



CHELTENHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Volunteer Handbook

WELCOME

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with Cheltenham Borough Council. We are immensely proud of our volunteers who, through their efforts, are putting something back into society, working with our staff to make Cheltenham a better place, whilst also learning new skills and socialising with others.

Whether your interest in volunteering with us is in events, community projects, green space management or for another reason, we hope that you find it a rewarding experience.

The council adopted a vision that Cheltenham is a place where everyone thrives. Within our place vision we acknowledge the importance of volunteering, making an explicit statement that:

“People and our communities thrive when there are more opportunities to volunteer, to give time and effort to making Cheltenham and its organisations and communities a better place.”

This handbook provides you with all the information that you will need, outlines some of the benefits you will gain, and our expectations of you as a volunteer. You will receive more detailed information about the project that you will be working on, and your role in it, from your nominated supervisor who will be on hand to support you.

Thank you once more for offering to volunteer with us, we really do value our volunteers, many of whom have been with us for several years and who continue to champion the experience to others. If you are new to volunteering with us, we hope that you will feel the same.

We look forward to working with you.

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A VISION FOR CHELTENHAM

Cheltenham is an amazing place. From humble medieval origins to a buzzing borough of over 118,000 people, Cheltenham is a place that has thrived through centuries of change. It is a place we are proud of and passionate about, and we are committed to helping it grow and prosper in years to come.

Within our place vision we acknowledge the importance of volunteering, making an explicit statement that

“People and our communities thrive when there are more opportunities to volunteer, to give time and effort to making Cheltenham and its organisations and communities a better place.”

Who volunteers for us?

There's no such thing as a typical Cheltenham Borough Council volunteer – volunteers like you join us for a variety of reasons and come from all walks of life.

Volunteers help us by:

- helping at events
- helping on community projects
- getting involved with environmental and outdoor activities
- and much more

For all of our volunteer roles we usually require a minimum age of 18 with the exception of 16-18 year olds who can join us for one-off events as long as they are accompanied by an adult.

The council will on occasion deliver specific schemes that work with young people or deliver projects or programmes that benefit young people. These activities all require their own safeguarding and health and safety risk assessments to be prepared and signed off in line with the council's policy framework to ensure that the young people's experience is a safe and positive one.

We do not place an upper age limit on volunteers because we recognise the valuable contribution made by all of our volunteers.

Your Volunteer Agreement

Arrangements with volunteers depend on trust and mutual understanding and are not intended to be legally binding. Volunteering is an exchange, and we hope that your volunteering experience with us will provide you with new skills, experiences and friendships. Acceptance of this handbook will be deemed to be acknowledgement of, and agreement with, the principles outlined below.

We will:

- provide you with a clear explanation of what you will be doing and why
- explain the standards we expect and encourage you to maintain them
- provide a named volunteer supervisor who will guide and support you in your role

- ensure that you are treated with respect and dignity
- provide a safe working environment
- provide an induction and any training to help you carry out your volunteering
- try and resolve fairly any problems and difficulties you may have while you volunteer with us
- welcome your feedback, good or bad, so that we can improve what we do
- reimburse you for actual and reasonable expenses incurred, in line with our volunteer policy
- keep you updated about volunteering opportunities and developments at the council
- recognise your contribution

In return we ask you to:

- complete the volunteer application form which includes signing the *Volunteers Declaration*:
 - *I understand that I am personally responsible for my own health, well-being and safety, and will only perform tasks I am fit to undertake*
 - *I accept that as a volunteer engaged in voluntary activities, I have a general duty of care towards members of the public, fellow volunteers and council staff*
 - *I agree to act with reasonable care and attention should I be required to use tools and equipment that are supplied Cheltenham Borough Council or supplied by myself*
 - *I understand that the activities I do as a volunteer will be agreed beforehand with the council staff member; and that I am only covered by the council's public liability insurance when I carry out these duties as directed.*
- respect our aims and values
- perform your volunteering role and project responsibilities as outlined in your volunteer agreement and role description to the best of your ability and to attend any training required
- treat others with respect, consideration and appreciation, no matter who they are and where they come from
- read and adhere to relevant policies and procedures, brought to your attention in your induction
- work professionally and safely, both for your own sake and others
- not commit the council to any expenditure other than reasonable travel expenses
- keep in touch with your volunteer supervisor, informing them if your circumstances or contact details change
- give reasonable notice if you are unable to attend so that we can make other arrangements
- provide regular feedback, including at the end of the project or your time with us

VOLUNTEERING WITH US

All volunteers will receive appropriate support and supervision in their activity. The level of supervision will match the nature of the role and the experience of the volunteer. All volunteers will have a nominated volunteer supervisor, someone they can have regular access to if problems arise or when help and support is needed, and we will provide you with their contact details.

It is important that you are well-briefed on the role you are to carry out. Your supervisor ultimately oversees your work and should give you sufficient guidance. We will provide you with a volunteer role description outlining the specific duties of the role.

What will my induction be like?

Your supervisor will help you get started and your induction will vary depending on your role, but a typical induction will include:

- a tour of the building or site
- an introduction to the team you will be working with
- health and safety advice
- practical guidance – you'll be shown where you'll sit and how to use any equipment necessary for your role.

Learning and development

We want you to be confident in your role so we'll provide you with any necessary learning and development opportunities, and the support you need to perform your role. If you are attending a single volunteering session, there will be an information briefing at the beginning of the session; longer-term roles will have a formal induction before duties begin. These will include general information about the council and information specific to the service in which you are volunteering, relevant health and safety instruction, guidance on good practice (for example advised dress) and a detailed discussion of the duties as listed in the volunteer role description.

Some roles will require further training such as shadowing council staff, carrying out duties with the support of staff or experienced volunteers, and learning skills via practical sessions. Refresher and extra training will also be provided as appropriate.

You may also be offered the opportunity to attend council courses, which are relevant to your volunteering role, free of charge.

If you feel that you need any specific training, please discuss this with your nominated volunteer supervisor.

Availability

How much time you give depends on your role, your project and your availability. Volunteering hours could involve mornings, afternoons, evenings or any days of the week. The role description will specify what constitutes a session within your role.

The role description will state the number of sessions you are expected to participate in and how long each session is. We ask that you make every effort to undertake these sessions.

Your volunteer supervisor will keep a record of the hours you volunteer. Depending on the role they may ask you to sign in and out of each session.

We recognise that as a volunteer you have offered your time freely, and as a result we will not enforce any obligations that would normally be found in an employment contract. We do not expect volunteers to attend, carry out certain tasks or commit a minimum amount of time, although we expect volunteers to help us planning our projects by making reliable arrangements of attendance with your volunteer supervisor. Likewise, we will not provide regular work or payment for any volunteer activity carried out.

We hope that volunteers will make every effort to attend and arrive on time but understand that unexpected events may on occasion prevent this from happening. If you are unable to attend on a certain day, please inform your supervisor as soon as possible so that alternative arrangements can be made.

THE ESSENTIALS

Expenses

We value the work carried out by our volunteers and the council is committed to paying *reasonable* 'out of pocket' expenses ensuring that potential volunteers are not excluded due to financial reasons. However, these need to be agreed in advance with your volunteer supervisor before you commence your volunteering activity. Where expenses are not agreed, you will be made aware of this at the first opportunity in the recruitment process.

We will not accept liability for any expenses that result from activities that have not been agreed in advance.

Breaks

You will be able to arrange suitable breaks with your supervisor. Please let them know if you have any specific needs or timings which need to be taken into account.

In line with current legislation, smoking, vaping and using e-cigarettes is not permitted within Cheltenham Borough Council buildings and vehicles. Designated smoking areas are available; please ask your volunteer supervisor for directions.

Equipment and Clothing

We will ensure that all volunteers have access to the necessary equipment to enable them to safely and effectively carry out the task in which they are engaged.

Any equipment or clothing provided by the council must be acquired via the volunteer supervisor and returned to them at the end of the task. You should safeguard any equipment provided by the Council and ensure that it is kept in effective working condition.

Use of IT equipment

If your volunteering role requires access to our IT network and systems, we will ensure that you receive appropriate training to enable you to carry out your role and responsibilities. This will include an element of data security training. Normally we will not provide you with a Cheltenham Borough Council email account.

WHAT COUNCIL POLICIES WILL I NEED TO FOLLOW?

As a volunteer with the council we will expect you to follow all of our policies and codes of practice. Your volunteer supervisor will be able to give you more details on these during your induction but the main policies which you need to know about are:

Volunteer Policy

This emphasises the value we attach to volunteering and our relationship with our volunteers. It outlines how and why we involve volunteers including how we recruit, select and manage our volunteers, and our principles of best practice.

Health & Safety

We are committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of our volunteers. We want to make sure that you are aware of and understand the health and safety risks associated with your role. We will provide you with the appropriate information, instruction, supervision and training required to enable you to work safely while volunteering at the council.

What does this actually mean for me?

As a volunteer you must:

- take reasonable care of yourself and others
- follow the health and safety policy and procedures of the council
- cooperate fully with your supervisor
- report on any health and safety concerns you may have
- report any accidents/incidents you have while at the location of your volunteering role

Risk assessments

As with our council employees, we carry out detailed risk assessments for each volunteer role in order to identify and address any potential hazards. These risk assessments are in line with current health and safety legislation.

Managing risks

If you have a disability or medical condition, you should disclose this in your application form and to your volunteer supervisor. This will help us to better ensure your health and safety at work and allow us to consider any reasonable adjustments, such as equipment or support, which you may need to fulfil your role to the best of your ability.

Emergencies

All volunteers are required, on application, to provide the council with a partner, family member or close friend's contact details in case of an emergency.

Insurance

All volunteers who are individually registered with and managed by the council to work in connection with council business are automatically covered by the council's insurance policies.

The council's insurance policies include coverage for Public Liability exposures, which covers any damage or injuries to members of the public or their property caused by the negligent actions of our volunteers whilst under supervision of the council. The policies will also protect the volunteers under the council's Employers Liability coverage, should they suffer an injury in the course of their duties and where the council are found to have acted negligently.

Please note that constituted groups who register to volunteer as a group, or businesses, local organisations and educational establishments wishing to provide volunteers for a one-off event need to have their own public liability insurance.

We ask all of our volunteers not to bring valuable items to their volunteering site. If you do, please be aware that you do so at your own risk.

Confidentiality and data protection

As a volunteer you may become aware of confidential information about Cheltenham Borough Council, its staff, users and suppliers. You must not disclose this information or use it for your own (or another's) benefit without the consent of the party concerned. This does not prevent disclosure once the information is in the public domain.

Likewise, we will ensure that any personal information you supply us with is treated in confidence and is handled in accordance with data protection regulations. Information you provide will only be used by Cheltenham Borough Council to provide you with the opportunity to volunteer in line with the [volunteer privacy statement](#). Any health or emergency contact information is only

collected to support you whilst volunteering or in case of emergency. Please inform us of any changes in your personal details so that we can keep our records up to date.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a process of protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect or harm. All volunteers who come into contact with vulnerable groups have a duty of care to safeguard, protect and promote their welfare.

Should your volunteering role involve contact with vulnerable groups, you will receive training on safeguarding and child protection.

During your time as a council volunteer, whatever your role, should you become aware of any safeguarding issues you **must** disclose them to your volunteer supervisor immediately.

More information about the council's approach to safeguarding, can be found [here](#)

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks

DBS is short for the Disclosure and Barring Service, an organisation which checks for any crimes a person may have committed and any times when they have been involved with the police. Your volunteer role may require you to be DBS checked – if this is the case, we will ask you to complete a form and provide various items of identification. Successful checks are usually confirmed within a month, although this occasionally takes longer.

If at any time during your span as a volunteer you are notified or become aware that you may be subject to new police proceedings, or that you have been referred to the DBS, you **must** inform your volunteer supervisor as soon as possible. This circumstance does not automatically mean you can no longer volunteer, but the continuation of your role would have to be considered.

Equality and diversity

The council is committed to the elimination of discrimination and promotion of equality of opportunity for all citizens and will work towards this goal, both in the provision of services and employment. We will do everything reasonably practical to make volunteering available to everybody and to conform to all relevant legislation. We want to create a good and harmonious working environment in which you should not feel threatened or intimidated.

For further information on our equality policies, please follow the link [here](#).

OTHER THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

When there is a problem

We aim to make your volunteering enjoyable and worthwhile but occasionally problems do occur. As volunteers are not employees, they are unable to use the council's grievance policy and procedure. However, they are entitled to use the council's [complaints procedure](#).

Complaints by volunteers should be raised in the first instance with their supervisor and dealt with informally where possible. Where appropriate, the complaint will be investigated fully by their supervisor, or if the complaint is against their own supervisor, by another volunteer supervisor or their line manager.

If we have concerns about your behaviour or contribution as a volunteer, we will discuss them with you and agree steps to address the concerns. These may include additional training or mentoring. However, if these areas of concern cannot be resolved after additional formal discussions, your volunteering relationship with us may have to end. In all cases you will be entitled to an explanation of the decision and action taken.

Volunteering whilst receiving benefits

Volunteering can often improve your job prospects by providing useful work experience and training. You can continue to claim benefits, as long as the only money you receive is to cover your volunteering expenses.

If you are unemployed and claiming benefits you should tell your benefits adviser that you intend to volunteer before starting. It is your own responsibility to establish whether volunteering is going to affect your entitlement to any benefits. Further advice should be obtained from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), Job Centre Plus, or Citizens Advice as Cheltenham Borough Council cannot be held responsible for any losses you may have.

Moving on

You can stop volunteering whenever you wish, although we will of course be sorry to lose you! Please give us as much notice as you can, so that we can make alternative arrangements and ensure that the project is not delayed.

At the end of your time as a volunteer, it would be helpful if you would take the time to provide us with some feedback – this will help us improve future volunteer projects. We will ask you to complete a feedback form to gather your opinions on your time as a whole, which will help us identify what has worked well and not so well. This feedback will be used to help shape future projects and ensure that they are successful. Your volunteer supervisor will talk you through the final arrangements.

If your volunteer placement is coming to an end and you would like to keep volunteering with us, please speak to your supervisor. We are keen to help our volunteers develop new skills and experience and may be able to identify another project that may be suitable for you.

References

If you require an academic, professional or character reference, your volunteer supervisor will be able to provide you with one. This could detail the training you have received and any skills you have acquired or updated.

Contact Details

We hope you will enjoy your time with us and if you have any issues or concerns, please speak to your supervisor who is always your first point of contact. However, if you have any questions about your application, forms you need to complete or other documents, or if you would like to talk to someone in the volunteering team, please contact the volunteering team:

volunteering@cheltenham.gov.uk

01242 264376

Volunteering Team, Communities, wellbeing & partnerships
Cheltenham Borough Council
Municipal Offices
Promenade
Cheltenham
GL50 9SA.

News and Events



As one of our volunteers, it's important we keep in touch with you. We have various ways of letting you know what's going on in the council, in your region and in your community.

➤ **Our website**

You can go online at cheltenham.gov.uk to find out more about what we do.

➤ **Social media**

See what's happening in the borough or post a message to join the conversation.

 Cheltbc  @cheltenhamBC

➤ **Paid employment**

Paid roles are advertised on the CBC [website](#)

Thank you!

Thank you for taking the time to read this handbook. Whilst it is fairly lengthy it attempts to answer most of the questions our volunteers have. The volunteering team is here to facilitate your activity with the council, so please contact us if you have any queries.

Finally, a huge thank you to all our volunteers; your willingness and enthusiasm to support your local town really is greatly appreciated.

Whilst relevant to all council services, the information in this handbook is not intended to be comprehensive; individual services may occasionally differ in their requirements and implementation. Any such deviations will be covered by the service in the role description or in your training