Surrey Compact

The Surrey Compact is a commitment to continually improve relationships between the public, voluntary, community and faith sector and organisations representing service users and carers.

Volunteering Code

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1. Principles of Volunteering

    The National Code on Volunteering defines volunteering as "an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives".

    The national code also identifies four principles that are regarded as fundamental to volunteering – Choice, Diversity, Reciprocity and Recognition.

    These are defined as follows:

    Choice: Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. Any encouragement to become involved in volunteering should not result in any form of coercion or compulsion. Freedom to volunteer implies freedom not to volunteer.

    Diversity: Volunteering should be open to all, no matter what their background. Implementing equalities policies and schemes and a welcoming approach are basic to supporting diversity.

    Reciprocity: Volunteers offer their contribution unwaged but should benefit in other ways in return for their contribution to wider social objectives. Giving voluntary time and skills must be recognised as establishing a reciprocal relationship in which the volunteer also benefits.

    Recognition: Explicit recognition of the value of what volunteers contribute to the organisation, to the community, to the social economy and to wider social objectives is fundamental to a fair relationship between volunteers and the organisation with which they are working.

2. Introduction

2.1 The aim of the Surrey Compact Volunteering Code is to draw on current best practice around attracting, supporting, training and retaining volunteers. It sets a benchmark by providing key principles and specific actions to help organisations develop, maintain and increase volunteering, and deal with new developments as they arise.

Although it is not a legally binding document, its impact comes from the public commitment of organisations in all sectors to supporting and using it. Those organisations that involve volunteers in their work or promote volunteering should set out how they intend to apply this code.

Where Compact Signatories do not follow this Code, they should satisfy themselves that, if asked, they have good reasons for not doing so.

2.2 This Code applies to all organisations that support the Surrey Compact.

2.3 Through this code the Surrey Compact is committed to:

- Ensuring that diversity is respected, embraced and celebrated;

- Working to promote volunteering by improving its profile, status and the range of volunteer activity;

- Making the value of volunteer contributions more visible;

- Ensuring that volunteers are brought into policy-making consultation processes appropriately;
- Challenging barriers to volunteering;
- Acknowledging the difference between volunteering and paid work, whilst ensuring volunteers' equality of treatment;
- Supporting and maintaining an appropriate volunteering infrastructure.

2.4 Public Sector bodies agree to:

- Develop, promote, recognise and celebrate volunteering;
- Take into account the needs and value of volunteers and volunteering when developing policies and services;
- Recognise volunteering infrastructure organisations as independent voluntary sector bodies and work together to ensure their long term sustainability;
- Promote and support employee volunteering;
- Recognise the associated costs of volunteer recruitment, promotion and expenses, training and support when considering funding agreements;

- Take all appropriate action to manage risk in all situations, thereby allowing the volunteer to work in a safe environment within the appropriate legislation.

2.5 The voluntary and community sector organisations agree to:

- Develop, promote, recognise and celebrate volunteering where possible;
- Provide volunteers with the recognition, support, management, training and other resources they need to be fully effective;
- Consult with volunteers on developments and changes in organisations or services that would affect them;
- Identify an appropriate member of staff and/or Board Member to be responsible for volunteer involvement, and for monitoring and reporting on volunteering;
- Include volunteers within the scope of equalities policies in place for staff and service users and carers;

- Take all appropriate action to manage risk in all situations, thereby allowing the volunteer to work in a safe environment within the appropriate legislation.

2.6 Joint undertakings will be to:

- Take all necessary steps to ensure safe practices with regard to services to vulnerable children and adults;
- Consider working towards an approved, identified Quality Standard.

3. Barriers to Volunteering

3.1 Barriers can include:

- Negative or ill-informed attitudes to volunteering;
- Quality of information;
- Lack of communication and collaboration between organisations.
- Lack of time.
- Difficulty in finding the right opportunity.
- Matching volunteers to the right opportunity.

3.2 To ensure that the barriers to volunteering are addressed, Compact affiliated organisations will:

- Explore how the range of volunteer activities can be maximised and publicised; both separately and collectively;
- Consider, on an organisation by organisation basis, a policy on the payment of volunteer expenses and ensure that the policy is made clear to potential volunteers;
- Enable volunteer champions to describe their experiences of volunteering to potential volunteers;
- Support the promotion of mentors and buddies for new volunteers;
- Use valuing volunteering publicity to describe the quality and range of volunteer activity;
- Support the development of volunteering infrastructure organisations in Surrey.

4. The Volunteering Experience

4.1 Volunteering is as much about benefits for the individual as well as for communities. Volunteers can benefit from volunteering by:

- Being involved

- Gaining experience

- Developing skills

- Achieving something

- Making a difference

- Enjoying themselves

- Being active

- Feeling good

Whatever the motivation, volunteers will gain the most from their experience if they are valued and treated respectfully, rather than being seen as simply a resource.

4.2 To ensure that the volunteering experience is as positive as possible, Compact affiliated organisations will:

- Ensure that volunteers have clarity about their role and responsibilities, and have access to induction, appropriate training, ongoing management support and supervision, and development opportunities;
- Challenge themselves to examine how involving volunteers relates to their purposes, values and objectives;
- Not use volunteers as substitutes for paid employees;
- Involve volunteers in decision-making and information so that volunteers are acknowledged as important partners and stakeholders;
- Identify an appropriate member of staff and/or Board Member to be responsible for volunteer involvement, and for monitoring and reporting on volunteering;
- Remember to recognise the contribution made by volunteers;
- Include volunteers appropriately in the organisation's appraisal and performance management system, ensuring the personal development of the individual.

5. The Volunteering Infrastructure

5.1 The volunteering infrastructure comprises the physical facilities, structures, systems, relationships, people, knowledge and skills that exist to support volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations and enable them to deliver their aims more effectively.

5.2 To ensure that the volunteering infrastructure is able to fulfil its role, Compact affiliated organisations will:

- Ensure that the network of organisations that support volunteering, through recruitment, training, development,

etc., establish complementary rather than competitive roles;

- Encourage the establishment of a forum for all organisations that see recruitment of volunteers as one of their main, as opposed to occasional, activities where common standards and good practice can be developed, agreed and promoted and information shared;
- Ensure practical support which may include sufficient funding or support in kind to enable volunteer infrastructure organisations to undertake the roles and responsibilities envisaged by the Compact and this code;
- Seek the advice of the volunteering infrastructure organisations in developing employee volunteering programmes;
- Stimulate and encourage public interest in volunteering;
- Stimulate volunteer-involving organisations to develop imaginative opportunities for potential volunteers;
- All volunteer infrastructure organisations will work in line with the Volunteering England Quality standards.

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