

Employee Volunteering Scheme

Background and Supporting Evidence

February 2021

Background

Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community and can take many forms. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain. This is the definition commonly accepted across the UK and used by the Welsh Government. CCBC recognises many of its employees already volunteer in their local communities and believe that volunteering is a great way for employees to develop new skills and support a worthwhile event or project and build local communities.

The Employee Volunteering Scheme was developed after research into other public sector schemes operating in Wales and the UK. The draft Scheme is based on research into schemes operating in Pembrokeshire, Newport Gwent, Monmouthshire, Warwickshire, Wigan, Liverpool, Cambridge, Comhairle, Scottish Borders and Welsh Government.

The development of the Scheme forms part of the corporate review of Corporate Volunteering and Community Partnerships. A Review Group was set up to co-ordinate the development of the Scheme. The group consists of representatives from HR, Voluntary Sector, Leisure Services, Regeneration Team, Transformation Team, Housing and Policy Team.

Consultation has been undertaken with:

- The Regeneration Team who held focus groups with staff who volunteered as buddy's and managers of the buddies.
- Voluntary sector organisations including the Parent Network
- Frontline managers including Waste Management
- GAVO (Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations) who held virtual consultation groups with volunteers

Quotes from GAVO consultations

'Volunteering on the Buddy Scheme had come in handy for my work and has been an added string to my bow. It has led to me applying for a better job within the council and has been a great benefit to me. It helped me secure another position which is more community based. This volunteering role has given me the taste for a more fulfilling job role, more community focused, more community spirited and it has really helped me'.

'I do have increased satisfaction when helping people that are not able to go out and about due to Covid. It has made me realise I want to do more for the community, not just during Covid but moving forward when the country eases out of lockdowns.'

'I have never volunteered before but since April 2020 I have been a Community Buddy after responding to an email at work. I wasn't sure what I had signed up for initially and thought it was something different. I was volunteering 8 hours a week, then 4 hours and now I volunteer between 2 and 4 hours a week'.

Quotes from The Regeneration Team consultations

'It's great to see CCBC adopting a forward-thinking policy like this. I have friends who work in the private sector, in banking, and this is a benefit they get to have a half day to volunteer to paint a community centre or something and get released from their day job'.

'I accept what was said in that the line manager would have to check on the Volunteer Wales website to verify hours but surely this is not a problem as most staff volunteer hours far in excess of the 2 days leave available and I cannot see anyone who gets involved in volunteering fictionalising hours to get extra days leave'.

'At present, no impact as volunteering duties undertaken in Officers own time. If we return to office working, we will have to ensure volunteering role doesn't impact significantly on our service. However, the opportunity to claim an additional 2 days annual leave may impact on cover at times etc. Also. If there were to be more than 1 volunteer within a team then this could impact on the service delivery'.

Participants were very enthusiastic about the principles of the Employee Volunteering Scheme. The recognition, acknowledgment and reward element for civic minded activities featured very highly amongst the group. This resulted in praise for their employer for proposing this policy.

Conclusion

The above case studies and discussion groups are important in supporting the Employee Volunteering Scheme and ensuring that it will be accepted and work in practice. A FAQ's for managers will be developed to answer any questions regarding supporting staff on the Scheme. When the Scheme is live, data and feedback will be collated, and a report will be submitted on the Employee Volunteering Scheme after a period of 12 months.