

The Cumbria **Compact**

Cumbria Compact Volunteering Code of Practice

The 'Volunteering Code of Practice' is a set of guidelines for organisations working with volunteers. It is recognised that volunteers are an essential component to many services that are currently delivered within Cumbria and that it is vital that they are both recognised for the contribution they make, and at the same time, are adequately supported in their roles.

Updated November 2013

What is the Cumbria Compact?

The Cumbria Compact aims to support, improve and develop the relationship between the public sector and the voluntary & community sector* in Cumbria so that together they can strengthen communities and improve people's lives. The public sector and the voluntary & community sector share a common set of principles, which are at the heart of what they are trying to achieve:

Respect

The public sector and the voluntary & community sector are accountable in different ways, but both need to act with transparency and integrity. Effective partnerships are built on mutual understanding and an appreciation of the differences between partners of the Compact.

Honesty

It is only through open communication that strong partnerships can be built and maintained. Full and frank discussions should be the basis for resolving difficulties.

Independence

The independence of the voluntary & community sector is recognised and supported. This includes its right within the law to campaign, to comment on and to challenge public sector policy (whatever funding or other relationship may exist) and to determine and manage its own affairs.

Diversity

The public sector and the voluntary & community sector value a thriving civil society, which brings innovation and choice through a multitude of voices.

Equality

Fairness for everyone, regardless of their background, is a fundamental goal, and the public sector and the voluntary & community sector will work together to achieve this.

Volunteering

The energy and commitment of people giving their time for the public good contributes to a vibrant society, and should be recognised and appreciated.

Citizen empowerment

By working together, the public sector and the voluntary & community sector can deliver change that is built around communities and people, meeting their needs and reflecting their choices.

*The 'voluntary & community sector' is also referred to as 'the third sector' or 'civil society organisations (CSO's). The terms refer to non-governmental organisations which are value-driven and which principally reinvest their surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives.

Definition of Volunteering

Volunteering is an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to close relatives. Central to this definition is the fact that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual.

This can include formal activity undertaken through public, private and voluntary organisations as well as informal community participation and social action. Everyone has the right to volunteer and volunteering can have significant benefits for individuals. (NCVO, 2013)

Scope and scale of Volunteering in Cumbria

There are volunteers in both the public sector, private sector and the voluntary & community sector. They undertake a wide variety of volunteer roles reflecting a range of time commitment, for example:

- Participating in environmental or conservation projects
- Running local community groups, such as Carer & Toddler groups
- Fundraising or providing other support (such as administration support) for a Third Sector Organisation (for example Age UK day care)
- Giving advice (for example, Citizens Advice Bureau advisers)
- Assisting or providing emergency services (for example, RNLI, Mountain Rescue, Special Constables, Fire and Rescue Service and First Responders)
- Working with young people (for example, Scout and Guide leaders or in a youth club)
- Befriending adults with learning disabilities
- Running a sports club
- Mentoring ex-offenders
- Leading or advising an organisation (for example as a village hall trustee or school governor)
- Providing professional expertise (for example volunteering through Reach)

This is not an exhaustive list but gives a good idea of the range and scope of volunteering activity.

The scale of volunteering is vast, for example, Scouting volunteers in Cumbria contribute the equivalent of around £1.6 million per annum. A "Quality of Life Survey" undertaken by Cumbria County Council on 2006 revealed that 35% of those questioned had "given their time, without pay, to a charitable, religious or volunteer organisation" during the previous year.

Principles of Volunteering

There are four principles fundamental to volunteering:

Choice

Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual, including the choice to stop volunteering without pressure or guilt.

Diversity

Volunteering should be open to all, no matter what their race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origins, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, financial resources or disability, whilst ensuring roles are appropriate and compatible with the skills of the volunteer. However, a specific role may have particular requirements, for example an enhanced level Disclosure Barring Service check may be required to enable a volunteer to work with vulnerable people.

Mutual Benefit

Volunteers offer their contribution and skills unwaged but should benefit in other ways in return for their contribution. Benefits that volunteers should expect to gain include a sense of worthwhile achievement, useful skills, experience and contacts, sociability and fun, access to training and inclusion in the life of the organisation and the wider community.

Recognition

It is vital that the value of volunteers' contribution is recognised by all involved. There are various ways to demonstrate how an organisation values its volunteers:

- Saying thank you
- By providing a parking pass
- Putting on social events
- Giving certificates
- Providing references
- Involving them in decision-making
- Including items about their achievements in newsletters
- Opportunities to gather information for evidence based qualifications

Local volunteering infrastructure

Within Cumbria there exists a large number of organisations that work with volunteers, including specialist organisations for young people, such as Cumbria Youth Alliance and the Princes Trust Team.

Many organisations recruit volunteers directly, whilst others use the network of Cumbria CVS Volunteer Centres. In addition to these Centres there are other brokerage services (for example Community Learning in Partnership who place volunteers aged 16 to 25 years old, the University of Cumbria Student Union that places student volunteers and Reach that places professional volunteers with appropriate third sector organisations).

CVS Volunteer Centres help strengthen volunteering in Cumbria and work to meet the following strategic objectives defined by Volunteering England:

Brokerage

The volunteer centres hold information on volunteering opportunities. They provide potential volunteers with accessible support and advice in matching individual skills and interests to appropriate volunteering opportunities.

Marketing

Marketing and promotional activities aimed at stimulating and encouraging interest in voluntary and community activity. The volunteer centres will market and promote volunteering through local and national events and campaigns.

Good practice development

Promoting and actively supporting good practice when working with volunteers.

Developing volunteering opportunities

Working creatively, in partnership with other agencies, to develop volunteering opportunities and stimulate volunteer participation.

Policy response and campaigning

Identify and lead on policy development concerning proposals or legislation that might have an impact on policy or campaign issues.

Strategic development of volunteering

Inform regional and national thinking; develop local strategies ensuring that volunteering has a place in local planning.

Commitments to support Volunteering

In supporting this Code, all organisations working with volunteers undertake to:

- Identify a named person within their organisations to be responsible for volunteer involvement, and co-ordinating support. Ensure this person receives full training and is adequately supported in their role
- Ensure that each volunteer has appropriate support, supervision and training
- Make sure that the contribution of volunteers is given adequate recognition and publicity
- Ensure that no volunteers are unfairly disadvantaged on the grounds of race, religion, disability, etc
- Carry out Disclosure Barring Service checks if appropriate to the volunteering role
- Ensure that volunteers are matched to suitable roles
- Work together to create and maintain a modern and dynamic volunteering infrastructure
- Encourage volunteers to claim for out-of-pocket expenses to ensure that volunteers who wish or need to claim expenses do not feel disadvantaged
- Encourage the involvement of volunteers in ongoing decision-making and ensure their inclusion in internal communications

In supporting this code, voluntary & community organisations undertake to:

- Promote volunteering opportunities, ensuring that recruitment is achieved on the basis of equality of opportunity and that all volunteers are subsequently managed sensitively and appropriately
- Ensure that the sector has appropriate resources and procedures to support and train volunteers and volunteer coordinators/managers
- Encourage the use of full cost recovery in relevant bids, to enable and develop volunteering, and recognise the financial contribution

In supporting this code, public sector organisations undertake to:

- Consult with voluntary & community organisations so that development and implementation of legislation/regulation, guidance and policies take account of the ways they may affect volunteers and volunteering activities.
- Work to actively reduce barriers to volunteering resulting from regulation and policies.
- Recognise that it is legitimate for voluntary & community organisations to include the costs of enabling greater access to volunteering in relevant applications for funding. For example, co-ordination costs, volunteer travel and training, equipment and or building adaptations.
- Work with the voluntary & community organisations to expand the public perception of volunteering by improving the profile, status and range of volunteer activity.
- Work to effectively tackle discrimination to ensure that volunteering is open to all.
- Support staff who wish to volunteer, for example, through employee volunteering schemes.
- Adopt policies to help ensure that specialist volunteering infrastructure can develop realistic sustainable long term funding.

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Appendix 1 - The Volunteer Charter

All signatories to the Code will observe and promote the Volunteer Charter.

Volunteers' Rights

- To be given a clear description of their role as a volunteer and responsibilities within the organisation.
- To be given the name of someone in the organisation that will look after their interests whilst they volunteer, and who will offer them appropriate induction, training and support and regular supervision.
- To be assured that any information shared with the organisation is kept confidential and is in compliance with the data protection act.
- To be given the same protection under health and safety regulations and public liability as paid workers.
- To ensure that there are clear problem solving procedures
- To be offered opportunities for training and skills development, appropriate for their role and tasks as a volunteer.
- Not to be exploited. Volunteers should not:
 - Be used to replace paid workers
 - Have unfair demands made on their time
 - Be asked to do something which is against their principles or beliefs
- To be given the chance to play a part in decision making within the organisation.
- To be paid out-of-pocket expenses such as travel and lunch whilst doing voluntary work.
- To be able to take a break from or cease to volunteer.

Volunteers' Responsibilities

- To accept the organisation's aims and objectives and work within agreed policies and procedures.
- To do what is reasonably requested of them, to the best of their ability.
- To treat information obtained whilst volunteering in an appropriate confidential manner and adhere to the organisation's confidentiality policies.
- To recognise that they represent the organisation and therefore need to act in an appropriate manner at all times.
- To honour any commitment made, to the best of their abilities, notifying the organisation in good time should they be unable to keep that commitment e.g. for holidays.
- To be willing to undertake appropriate training as necessary for the voluntary work undertaken.
- To recognise the right of the organisation to expect quality of service from its volunteers.
- To share suggestions for changes in working practices with the Volunteer Organiser.

Cumbria CVS Volunteer Centres 'Spreading good practice in volunteering'

Cumbria CVS Carlisle

27 Spencer St,
Carlisle
CA1 1BE

Cumbria CVS Eden

6 Hobson Court
Gillan Way
Penrith
CA11 9GQ

Cumbria CVS South

Stricklandgate House
92 Stricklandgate
Kendal
LA9 4PU

Cumbria CVS Barrow

Lesser Kings Hall
Hartington Street
Barrow in Furness
LA14 5SR

Cumbria CVS West

12a Selby Terrace
Maryport
Cumbria
CA15 6NF

County Volunteer Support Officer

Judith Holmshaw
Tel: 01768 800350
E-mail: judithh@cumbriacvs.org.uk

Cumbria CVS

Website: www.cumbriacvs.org.uk
Follow Cumbria CVS on twitter: [@cumbriacvs](https://twitter.com/cumbriacvs)
Like Cumbria CVS on Facebook: www.facebook.com/CumbriaCVS

National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)

Society Building

All Saints Street

London N1 9RL

Email: ncvo@ncvo.org.uk

Website: www.ncvo.org.uk

On-line information sheets available include

- Definitions for volunteering
- Health & Safety
- How to say thank you
- Monitoring and evaluating a volunteer programme
- National statistics on volunteering
- Problem solving procedures
- Screening and Disclosure Barring Service checks
- Types of insurance policy which cover volunteers

Useful Websites

- www.ncvo.org.uk
- <http://iiv.investinginvolunteers.org.uk/>
- www.do-it.org.uk
- www.statistics.gov.uk
- www.charitycommission.gov.uk
- <http://trusteesweek.blogspot.co.uk/>

List of signatories



Carlisle City Council



Copeland Borough Council



Cumbria County Council



Cumbria Third Sector Network



Cumbria Police & Crime Commissioner



Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust



Cumbria CVS



Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group

Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group



North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust



South Lakeland District Council



University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Trust