

Volunteering Policy

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1 Policy

1.1 Aim

Lambeth's Cooperative Council ambition and corporate plan set out a vision of a council and borough that is more aspirational, caring, safe and secure.

At the heart of the council's plan is the firm belief that the council and its residents must work together to co-produce services to ensure these ambitions are realised. Whilst the council values the skills of its current workforce we recognise that co-production requires a new way of thinking and working, embodied by mutual concept. We will need to embed a new working culture and transform our staff into enablers of mutualism and cooperation.

The Volunteering Policy sets out the council's approach to how it will support employees to volunteer in the Lambeth community, gaining skills, experience and competencies that support cooperative working. It is the foundation on which the council's involvement of volunteers will be based and provides a framework for the workforce to learn to work hand in hand with residents to achieve the ambitions set out in the corporate plan.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all employees directly employed by the Council, excluding non-teaching staff based in schools.

1.3 Responsibilities

Employees are responsible for:

- Providing information about volunteering activity that they wish to undertake
- Seeking appropriate approval through their line manager for absence from work in order to carry out volunteer work.

Line managers are responsible for

- Considering requests from employees to undertake volunteering activities during work time
- Providing guidance about the suitability of volunteering opportunities
- Ensuring that appropriate measures are taken to maintain service delivery in all cases where time off for volunteering is approved
- Maintaining appropriate records of time off granted for each employee

- Ensuring the health, safety and welfare of their employees whilst volunteering
- Ensuring requests are considered and implemented in accordance with the Council's FRESH values.

Human Resources are responsible for:

- Providing advice and support to managers and staff throughout the process
- Monitoring the application of the procedure, reporting trends and non-compliance. Ensuring all staff have equal opportunity to participate and a discussion takes place around any individual requirements.

2 General Principles

2.1 Supporting Volunteering

- 2.1.1 Volunteering in the community is not a new concept. Many within our workforce already give up some of their personal time to work with charitable institutions, school and hospitals, voluntary groups, residents associations, trade unions as well as through religious organisations. It is a recognised avenue for many to give back to their communities. The council intends to build on this goodwill and practice in its journey to becoming a cooperative council.
- 2.1.2 Volunteering provides additional opportunities to explore ways of working between the council and its partners. It is one way of enabling the workforce to connect with the council's many diverse communities and develop and strengthen links with local community projects. The workforce itself will benefit in achieving personal development goals, in particular for those staff not usually dealing with the public or dealing with them in a different way. There is also an opportunity to make a positive contribution to creating a safe and secure environment, investing in the borough's children and young people and encouraging enterprise and employment in the borough.
- 2.1.3 Allowing paid time off confirms the council's commitment to volunteering and supports active participation. The council has agreed to approve paid time off for volunteering work in Lambeth. Eligible employees may take paid leave of up to three days per year (21 hours) or pro-rata equivalent for staff who work part time.
- 2.1.4 This arrangement is specifically to enable staff to contribute to the cooperative council ambition and does not replace our existing special leave policy.

3 Outcomes

3.1 Benefits to the council

- 3.1.1 Volunteering complements the council's existing training and development programme by providing a wider variety of different real-life settings where the workforce can apply and demonstrate their learning.
- 3.1.2 Improved relations with the community. Volunteering will help to inspire trust and confidence within the council and between the council and Third Sector and enhance the reputation and perception of the cooperative council.
- 3.1.3 A broader understanding of community issues and the impact of the work of the council on the everyday lives of our residents. This will in turn have a positive impact on staff morale and motivation.
- 3.1.4 Exposure to areas outside their normal remit will broaden staff development, allowing them to build new skills. This will not only assist in retaining valuable staff and reduce recruitment and training costs but will also increase creativity and performance in the workplace.
- 3.1.5 Increased knowledge and competencies in co-producing services, managing smaller units will building capacity for successfully managing mutuals and social enterprises as the council considers alternative methods of service delivery.
- 3.1.6 Team based volunteering opportunities support the building of strong and effective teams which improves working relationships and performance.

3.2 Benefits to the community

- 3.2.1 Working with the council workforce will assist in breaking down barriers between officialdom and citizens.
- 3.2.2 Residents will gain an insight into how the council operates and how goals requiring council support may be achieved more efficiently.
- 3.2.3 Residents will have an opportunity to develop skills in areas such as management development and financial management.
- 3.2.4 Residents will develop links that allow them to have a greater say in the provision of services, enhancing their social, economic and environmental well being.

4 Guidelines

4.1 Eligibility

- 4.1.1 All directly employed staff of the council who have successfully completed their probation period are eligible to be considered for paid time off for volunteering in Lambeth.

4.2 Volunteering Activities

- 4.2.1 The council is keen to support employees who wish to volunteer in Lambeth. Employees may choose the work they wish to be involved with but this must not be inconsistent with the Staff Code of Conduct or in any way conflict with the council's interests or bring the council into disrepute. Though this list is not exhaustive, examples of volunteering activity may include:

- Assisting in literacy campaigns in primary schools
- Community mentoring with a range of client groups, such as looked after children
- Team tasks, such as clean up campaigns and open spaces
- Teams can adopt a local cause, partnerships can be established between them and one particular group, charity or school
- Sport based activities with youth clubs
- Trustees and committee members
- Stewards for local events
- Survey and interviewing
- Helping older people
- Participating in prisoner projects
- Teaching English as a second language
- Non-political campaigning and fundraising
- Tree planting.

4.3 Time off

- 4.3.1 Volunteering work can be carried out in a block of 3 days or spread out evenly over the course of one year. All time off must be agreed in advance with the line manager. Approval is at management discretion and must take into consideration the demands of the service. A record

of time approved and taken must be kept by each manager and this will be routinely monitored through human resources.

4.4 Health and Safety

- 4.4.1 Lambeth Council has a statutory duty to provide a safe place to work in and a healthy working environment for all who use its buildings, including those who use it on a temporary basis.
- 4.4.2 The general duties imposed upon the Council are defined in the Health and Safety at Work Etc Act 1974. Effective control of health and safety is achievable through co-operative effort at all levels and good management practice in carrying out risk assessments and control.
- 4.4.3 All volunteer users of our office space have a duty to take responsible care for themselves and others and to co-operate with Lambeth staff to enable the Council to comply with its duties.
- 4.4.4 Volunteers and employees are reminded that they have a similar duty of care for their own Health and Safety whilst travelling to or from any venue for the purposes of council business or when taking part in any authorised activity wherever this may be conducted.

4.5 Monitoring and Evaluation

- 4.5.1 To enable the council to evaluate the success of volunteering, strengthen and build future initiatives around the practice, all staff participants will be expected to provide feedback on their experience. This should outline any training received and the skills acquired, relationships built with the community and further areas that may be developed. Complete the [evaluation form](#) in the Lambeth Learning Zone under Statutory, Cooperative Council.

4.6 How to get involved

- 4.6.1 To get more information on volunteering, details will be advertised on our [volunteering page](#) on the intranet. This includes a social site where opportunities can be posted by staff. To access go to Staff Services, Learning and Development, Volunteering.
- 4.6.2 In addition we will be using twitter and facebook to provide updates as well as being a place for you to post your comments.

5 Application Process

- 5.1 As part of the annual appraisal cycle and through the established regular one-to-one process, managers and employees will discuss the benefits a volunteering activity might bring.

- 5.2 When an employee identifies a possible volunteering opportunity, they must provide the following details to their line manager, to allow them to make an appropriate decision whether to authorise paid time off:
- The name of the organisation where the employee proposes to volunteer
 - The dates and times for the proposed period of volunteering
 - The expected benefit to the organisation, the employee and the council where applicable.
- 5.3 All employees wishing to undertake volunteering activities must complete a [volunteering application form](#) in the Lambeth Learning Zone under Statutory, Cooperative Council or if you require any assistance email volunteering@lambeth.gov.uk.