



Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council

Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

Volunteer Policy

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1. Introduction

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council has developed this volunteer policy to celebrate and recognise the contribution of volunteers to life in the local community and to ensure that where the Council involves volunteers it is done in line with good practice.

Volunteering has a part to play in enabling Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area to be one with a vibrant community where people want to live and get involved in community life.

Volunteering is defined as: “The commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society and the community, the environment or individuals outside, (or in addition to) one’s immediate family. It is unpaid and undertaken freely and by choice” (Department for Social Development, Join in Get Involved, Build a Better Future 2012).

This policy and associated procedures are designed to embed good volunteering practice and contribute to its consistent application across the Council.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council will ensure that Volunteers will never be used as an alternative to or to displace the role of paid staff.

2. Policy Responsibility

To ensure the successful implementation of the Volunteer Policy and Procedure, clear roles and responsibilities have been established and are outlined below:

Group or Individual	Role and Responsibilities
Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Approve the Volunteer Policy and subsequent amendments.➤ Attend any relevant training or awareness raising sessions.
Chief Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The Chief Executive has ultimate officer responsibility for implementing the Policy throughout the Council.
Senior Management Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Allocate resources to enable the Council to meet its responsibilities in relation to the Policy.➤ Promote the effective implementation of the Policy within their areas of responsibility.➤ Raise the profile of Volunteering within the Council.

Group or Individual	Role and Responsibilities
Heads of Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure employees are aware of this policy. ➤ Ensure that relevant employees attend the relevant training sessions. ➤ Provide assurance on the appropriateness of the Volunteer Role Descriptions within their areas of responsibility. ➤ Provide advice and support as required.
Designated Volunteer Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide advice and support as required ➤ Ensure adherence to the Management Principles set out in Section Seven of the Volunteer Policy.
All Employees/Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Take due care to ensure compliance with and to promote the Volunteer Policy.

3. Background

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council involves volunteers in its work. Volunteers add value to the work of paid staff and have a different but complementary role. By providing a positive, high quality volunteering experience, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council will be better placed to attract, involve and retain volunteers.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council has a key role to play as an enabler of community life and supports and develops volunteering through its programmes and the provision of grant aid.

Volunteers involved with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council have a direct impact on the life of the community through:

- Delivery of Programmes for Children and Young People;
- Delivery of Older People's Services;
- Community based activity;
- The Arts and Heritage;
- Sport and Leisure activities;
- Parks and the Environment ;
- Events;
- Membership of Committees;
- Community Safety

4. Vision and Values

As already noted, Volunteering is defined as “the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society and the community, the environment, or individuals outside (or in addition to) one’s immediate family. It is unpaid and undertaken freely and by choice’.¹

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council values volunteer involvement in its work as an expression of active citizenship and of individual and community wellbeing.

The Council’s Corporate Plan highlights that the Council seeks to be “People and community focused – a council that involves and engages our people and communities, working with others to shape the way we deliver services that meet local needs².” The Volunteering Policy is one facet of how the Council plans to engage with its citizens to enable them to be involved in supporting and shaping services.

We support and encourage volunteering that builds connected, cohesive, competitive and confident communities.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council values the involvement of volunteers in our work as they help reflect the interests, needs and resources of the communities we serve. Volunteers bring a unique perspective; they are part of our team, with a distinctive but complementary role alongside paid staff. Involving volunteers enables us to enhance the benefits we can offer to residents.

We value volunteering across the community and recognise the important contribution volunteers make to all aspects of community life as well as the many vital services which they deliver. As a partner, supporter and funder of community and voluntary sector organisations we seek to encourage a local environment which enables volunteering to grow and plan to publically recognise the value of volunteers.

Volunteering is a mutually beneficial experience. Fermanagh and Omagh District Council benefits from the skills, experience and enthusiasm of volunteers, and in turn we believe that volunteers gain personal benefits, such as improved health and wellbeing and skills development, from their volunteering experience. We are committed to managing volunteers in a way that ensures the needs of both parties are met.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council strives to be a diverse and inclusive organisation operating within a diverse and inclusive community. As part of this we are committed to ensuring equality of access to high quality volunteer opportunities and equality of treatment for our volunteers in all our policies and practices.

¹ “Join In, Get Involved: Build a Better Future. The Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan for Northern Ireland”, Department for Social Development, March 2012

² Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019

5. Volunteer Roles

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council offers a range of roles for volunteers that bring added value to our work.

The Council will ensure that:

- Volunteers are involved at appropriate levels in roles which complement, but never substitute, the work of paid Council staff.
- Volunteers will not be used as an alternative to or to displace the role of paid staff.
- Volunteers will not fulfil the roles of an employee, where there is an actual vacancy or in times of industrial action. They may continue with their regular tasks but will not be asked to undertake additional duties.
- The role or task of the volunteer is identified prior to the placement of an individual at a given location.
- Roles will be approved by the relevant Head of Service.
- All volunteers are provided with a written role description, outlining the purpose, tasks and main expectations of their role. This role is reviewed with their immediate supervisor where appropriate.

6. Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council is committed to making volunteering an inclusive process in which people from diverse backgrounds and with diverse skills can participate. We wish to see all sections of the community represented amongst our volunteers.

The Council will ensure that:

- Volunteering opportunities are widely promoted,
- Recruitment and selection materials are available in formats accessible to any individual or group, upon request.
- The make-up of our volunteers is reviewed on a yearly basis to identify and target any under-represented groups.
- A fair, effective and open system in the recruitment and selection of volunteers is implemented and all information collected in this process is treated confidentially.
 - All potential volunteers complete the appropriate recruitment and selection process for the role they are applying for (Due to the range of roles available within Council this will vary) including:
 - An application form,
 - A matching meeting,
 - A reference check,
 - A criminal records checks in line with Access NI Guidelines, where appropriate.

- The recruitment and selection process is conducted by an appropriately briefed/trained staff member and aims to ensure both parties give and receive sufficient information to assess whether the volunteering opportunities available match the potential volunteer's interests, skills, qualities and needs.
- The recruitment and selection process is signed off by the relevant Head of Service.

Where Staff are selecting Volunteers, either during the application process or when allocating roles and duties, they must show no consideration to possible financial factors. Volunteers must be appointed on ability and potential benefit to the individual and not on the amount of expenses they may be entitled to claim.

Volunteers for Fermanagh and Omagh District Council must be at least 16 years old. The Council recognises that volunteers between 16-18 years old will be treated in accordance with the Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

Please note that when a group approaches the Council for options to participate, the recruitment and selection process will not be applicable and the group will not be eligible to claim expenses.

7. Management of Volunteers

All volunteers will be managed in line with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council's agreed procedures.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council aims to reflect the voluntary nature of its relationship with volunteers in all our policies and procedures for managing their involvement. This will involve the following in a manner commensurate with the role:

- A written letter of welcome which outlines the expectations and responsibilities of both the volunteer and the Council.
- A written role description outlining the purposes, tasks and main expectations of the roles.
- An induction within six weeks of commencing their voluntary work. For one off and short term volunteer role opportunities induction should take place prior to the volunteer beginning the actual volunteer role.
- Appropriate written information on relevant legislation, organisational policies and codes of behaviour. Volunteers will need to provide written confirmation of receipt of this information.
- All volunteers are allocated a named member of staff as their supervisor with an alternative identified should the designated supervisor be unavailable. This person will provide day to day guidance on any issue related to the voluntary work.
- For longer term roles there will be a settling in/taster period, the length of which will depend on the nature and hours of the voluntary work. Volunteers are given additional support during this period ending in a review meeting between the volunteer and their supervisor to ensure both parties are satisfied with the arrangements.

- Regular support to and supervision of the volunteer. The frequency, duration and format of this support and supervision is agreed between the volunteer and their supervisor at the end of the settling in/taster period. This will be appropriate to the role.
- The volunteer's designated supervisor will deal with minor complaints or issues about or by volunteers or their work through the usual support and supervision procedures in the first instance. However we recognise our duty to protect the well-being and interests of our volunteers, staff and service users and therefore operate a procedure for dealing with more serious complaints by or about volunteers. In the case of particularly serious offences, as specified in the Code of Conduct, this process may be bypassed and/or the subject of the complaint asked to leave. Where a criminal offence is suspected the matter will be handed over to the police.
- Fermanagh and Omagh District Council will gather feedback and opinions from volunteers in appropriate ways and on a regular basis.
- Provision of adequate and appropriate facilities, equipment and resources to enable volunteers to fulfil their roles.
- Provision of recognition for volunteers within the Council at least annually.

8. Record Keeping

In order to effectively monitor the work carried out by volunteers and how they are managed, a personnel file is maintained for all volunteers. This will include:

- contact details and other relevant personal information,
- the initial application forms,
- details of the recruitment and selection process,
- agreements made,
- hours volunteered,
- records of supervision,
- training undertaken and,
- complaints or grievances received or made.

Some of this information and other relevant information may also be recorded in centralised, computerised records. All such information is treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) and volunteers are entitled to inspect all such information pertaining to them. Some information in relation to volunteering may be subject to Freedom of Information.

9. Insurance/Risk Assessment/Personal Protection Equipment

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council will ensure that appropriate insurance is in place to protect volunteers whilst carrying out their voluntary role as agreed with their volunteer supervisor.

To comply with Insurance the Volunteer's Supervisor must complete a risk assessment with consideration for their role and duties.

Following a Risk Assessment, if it is identified that the Volunteer needs Personal Protection Equipment, the equipment must be supplied and explained to the volunteer.

10. Expenses

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council will reimburse volunteers' agreed out of pocket expenses when claims are submitted on a standard Expenses Claim Form and accompanied by proof of expenditure.

Please note that when a group approaches the Council to participate in a project, the group will not be eligible to claim expenses.

11. Individual Support Requirements

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council will provide individual support requirements where necessary for the Volunteers role and duties.

Any support that is required must be discussed and agreed by the relevant Co-ordinator or Manager.

12. Training

Full details of rates and methods for claiming will be given at induction.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council is committed to encouraging volunteers to improve their personal and professional effectiveness in order to fulfil their potential.

In addition to induction training, volunteers and their supervisors will agree appropriate training that is relevant to their voluntary role. All requests will be subject to available funding.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council staff required to recruit, select and manage volunteers will be provided with the necessary training.

12. Monitoring & Review of the Policy

The Volunteer Policy will, under normal circumstances, be reviewed every three years. This policy will be subject to scrutiny and, from time to time, updates and re-issues will be circulated.

However, the Policy will be reviewed sooner in the event of any one or more of the following:

1. Failure or weakness in the policy is highlighted.
2. Changes in legislative requirements.
3. Changes in Government/Council or other directives and requirements.