



# Code of Good Practice on Volunteering



## Bolton's Compact

Bolton's Compact is a statement of partnership between the local statutory sector and voluntary and community sectors. The Compact represents a commitment to respect each other's rights and responsibilities.

The Compact aims to enhance the way voluntary and community groups and statutory organisations relate to each other, communicate and work together.

As part of the Compact 6 Codes of Good Practice will be produced:

- Black and Minority Ethnic Groups
  - Community Groups
    - Consultation
    - Funding
  - Partnership Working
    - Volunteering

### Bolton's Code of Good Practice on Volunteering

This Code of Good Practice sets out a framework which all partners involved in volunteering consider essential so that volunteering will always be a worthwhile experience based on agreed and consistently applied principles across the Borough.

Volunteering is a long standing and traditional practice and should be recognised as such.

For the purpose of this code volunteering is defined as:

**"An activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the community or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives".**

This Code therefore recognises that volunteering involves:

- Activities by groups as well as individuals
- Individuals from all the diverse communities within the Borough
  - A diversity of activity and opportunities
  - Various reasons why people volunteer
  - A commitment and desire to help others

# 7 Key Principles for Effective Volunteering

## 1. Volunteering Should Be Appropriate

Volunteering is a powerful force for change, both for those who volunteer and for the wider community. Volunteering should be a quality experience for both the volunteer and the organisation. The volunteering experience and contribution is unique. The relationship volunteers have with organisations that use them is both distinct, and different, from that of an employee. Partners will ensure that they will work together to promote policies which recognise differences in volunteer's motivation and contribution. This will also be reflected in the way that volunteers are managed by organisations.

- Volunteers must be appropriate to an organisations needs and the organisation appropriate to the volunteers needs to ensure a mutually beneficial relationship.
- The culture and the structure of an organisation must be such that it enables volunteering to take place in order to ensure a quality and satisfying experience for all concerned.
- Any organisations resources must be sufficient to support the level of volunteering needed in order to ensure realistic expectations are fulfilled, and provides a positive volunteering experience.
- Organisations should examine their overall purpose, values and objectives, particularly focusing on how involving volunteers might relate to their purpose, values and objectives.

## 2. Valuing and Supporting Volunteers

Volunteers make significant contributions to society which often goes unacknowledged. Partners will develop policies and practices which ensure volunteer time is recognised as a significant and valuable contribution. The contribution of volunteers in all sectors and all aspects of life needs to be recognised and celebrated.

All Volunteer-involving organisations will:

- Make visible the value of volunteer contributions for example in publications

- Ensure that the contribution of volunteers is recognised as having more than monetary value
- Acknowledge that volunteering is more than the performance of a service. Volunteers' spot and articulate unmet needs and emerging issues, and represent the aims of the organisation. This contribution should be recognised and celebrated.
- Exercise a duty of care to their volunteers by addressing Health and Safety issues, risk assess activities and roles, offer appropriate training and provide adequate insurance cover.
- Involve volunteers in decision-making and information exchanges, ensuring that volunteers are acknowledged as important contributors and stakeholders in the organisation.
- Identify a named person to be responsible for volunteer involvement, also identify a Trustee Board champion (or equivalent) for volunteering.

### **3. Assessing the Impact of Volunteering**

Volunteering works best when its benefits can be demonstrated. In order to develop and continually improve organisations need to be able to show the benefits volunteering has made.

This can include the impact on:

- **The volunteer themselves**
  - **The organisation**
- **The service users or beneficiaries**
  - **The wider community**

All sectors that engage with volunteers should try to measure the performance and effectiveness of their activities against other regional and national organisations.

Regular reviews will show the benefits of volunteering and will help the development of individual volunteers, services offered and the organisation.

## 4. Ensuring Fairness and Suitability

Opportunities for volunteering should be available to all members of the wider community, whilst taking into account the objectives and purpose of the organisation. Working together we can break down barriers generated by prejudices and perceived areas of conflict. The Volunteering community in Bolton exists to enable and support people to volunteer, and to support organisations from all sectors in their volunteer involvement. This includes organisations that use volunteers as well as those that provide and encourage volunteering.

Barriers to volunteering, which may be institutional, geographical or attitudinal, for example, can reduce the opportunity and motivation for individuals to become involved in volunteer activity. Partners will ensure they challenge barriers to volunteering.

Partners should work together to identify and challenge barriers to volunteering by:

- Creating a climate where volunteering is encouraged
- Creating volunteer aware and volunteer friendly communities
- Having a culture that reaches out to potential volunteers and volunteering organisations
- Creating opportunities for getting together in formal structured and unstructured settings as well as informal community based voluntary activity
- Ensuring volunteers are properly supported by volunteer involving organisations and by partners who sign up to the Compact
- Ensuring that there is a clear policy regarding the prompt payment of volunteer expenses
- Ensuring their volunteers reflect the rich diversity of the community of Bolton

It is recognised that commercial partners have legitimate and understandable expectations concerning a return on investment in terms of community profile and more productive employees. It is for this reason the commercial sector should support volunteering by:

- Encouraging and supporting community activity within their workforce.
- Being aware that an employee may have volunteering responsibilities outside the workplace.
- Recognising the need for appropriate flexibility in work/ life balance to allow the employee time outside the workplace to volunteer.
- Acknowledgment of the skills an employee or potential employee can gain through volunteering and therefore bring to the business.

## **5. Freedom of Choice**

Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual.

That choice must be an informed decision, not just about whether to volunteer, but also which organisation to engage with. To enable informed choices to be made, information about volunteering needs to be available in the language and format appropriate to the individual.

People who want to volunteer should have the opportunity to choose when, where and how they want to engage in volunteering and when they want to disengage from the process.

Equally, organisations involving volunteers have the right and duty to decide whether volunteers are suitable for particular roles and those who benefit from services provided by volunteers have a right to choose whom they receive the service from.

Therefore volunteering should:

- Allow for options and exceptions
- Be appropriate for both the individual and the organisation
- Encourage appropriate and realistic interpretation and implementation of the principles
- Be about doing the right thing rather than doing things right
- Instill confidence to interpret, adapt and adopt, challenge and innovate
- Create trust and confidence.

## **6. Support for Volunteering**

The volunteering infrastructure is the physical facilities, structures, systems, relationships, people, knowledge and skills that exist to support, develop, coordinate, represent and promote organisations enabling them to deliver their aims more effectively.

The volunteering infrastructure has a unique role in supporting volunteers, organisations that use volunteers, the wider voluntary and community, statutory and private sectors as well as delivering volunteering initiatives and programmes.

Partners agree that resources should be invested in supporting and maintaining a modern, dynamic volunteering infrastructure in Bolton.

## 7. Linked and Strategic

Bolton's Volunteering Code of Good Practice must remain linked to the national and local Voluntary Sector Compacts and interpreted so it can be strong at local, regional and national level.

Experiences and good practice concerning volunteers in Bolton should be shared locally through the different local networks, for example the Volunteering Forum. This will enable those who volunteer in Bolton to inform decision makers at local, regional and national level. Volunteers who wish to contribute in this way will be encouraged to do so. Full support and training will be offered to enable participation at all levels.



This Volunteering Code of Good Practice was developed by:

**Volunteer Centre Bolton**  
**Bolton Community Network**  
**Bolton Council for Voluntary Service**  
**Bolton Metropolitan Borough council**  
**The University of Bolton**  
**Bolton Primary Care Trust**  
**Bolton Lads and Girls Club**  
**Bolton Befriending Forum**

Thanks also go to all the organisations that took part in the consultation process.



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**The website: [www.boltoncompact.org.uk](http://www.boltoncompact.org.uk)**

The website holds up to date information on all local and national Codes. There is a feedback form that can be filled in on line. Make your voice heard and have your opinions taken into consideration on any of the Codes.

Please log on and find out what else is going on in the world of Bolton Compact.

\* This Compact Code of Good Practice will be made available in Urdu, Gujarati on tape and in large print upon request.