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Introduction

Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community: the environment of individuals outside one's immediate family. It is undertaken freely and by choice without concern for financial gain.

Barrow upon Soar Parish Council (BPC) believes in the value of voluntary activity as an important expression of citizenship and an essential component of a free and democratic society. It supports and promotes volunteering in public and third sector organisations. BPC takes responsibility for ensuring that volunteers within its own organisation are appropriately involved, valued for their contribution and respected as colleagues.

In adopting this volunteer policy BPC wishes to:

- Formally acknowledge and support the role of volunteers in its work
- Set out the principles governing the involvement of volunteers and provide a set of guidelines to ensure good practice in working with volunteers
- Encourage and enable the involvement of volunteers.

Volunteer Policy Statement

BPC Equal Opportunities

- As an employer and engager of volunteers BPC is committed to a policy of equal opportunities. This principle will apply to service delivery, recruitment, promotion, training, facilities, procedures and all terms and conditions.
- Volunteers will be expected to adhere to BPC Equal Opportunities Policy.

Recruitment & Selection

- Recruitment of volunteers will be from all sections of the community and will be in line with BPC Equal Opportunities Policy.
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Information & Training

- Volunteers will receive full information about their chosen area of work and will be given a clear idea of their responsibilities to by the volunteer group organiser.

- Volunteers will be given induction and training in the specific tasks to be undertaken.
- Volunteers will not carry out any tasks that are beyond their scope of works or ability.
- A full risk assessment will be undertaken for all types of tasks.
- Volunteers to be covered by the PC insurance must complete a registration form to be kept on file by the volunteer group leader or at the Parish Council office. Information will not be shared and kept secure by the volunteer leader.
- Volunteers will be consulted in any decisions which affect them.

Support & Supervision

- Volunteers will be assigned a named contact person for supervision and support.

Problem-Solving

- BPC recognises that problems do arise, and we aim to identify and resolve these problems at the earliest stage. Volunteers who have a problem of any kind should discuss it in the first instance with their volunteer group leader.

Confidentiality

- Volunteers will be bound by the same confidentiality conditions as BPC paid staff.

Expenses & Insurance

- Expenses must be applied for and approved in advance of any planned activity/expenditure.
- Volunteers will be adequately covered by insurance while carrying out agreed duties with approved risk assessments.

Health and Safety

- All volunteers are covered by the same health and safety policies and provisions as staff.

Relations with Paid Staff

- BPC is committed to ensuring that volunteers work complements the work of paid staff, and that it will not be used as a substitute for paid work.
- Steps will be taken to ensure that staff at all levels are clear about the roles of volunteers and to foster good working relationships between staff and volunteers.

Costs

- BPC will endeavour to identify and cover the costs of involving volunteers and recognises the value of designated responsibilities within specific posts for the management of volunteers.

References

- On the basis of their voluntary work, volunteers will have the right to request a reference.

Monitoring & Evaluation

- BPC will systemically monitor and evaluate its involvement of volunteers with reference to this Volunteer Policy.
 - Volunteer group leaders will provide reports to BPC
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Note

- "Staff" refers to paid staff and those undertaking placements with BPC

Guidelines for Involving Volunteers

These guidelines are intended for use along with the policy statement. They give further detail on recommended good practice in the involvement of volunteers within (Organisation Name)

Preparation

Prior to recruiting volunteers, full consultation and discussion should take place with users of the service, paid staff and unions to satisfy that there is a genuine need for volunteers and to develop a clear description of their role. A contact person within the section proposing to involve volunteers should be identified and the staff time and expenses to train, support and reimburse volunteers determined.

Recruitment

- BPC has an Equal Opportunities Policy and will prevent discrimination particularly on the grounds of gender, marital status, disability, race, colour, religious belief, political belief, sexuality, nationality, ethnic origin, age, trade union activity, responsibility for dependents or employment status.
- In order to reach a wide section of the community, recruitment should be by a variety of means.
- Positive action in recruitment may be used for specific voluntary tasks. For example, specific work with minority ethnic groups.

Initial Contact

- People interested in becoming volunteers with BPC should be invited for an informal talk with the appropriate contact person/volunteer group leader. They should:
 - Be given written information to take away
 - Have their role explained
 - Have the next stages of becoming a volunteer with BPC outlined
- If the volunteer wishes to proceed with the registration at this stage, the contact person should fill out the registration form for the relevant volunteer group.
- If the volunteer is undecided, agree the next step e.g. for the contact person to phone the potential volunteer in a week's time.

- All information should be dealt with in the strictest confidence and should not necessarily prejudice the person being accepted for voluntary work.

Records

- Minimum details should be kept on volunteers. This will include the application form, references, placement details, relevant information regarding the person's health, correspondence and any other relevant information such as emergency contact details.
- Record keeping must be secure but accessible to other members of staff if you are absent.
- The Data Protection Act enables people to access information held about them.

Induction

- Induction sessions should be provided for all new volunteers and should cover:
 - Role of volunteers
 - Responsibilities of volunteers
 - Arrangements for training, support and supervision
 - Contact person
 - Need for confidentiality
 - Ethos/values, etc
 - System for payment of expenses
 - Problem-solving procedures
 - Building orientation
 - Health and Safety
 - Meeting staff

Placement

- Once a suitable voluntary placement has been identified, details about the frequency and length of commitment and nature of the voluntary activity should be determined and an established trial period agreed.
- BPC reserves the right to ask volunteers to leave and will give reasons in writing if requested.

Support, Supervision and Problem-Solving

- Regular support/supervision should be available to each volunteer. The type and level of support will depend on the needs of the volunteer and the nature of their role.
- Each volunteer should have a clearly identified supervisor who is responsible for the day to day management and guidance of the volunteer and who will be able to offer advice, support and feedback on a regular basis.

Expenses

- The procedures for claiming expenses should be clear and accessible.
- All agreed out of pocket expenses should be reimbursed on production of receipts.

Insurance

- Agreed volunteer activity is covered by the BPC insurance policy on the condition that appropriate risk assessments are completed.

Review

- This policy comes into force on 6th November 2023 and BPC commits itself to review the policy as and when changes in legislation or other factors make this necessary. The policy will be subject to a comprehensive review two years after its introduction.
- Review date: 6th November 2025