

Volunteering Strategy 2016-2019

What is a Volunteer?

Volunteers may be described as individuals who put their experience, knowledge and skills at the disposal of an organisation, free of charge, with the primary aim of helping the organisation to achieve its service objectives and, or with the primary aim of bringing some benefit to the local community. In this sense, volunteers are to be distinguished from students, other work placements and secondees, where the primary aim is usually for the student or secondee to obtain certain work experience or to carry out work or research in certain areas.

Vision for volunteering

Brentwood Borough Council recognises that volunteers play an integral role in our communities. By promoting and contributing to community cohesion, volunteers have the power to make a positive difference to people's lives.

According to the government's Community Life Survey, from 2014-2015 47% of adults and 37% of young people aged 16-25 took part in regular volunteering (formal and informal), which is a decline from the previous 2 years.

Brentwood Borough Council is committed to ensuring that the local community is fully involved in influencing decision-making regarding its services and prioritises engaging local volunteers in service delivery. It will, where appropriate, support organisations to raise the profile of volunteering, and will lead by example by supporting and encouraging its own staff to undertake volunteering.

The purpose of this strategy

This strategy has been developed to ensure that Brentwood Borough Council:

- Supports the positive promotion of volunteering across the Borough by raising the profile of volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations.
- Demonstrates best practice by supporting staff to undertake volunteering.
- Ensures that volunteers are an integral part of the Council's service delivery.

The role of the voluntary and community sector

The Brentwood Compact

The Brentwood Compact is a written agreement setting out guidelines for working relations between independent voluntary organisations, charities, community groups and Statutory Sector organisations working within the Borough. It aims to promote partnerships between the Statutory Sector and the Voluntary Sector for the benefit of everyone in Brentwood. The Compact makes clear statements about expected standards for organisations to work to and consequently underpins principles we already share.

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The central themes of the Brentwood Compact include good volunteering practice and supporting the independence of the voluntary and community sector. It outlines that this can be achieved by recognising that volunteers make an important contribution to Brentwood Borough both socially and economically. It also outlines the importance of recognising good practice and effective management of volunteers and the need for organisational support for their work.

Raising awareness of volunteering opportunities and volunteer-involving organisations

As outlined by the Brentwood Compact, the Council will endeavour to recognise the importance of volunteers and support the voluntary and community sector by:

- Working directly with voluntary organisations such as Brentwood CVS and the forthcoming Brentwood Volunteer Centre to support the development of local volunteering.
- Displaying promotional materials regarding volunteering opportunities where possible throughout the Borough.
- Using word of mouth and promoting volunteering through networks, partnerships and community organisations.
- Establishing links with schools, colleges, local companies, places of worship and community groups to engage new volunteers.
- Using existing Council communication means, such as social media and online channels to promote local volunteering opportunities.
- Issuing pro-active press releases to local community groups and the media.
- Actively encouraging equal opportunities by engaging hard to reach groups and vulnerable groups.

Employee Volunteering Scheme

Brentwood Borough Council employees work to improve residents' quality of life in many different ways, both directly and indirectly. Employee volunteering provides an opportunity for employees to make a more direct and personal contribution to local people and our communities.

In supporting and encouraging employees to volunteer through its employee volunteering scheme, Brentwood Borough Council aims to:

- Strengthen its links with the local community and share knowledge, expertise and skills of its employees;
- Contribute positively to the delivery of Brentwood Borough Council services;
- Enhance partnership working;
- Aid skill development of employees that can be brought back to the workplace;
- Raise wellbeing and morale of employees;
- Lead by example.

Engaging volunteers in Council service delivery

Brentwood Borough Council recognises that there can be occasions whereby a volunteer's help can make an appropriate and significant contribution to the service delivery of the Council:

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- Volunteers can bring a different perspective to the work of the Council; often one that reflects the diverse views of the local community.
- Volunteers can help to extend services the Council currently offers.
- Volunteering empowers our citizens to actively influence decision making and service provision.
- By providing opportunities for skills development within our local community.
- Volunteering can be a valuable pathway to employment or training opportunities.
- Volunteering can provide opportunities to meet like-minded people.
- Volunteering can provide an opportunity to be involved with something interesting, absorbing and rewarding.
- Volunteering can improve general health and wellbeing.

(For additional information regarding Brentwood Borough Council's principles around engaging volunteers, please see the Brentwood Borough Council Volunteer Handbook.)

This strategy should be read in conjunction with:

- The Brentwood Compact
- The Volunteer Engagement and Recruitment Policy and Procedures
- Employee Volunteering Policy and Procedures

Monitoring

This strategy will be monitored on an annual basis. It will be reviewed and refreshed every 3 years.

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Brentwood Borough Council

Volunteering Strategy – Action Plan 2016 / 2017

Objective	Actions	Responsibility	Resources	Timescale
<p>Support the positive promotion of volunteering across the Borough by raising the profile of volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations.</p>	<p>Brentwood Compact Launch the Brentwood Compact Align with the Essex Compact</p>	<p>Partnership, Leisure and Funding Manager.</p>	<p>Existing</p>	<p>April 2016</p>
	<p>Work closely with Brentwood CVS to support the establishment of the Brentwood Volunteer Centre and the Timebank scheme through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisting with funding applications • Assisting with project set up and management. • Promoting the Centre once set up • Directing Council Volunteering opportunities through the Centre. 	<p>Partnership, Leisure and Funding Manager. Culture, Community and Youth Development Officer.</p>	<p>Existing</p>	<p>Ongoing – Centre to be established by end of 2016.</p>
	<p>Working with voluntary and community groups by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting local volunteering opportunities through displaying materials and via social media and other communication platforms. • Promoting volunteering opportunities through networks and partnerships. 	<p>Culture, Community and Youth Development Officer.</p>	<p>Existing</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

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Demonstrate best practice by supporting staff to undertake volunteering.	Update the Employee Volunteering Policy and Procedures, continuing to allow staff up to 2 days leave for volunteering within the local community.	Culture, Community and Youth Development Officer.	Existing	March 2016
	Deliver group volunteering activities for staff such as environmental clean up days.	Culture, Community and Youth Development Officer.	Existing	April 2016
		Community Services Assistant. Streetscene and Environment – Operational Services – Business Support Services Manager		September 2016
Ensures volunteers are an integral part of the Council's service delivery.	Update the Volunteer Engagement Policy and Procedures including the Volunteer Handbook.	Culture, Community and Youth Development Officer.	Existing	March 2016
	Promote the use of volunteers across the Council through internal communication methods including through the HR Microsite.	Culture, Community and Youth Development Officer.	Existing	Ongoing
	Promote particular Council volunteering schemes and opportunities such as the Countryside Volunteers, Environmental Action Days and community event stewarding.	Culture, Community and Youth Development Officer.	Existing	Ongoing