volunteering.org.ok
10. Volunteering England
Email: volunteering@volunteeringengland.org

11. Retired & senior Volunteer Programme (RSVP)
Community Service Volunteers (CSV)
London N1 9NJ
Tel: 020-7643-1385
Email: rsvpinfo@csv.org.uk

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A review from the Government's Volunteering Champion
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Tel: 08452-777-778
Web: www.angus.gov.uk

Action Plan

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Lead Responsibility
Commission Halton Voluntary Action (HVA) to undertake 6 month project within the Health & Community (H&C) Directorate, linked to supporting the implementation of the Council's Volunteering Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness/knowledge/value of current and potential volunteering placement opportunities within the Health & Community Directorate and scope of volunteering in HBC as an organisation. Increased number and quality of volunteering opportunities within Sure Start to Later Life (SS2LL) and Community Bridge Building (CBB) within the H&C Directorate. Improved impact on service delivery of volunteering activity 	September 2009	Operational Director (Health & Partnerships)
Undertake baseline, training and development of volunteering 'manual/guidelines'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertaken a simple survey across the whole of the Authority, to ascertain the current levels of volunteering activity in HBC and the potential for future development. Analysed accurate baseline of current and potential placements across the H&C Directorate Trained managers within SS2LL and CBB to increase awareness/quality of placements Formulated consistency of approach and improved quality of placements across the H&C Directorate 	December 2009	HVA
Undertake development, monitoring and evaluation of volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of volunteering opportunities within SS2LL and CBB, in conjunction with undertaking management/monitoring 	February 2010	HVA

opportunities within SS2LL and CBB.	<p>and support processes associated with co-coordinating placements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and mentoring activity with “volunteer managers” within SS2LL and CBB, to ensure increased number of placements and -where required - improved quality of experience. • Data collected to measure increase, if any, in the number of volunteers within SS2LL and CBB from the baseline and qualitative data monitoring to outline the effect / impact of the coordinated approach on the volunteer experience and service delivery. 		
Undertake end of project analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of Project report produced outlining evaluation of success of placements undertaken in SS2LL and CBB for the service and individual volunteers utilising best practice tools around impact of volunteering on the individual and service area • End of project presentation made to the SIG which will draw together the key findings and recommendations of the project. 	March 2010	HVA
Produce Chief Officers Management Team Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to outline the key findings and recommendations of the project. Report will give senior managers the required information needed, in order to formulate a future plan with regards to volunteering activity within HBC in the future. 	April 2010	Operational Director (Health & Partnerships)

Outcomes of the Strategy for HBC

- Greater involvement of appropriate stakeholders in implementation of strategy (including corporate and voluntary sector.)
- Increase number of volunteers, especially from disadvantaged and under-represented groups.
- Increase in number of HBC employee volunteers.
- Accurate data obtained of existing volunteer activity within Directorates and across the Council. Reliable baseline from which to develop volunteering performance management.
- Creation of volunteering hub which will work to achieve a leaner, effectively marketed and high quality volunteering infrastructure reaching, recruiting and placing a greater number and diversity of individuals coupled with improved volunteer management.
- Better retention of volunteers
- Increase in staff skills in managing volunteers
- Clarity provided to staff and volunteers around best practice.
- Application of policies and procedures for volunteers.
- Creation of a standardised corporate approach to volunteering.
- HBC, staff and volunteers have clear idea of role each play in volunteering for HBC

Principles of Good Practice

1. General support

Volunteers tend to be active in a wide range of bodies and in different situations. For example, in addition to voluntary and community organisations, they are also used by statutory bodies and in particular, by health services and hospitals. It is therefore important to ensure that they are being managed and supported in the best possible way. This is crucial because volunteering has become more complex and bureaucratic. In particular, there may be health and safety issues, criminal record checks (for certain areas of volunteering) and an overall increased risk of litigation reflecting society in general.

Good practice guides for volunteering also exist. There is the **Volunteering England Investing in Volunteers Quality Mark** for organisations using volunteers. In addition, **The Institute of Volunteering Research** has produced a 'Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit'. This enables organisations to assess the effect that volunteers have on: volunteers themselves, on the organisation, on service users and on the community.

Also, the 'Voluntary Sector Institute for Professional Develop' (VSIPD) has been instrumental in commissioning an NVQ level 2 certificate in Community Volunteering. In addition, 'Business in the Community' (BITC) a nationwide collective of companies which challenges organisations to improve the impact they have on society and the environment, offers accreditation for employees wishing to volunteer. This is called 'Volunteering Plus' and it enables any learning and development that results from volunteering to be directly linked back into the workplace.

2. Common principles and relations with paid staff

All employees have a role to play in identifying ways in which the work of HBC in general and the Health and Community Directorate in particular, can be enhanced through the involvement of volunteers. However, it is important to ensure at an early stage in planning that such opportunities are seen as complementing, rather than substituting for the work of paid staff. The tasks volunteers will be expected to perform must be clearly defined, along with any set times/shifts, so that all concerned with their activities are aware of their responsibilities. It is important that the views of volunteers and those working with them are represented through such established mechanisms as Volunteer Forums.

Volunteers must not be asked to carry out tasks previously undertaken by paid workers whose posts have been made redundant, frozen or whose hours have been reduced. Nor must volunteers be made to work in a way that could contribute to a decrease in paid employment. They cannot be used in times of industrial action to do the work of paid employees. As far as possible

volunteers will have responsibility for carrying out specific tasks and these should add value to existing services. HBC will ensure that its employees at all levels are clear about the role of volunteers and that good relations are fostered between employees and volunteers.

3. Recruitment, Selection and Placement

Volunteering opportunities should be promoted widely such that they are accessible to all sections of the community. Individual opportunities when publicised, need to draw attention to the benefits and experience that can be gained from participation in volunteering. Recruitment and selection of volunteers must be in accordance with HBC Safe Recruitment and Selection for Appointing Officers and Equal Opportunities Policy. All the relevant checks should be adhered to and in particular good practice should be followed in the following areas:

- Advertising widely through various means – posters, adverts, volunteer events/talks in local places such as libraries, etc.;
- Completion of a volunteer application form;
- Volunteer “interview” – an informal two-way process, giving the potential volunteer enough information for them to decide whether or not they would like to volunteer and finding out if their skills and experience would fit into a volunteering role;
- Satisfactory checks prior to starting the volunteer placement, e.g. two references, and for some job roles, a Criminal Record Bureau disclosure etc. Some volunteers may approach the Council via other bodies, for example, Volunteer Centre or Bureau, voluntary organisations, where they may have already been through some of these checks. Obtaining copies of these checks, or a statement from the organisation confirming that satisfactory checks have been received will be required.
- Volunteer Induction
- Volunteer Agreement (agreed between both parties) – outlining what the volunteer can expect from the Council and what the Council will expect in return. Areas to be covered would include how the volunteer will be trained and supervised, what times they will be expected to come in and how frequently and what the volunteer should do if they cannot come in. It must be made clear that this agreement is not a contract of employment, and that either party can terminate the arrangement at any point in time. If possible, an opportunity should be made available for a discussion around why the arrangement is being discontinued.
- Volunteer recognition – some form of recognition such as an internal awards scheme, or presentation of a certificate, etc.

Placements within HBC will need to be carefully matched to the volunteer’s particular skills, experience and interests. Once placed, the council will expect volunteers to be made aware of and comply with existing policies and procedures (maybe in the form of a volunteer handbook). All volunteer roles

will be clearly outlined in a document that sets out the duties involved, time and frequency, commitment and required skills.

4. Support, Rights and Expectations of Volunteers

HBC must make adequate provision for the management of volunteers within available resources (financial, personnel, etc.). HBC will provide an induction period and a review session in order to assess the progress of the placement. This will enable problems to be identified and resolved at an early stage. In addition, an induction pack, or volunteer handbook containing health and safety legislation, complaints procedures, confidentiality, policies, procedures and other information relevant to their area of work, must be made available.

HBC will provide insurance* (normally through employer's liability insurance or public liability insurance) for volunteers and also funding for payment of reasonable, authorised, out-of-pocket expenses. In this respect volunteers will be given clear instructions and information about what expenses can be claimed and how to make such a claim. Each volunteer will be assigned a specific contact or mentor who will provide information, encouragement and support on a regular basis. Any issues or problems should be discussed initially with this mentor. HBC will offer suitable training based upon the volunteer's role, current skills, previous experience and the council's requirements.

* Insurance – there is no upper age limit to volunteering at Halton Borough Council, however, some insurance companies either refuse to insure older people in certain roles, or charge a higher premium for older people. There are many inconsistencies with insurance companies and their treatment of older volunteers, but hopefully with the introduction of age discrimination legislation this problem will end.

HBC firmly recognises that volunteers have the right to:

- Know what is expected of them
- Have clearly specified lines of support and supervision
- Be shown appreciation
- Have a safe working environment
- Be insured
- Know what their rights and responsibilities are if something goes wrong
- Be paid appropriate expenses
- Be trained for the duties they are expected to undertake
- Be free from any form of discrimination
- Confidentiality
- A level of personal development

In return, HBC would expect volunteers to:

- Be reliable, honest and respect confidentiality
- Attend training and support sessions when these are agreed
- Act with due care for their own safety and that of others
- Acknowledge and adhere to council policies and procedures

- Carry out tasks in accordance with the aims, values and expectations of the council
- Always work within agreed guidelines and remits
- Be anti-discriminatory in their work and at all times promote equality of opportunity
- Honour the volunteering commitment that they have made