

# **Staff Guide to Employee Volunteering Scheme**

August 2009



## **What is an Employee Volunteering Scheme?**

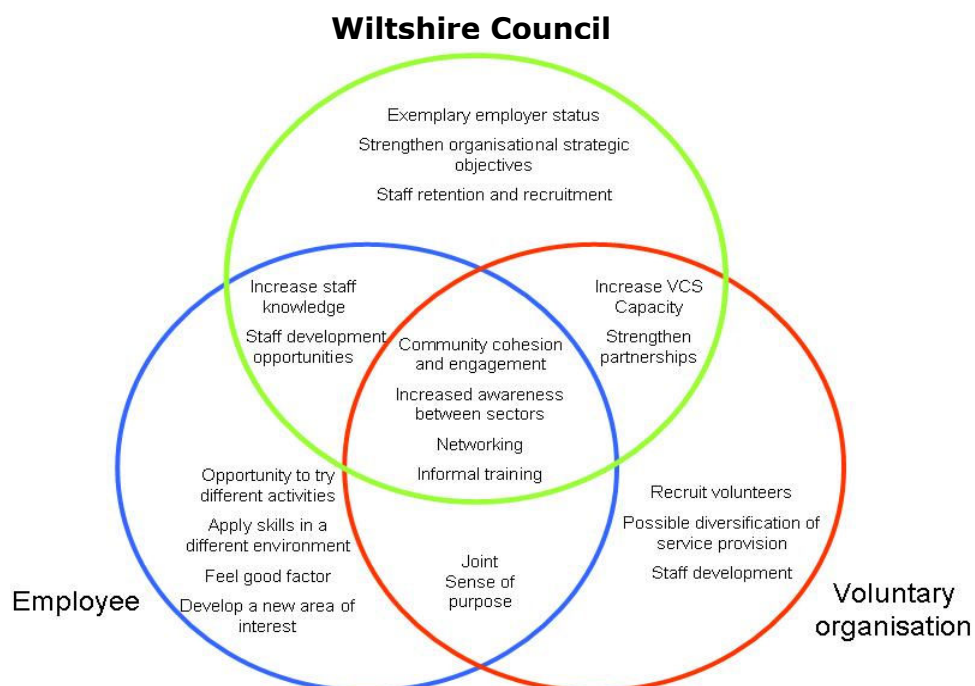
At Wiltshire Council an employee volunteering scheme has been set up to support and encourage staff who would like to participate in volunteering activities.

The scheme allows each eligible member of staff to have 22.5 hours paid leave per year to take part in volunteering activities which are eligible within the scheme.

## **Why volunteer?**

There are many reasons why people want to participate in volunteering activities. Amongst other things these include wanting to give a helping hand in the local community, improving and developing new skills and simply getting to know more people.

Indeed, there are a lot of benefits which are associated with volunteering and employee volunteer schemes. These benefits apply to the volunteer, the organisation that they are volunteering with and the volunteer's employer who is allowing them to participate in the scheme.



## **Who can take part in the scheme?**

The scheme is open to the all Wiltshire Council employees, with the exception of school-based and commercial contract staff who unfortunately are not able to take part in the scheme at present due to issues surrounding cover provision and contract liabilities.

## **Whose permission do I need to take part in the scheme?**

If you have decided that you would like to participate in the scheme, you need to initially consult with your manager before proceeding further. Your manager will make the decision about whether you will be able to take part in the scheme, although they should only refuse permission if it would cause disruption for service delivery, adversely affect quality or performance, add costs to services or is otherwise not in the best interests of the Council.

Once you have sought their initial approval, you will need to complete the formal application form and you and your line manager will sign it.

## **How much leave will I be given if I take part?**

Each eligible employee will be allowed a maximum of 22.5 hours per year as paid annual leave, providing it is for volunteering activities which are permitted within this scheme. This will be on a pro-rata basis. Therefore if you work 2.5 days a week you will be permitted 11 hours paid leave per year for the scheme.

## **When can I take volunteering leave?**

Leave can be taken in small blocks e.g. blocks of one hour per week over 22 weeks, or in larger blocks. For community challenge events, it might be a full day.

You must give your manager reasonable notice of when you would like to take this time to ensure that service delivery is not disrupted.

You will not be able to carry volunteering leave from one year in to the next.

## **What volunteering activities can I participate in?**

*TBC – recommendations are requested from Chief Officers.*

## **Do I have to match the amount of time given through the Wiltshire Council scheme with my own spare time?**

Whilst it would be great if you were able to give some of your own spare time outside of work hours to participate in volunteering activities, you do not have to do so in order to take part in this scheme.

## **Will Wiltshire Council reimburse my costs if I take part in the scheme?**

Generally no. Wiltshire Council will not reimburse any of your costs, including travel, if you take part in the scheme. It may be that certain voluntary organisations are able to reimburse some of your personal costs, but this will need to be discussed directly between you and the organisation that you will be volunteering for. If you are participating in a Council-led community challenge event, you will be able to claim necessary travel costs at your usual mileage rate.

## **What if I have any conflicts of interest?**

If you have any conflicts of interest, i.e. official contact, with a voluntary organisation involved in the scheme, you should make these known and not choose them as the organisation that you volunteer for. Your line manager or HR can give you more guidance on this.

## **How will Wiltshire Council know when I'm volunteering?**

You will have informed your manager with reasonable notice of when you want to participate. You will also be asked to keep a log of when you take part in volunteering activity, which you will have to send to Human Resources/the scheme coordinator when requested.

Whilst the scheme is based on trust, Wiltshire Council reserves the right to contact the organisation with which you are volunteering.

## **Will I need a CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) check?**

If you are working with certain groups of people, such as children or vulnerable people, then you will need a CRB check. The voluntary organisation that you will be volunteering with will undertake this. Most organisations do not charge volunteers, but you may want to double-check first. If you need a CRB check for Council-led community challenge events, the council's HR department will undertake the check, but the process can take several weeks, so you need to plan for this.

## **Any health and safety considerations?**

There are a wide range of activities that you can participate in when volunteering. You may need to think about whether there are any activities which you should avoid. For example, if you have a bad back, then maybe doing gardening for a community centre is not a good idea.

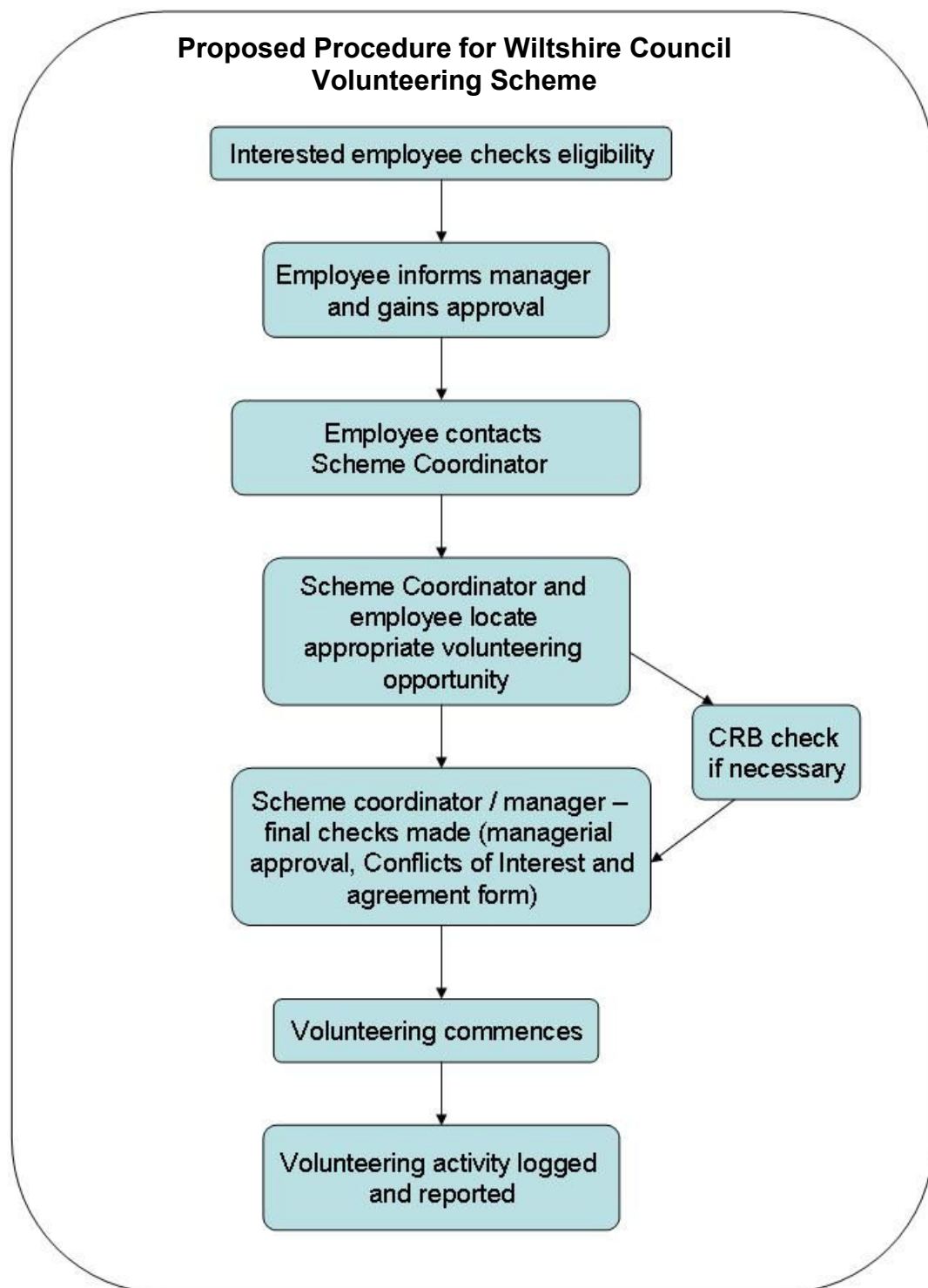
All registered voluntary organisations have appropriate arrangements for health and safety, risk and insurance and these should be in place before you begin your volunteering. WC is NOT responsible for providing cover for insurance, health and safety or risk assessments whilst you are volunteering in the scheme, unless the Council itself is providing the volunteering opportunity. Once you have found an activity that you would like to take part in, you will need to contact the voluntary organisation to ensure that they have appropriate policies in place. You, or the voluntary organisation will need to provide evidence of these before being permitted to undertake activity.

## **Interested in taking part? The next steps**

If you are interested in taking part in the employee volunteering scheme, please contact the scheme co-ordinator for further information.

email:

telephone:

**Procedure**

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