

# HIGHLAND COUNCIL EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORTS SERVICE

## GUIDANCE ON MANAGING AND VETTING VOLUNTEERS

(V2 amended November 2006)

This guidance policy and procedure document is designed to apply to all aspects of Highland Council's Education, Culture and Sport Service (ECS) including all schools, youth clubs, libraries, leisure and community centres.

The document sits below the Highland Councils overall corporate Volunteering Policy which was approved by Council in September 2002.

### 1. The Council's Corporate Policy

Within the Council's Corporate Policy volunteering is defined as follows:

- "Volunteering is an important expression of citizenship. It is the commitment by individuals of time and energy for the benefit of the community. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain.
- It is one of the main ways in which citizens of all ages and from all sectors of society become involved in the life of their community and society.
- Volunteering also has many benefits for individuals, providing an invaluable and inexpensive gateway for personal development and fulfilment."

The Council recognises that it has a variety of roles in relation to volunteering including acting as: -

- A supporter of volunteering in Highland communities
- A funder of activities that give rise to opportunities for volunteering
- A purchaser of services that engage volunteers
- An engager of volunteers in the delivery of services
- An employer, with skilful staff, who themselves undertake volunteering

In the context of this policy and procedure the focus is on the Council as an engager of volunteers in the delivery of services.

### 2. Corporate Principles: What is a volunteer?

The Corporate Volunteering Policy highlights the distinctive nature of volunteering in terms of its additionality by complementing and supporting the work of the Council rather than as a substitution for existing provision. A key principle of volunteering is the need to encourage the participation of people from a broad range of backgrounds to contribute their skills and experience. Engaging volunteers should therefore be seen as an opportunity to add diversity and value to the Council's work. Importantly in terms of the recruitment and retention of volunteers, while they are not paid staff, they should be given parity in all other aspects of employment rights and responsibilities.

To help bring the principles outlined in the Corporate Volunteering Policy into working practice the Education, Culture and Sport Service when engaging volunteers will recognise the following rights and in return expect volunteers to adhere to certain responsibilities.

### **3. Rights of volunteers**

The Council's Corporate Policy recognises the following rights of volunteers:

- To know what is expected of them. Tasks to be performed by volunteers will be clearly defined, so that all concerned with their activities are sure of their respective responsibilities.
- To have clearly specified lines of support and supervision.
- To be valued.
- To have safe working conditions.
- To be insured.
- To know what their rights and responsibilities are if something goes wrong.
- To be paid agreed expenses where appropriate (in line with the Council's existing scheme).
- Where appropriate the Council will provide an induction period and a review/appraisal session to assess the progress of the placement and to resolve any problems
- To receive appropriate and relevant training.
- To be free from any form of discrimination or harassment which contravenes good equal opportunities practice.
- Have access to grievance and disciplinary procedures.

### **4. Education, Culture and Sport Service's Expectations of Volunteers**

It is expected that volunteers will be:

- Reliable
- Honest
- Respect confidentiality and where necessary, sign confidentiality agreements
- Attend training and support sessions where agreed
- Carry out their tasks in a way which corresponds to the aims and values of the Service
- Work within agreed guidelines and remits

It is the responsibility of the Education, Culture and Sport Service Managers to identify ways in which the work of the Service can be extended by the involvement of volunteers, and to ensure that these opportunities complement rather than supplement the work of employees.

- The Service will consult with appropriate Trade Unions when appropriate.
- Volunteers will not be asked to take on tasks formerly or currently undertaken by employees, or to work in ways, which facilitate a decrease in paid employment.
- Volunteers will not be engaged in times of industrial action to do the work of paid staff. It is important to recognise however that they may continue with their regular work, but should not be asked to undertake additional duties.

Turning to issues of recruitment, interview and selection, all appropriate volunteering opportunities will be advertised appropriately in ways that are accessible to all sections of the community (e.g. school or community newsletter, local press). Such advertising will specify the task to be undertaken and will draw attention to the benefits and experience to be gained from participation in volunteering. Written agreements between the Council and the volunteer will detail description of the task, time, commitment, necessary skills and actual duties. The Council's Equal Opportunities Policy will be adhered to in relation to appointing volunteers.

### **5. School Pupils as volunteers**

Whilst the bulk of volunteering activity may be undertaken by adults, it is recognised that some volunteering work may be carried out by young people. The Council will expect that where such

volunteering takes place appropriate and proper levels of support and supervision will be put in place for young people who volunteer.

There is no lower age limit in respect of the requirement to disclosure check volunteers. Research has shown that most paedophiles become aware of their sexual preferences before reaching adulthood and sexual offences are sometimes perpetrated by children against other children. Disclosure checking of school age volunteers is not only a necessary precaution but should also be viewed as a helpful step for those wishing to pursue a career working with children. Having once been disclosure checked, the young person will acquire a unique identifier which will speed up subsequent disclosure checks for employment purposes. It will also give the young person an instant advantage in the baby-sitting market.

An exception to the requirement for vetting will therefore only apply to secondary school pupils who involve themselves in supervised, school based volunteering for example assisting younger pupils with reading and writing activities. All pupils under the age of 16 years should be supervised at all times when engaged in voluntary work with other pupils. For pupils aged 16 years and over, where activity may be unsupervised and the criteria for disclosure checking are met (see Appendix III), the procedures for vetting of adult volunteers should be applied.

Where volunteering takes place within a school, normal school policies, guidance and staff supervision procedures will apply. Where pupils are undertaking a school organised volunteering activity involving children in another school or in any other ECS facility; the head teacher should seek appropriate references from his / her own staff on the suitability of all such pupils to undertake this role. The head teacher will then confirm in writing to colleagues with Education, Culture and Sport Service that the pupil volunteer(s) are deemed by their own school to be suitable to work with young children. It remains clearly the responsibility of the school or facility where the activity is taking place to ensure appropriate adult supervision and management of pupil volunteers.

## **6. Why do we need an Education, Culture and Sport Guidance on Managing and Vetting Volunteers?**

The Education, Culture and Sport Service's responsibility is to ensure that volunteer's rights are protected and that volunteers are appropriately managed and supported. It is important that there is a clear understanding by the volunteer as to their role and responsibilities. Volunteers need to understand that this policy and procedure are about not only protecting their rights but about protecting the young people and vulnerable adults<sup>1</sup> they will work with. A guide to Good Practice for Volunteers is provided in Appendix IV of this policy.

The Scottish Executive review of child protection "It's everyone's job to make sure I'm alright" highlights the need for us all to take an active role in protecting children. Robust vetting and volunteering policies need to be put in place to ensure we offer the best protection for our children. While legislation and guidance is awaited on vulnerable adult (adults at risk) this policy should be used as good practice in relation to adults at risk until national guidance is available.

<sup>1</sup> Definition: A vulnerable adult is one who is, or is likely to be, dependent on another, or others, for care, whether as a result of ageing, illness, physical, mental or learning disability, or a combination of all or some of these factors.

## **7. Why do we need to vet volunteers?**

There are a number of people who actively seek to harm or abuse children, these people often do not have a criminal record. Scottish Executive figures highlight that these people are within our communities and are not necessarily strangers to our children; in 2002, 97.8% of all children who presented at a child protection case conference knew their abuser (Scot Exec 2002).

In 2003 the Scottish Executive introduced the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act to improve safeguards for children by preventing unsuitable people from working with them. The Act provides for Scottish Ministers to maintain a List of persons unsuitable to work in a child care position. This List is known as the 'Disqualified from Working with Children List'.

An organisation **has a duty** to refer to Ministers any person working in a child care position who harms a child or puts a child at risk of harm **and** is dismissed or moved away from access to children as a consequence. This applies even if the person has left the organisation prior to the outcome of the allegation or incident being decided.

**An organisation commits an offence if they fail to make a referral to the List in circumstances where they should do so.**

**Highland Council has a specific process for deciding who should be referred to the list.** Within ECS in all circumstances where a referral is being considered the appropriate Head of Service should be notified so the matter can be discussed with the Service's Director. In all Highland Council cases the Director of Corporate Services will take the final decision to refer to the list.

When a referral is made, the Ministers will consider the evidence and decide whether to include the person on the List. Courts can also refer people who have committed an offence against a child and who are considered unsuitable to work with children.

**A person who is on the List commits an offence if s/he applies to work in a child care position.**

**An organisation commits an offence if they knowingly employ or procure employment in child care for a disqualified person, or if they fail to remove a disqualified person from working in child care within their organisation.**

Vetting allows us to screen all those who volunteer and enables decisions to be made about their suitability for the volunteering task required. The type of vetting applied will depend upon the volunteer's level of access to children, young people and vulnerable adults and the nature of that access.

## **8. How do we vet volunteers?**

The Education, Culture and Sport Service has clearly understood procedures for vetting those who are to work with children and other vulnerable groups. Vetting/Screening procedures take full account of proposals for a National System of Accreditation and vetting information (criminal record checks, etc) for those working with children and young people in Scotland.

The Service will request references for all volunteers and will require disclosure checks for all volunteers who fit the criteria in respect of children and young people. (See Appendix III) or who will have similar access to vulnerable adults.

These issues are critical to our Service and the procedures to be followed for volunteers are outlined below:

There are two levels of vetting; one covers those who meet the criteria for Disclosure checks and one for those with limited or supervised access. Volunteers who have substantial access to children require the most rigorous vetting.

Disclosure checks:

There are two types of disclosure checks:

- A standard disclosure check gives information about current criminal convictions but excludes spent convictions and other information. This applies to posts that are exempt under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act.
- An enhanced disclosure check gives information on all current and past criminal convictions together with information on soft intelligence that may be of concern in a childcare environment. This may include sensitive information that the police do not wish the applicant to be made aware of e.g. that they are suspects in an ongoing police operation. The return that you get will make clear what can and cannot be told to the applicant.

You need to undertake enhanced disclosure checks for anyone, paid or unpaid:

- Whose normal duties include caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of children.
- Whose normal duties involve unsupervised contact with children under arrangements made by a responsible person (i.e. someone legally entitled to have charge of the child or to make arrangements for that child's care.)

or

- Whose normal duties include supervising or managing an individual in a child care position.

Where an organisation is also a Scottish charity then trustees concerned with its management or control may also be required to be disclosure checked.

(For examples see Appendix III.)

Where the criteria for disclosure checking are met the volunteer must be fully vetted and the appropriate type of check must be undertaken. This requires a Disclosure Scotland form to be completed and submitted, an application form to be completed, the lifting of references and a trial period (which will allow the Service and volunteers to ensure they are compatible). This level of vetting will only be applied to those volunteers who meet the criteria for disclosure checks or have similar access to vulnerable adults. These include those who are helping out in classrooms, transporting children on a regular basis or offering sports coaching. Appendix I of this report provides a checklist for managers, Appendix II provides a template for gathering a personal profile and Appendix III provides examples of 'substantial access'.

What if there is no unsupervised access to children but the volunteer is still involved in activities?

These volunteers still require to be known to the service, for these people it will be necessary to-

- Note names, address, purpose of visit, times in and out using your visitors book system (if at a school or other public building).
- Ensure that when volunteers are helping at a fund raising event, discos, day trips etc, where there are a number of staff involved, volunteers are not left alone with children and there is no regularity of contact, there must be a list of names and addresses.

You are required at all times to use your professional judgement and the knowledge you and your staff may have about potential volunteers and their suitability. If you are unsure of which category a volunteer task falls into please seek advice from your Area Service Manager.

Appendix I

Vetting Checklist

Name of Volunteer.....

Location/Group.....

1. Have you explained the need for vetting to the potential volunteer/employee? Yes/No
2. Have you given the volunteer/employee an opportunity to read your Child Protection Policy and discussed any issues arising out of this with him/her? Yes/No
3. Have you set up a personnel file for the potential volunteer/employee? Yes/No
4. Has the volunteer/employee completed a Child Protection Personal Profile Form? (Please attach the completed form to this check list) Yes/No
5. Have you carried out appropriate vetting? Has the volunteer consented to a disclosure check (where this is required) and completed the appropriate paperwork and has this been followed through? Yes/No
6. Were the results satisfactory? Yes/No
7. Have you taken up two written references? (Please attach the references to this check list) Yes/No
8. Have you followed up these references with either a telephone call or conversation? (Please attach a written record with full details including the date of the call or conversation to this checklist) Yes/No
9. Has the above individual been approved as a volunteer/employee with your organisation? (You must be able to answer YES to questions 1-8 above before you sign this form) Yes/No

Signed.....Manager/Head Teacher

Date.....

Personal Profile Form Appendix II

To be completed by all new volunteers/employees.

1. Organisation's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Personal Details:

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Forename: \_\_\_\_\_ Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone No (incl STD code): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_ Currently Employed: YES / NO

3. Qualifications/Training - Please enter details of any qualifications or training courses you have attended which are relevant to caring for young children.

Date(s) Title of Qualification/Training Subjects Studied Length of Course Name of Organisation

4. Experience - Please give details of experience of working with under 16's or vulnerable people. Where previously have you worked with young people under the age of 16? In what capacity? Between which dates? Any other comments?:

5. Referees - Please provide the names and addresses of TWO responsible persons for reference purposes. Referees should not be related to you and, where possible, should have a knowledge of your ability to care for or be in the proximity of children. All references will be taken up. You should secure prior agreement of referees before providing their names.

Referee 1

Referee 2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Declaration - I have read and understood the organisation's Child Protection Policy and agree to CONFIDENTIAL vetting procedures. I agree to inform\* ..... of any change in circumstances.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Fill in the name of school, youth club, library, leisure and community centres or any other premises or group name.

### Appendix III

Examples of volunteering tasks that are considered to require disclosure checking.

This type of volunteering task would include:

- .. Sports coaching, arts activities, etc.
- .. After school clubs
- .. Swimming lessons
- .. Playground supervision
- .. Overnight trips
- .. Regular provision of transport
- .. Youth club activities
- .. Outdoor education

Other volunteering tasks that will require to be assessed would include:

- .. Classroom activities
- .. Assisted reading & library schemes
- .. Golden time activities
- .. Breakfast clubs
- .. After school clubs
- .. Holiday activities

These are not definitive lists, but give examples of the tasks you should be considering. If you are unsure of which category a volunteer task falls into please seek advice from your Area Service Manager.



## Good Practice for Volunteers Appendix IV

### General Points

- Treat everyone with respect.
- Always respect a child's right to personal privacy.
- Never make salacious, suggestive or demeaning remarks/gestures towards a child.
- Avoid any physical horseplay with a child or any actions another adult may misinterpret no matter how innocent and well intentioned your actions may be.
- Always encourage children to feel comfortable and confident to point out to you attitudes or behaviours they do not like (including your own).
- If you suspect that a child or young person is becoming inappropriately attracted to you (or another volunteer), you must share your concerns with a member of senior management.

### One-to-One Situations

- It may be important for you to be alone with a child. In these circumstances try to ensure that others are within earshot and preferably within vision.
- If you are on your own with a child NEVER have the door locked.
- Where possible maintain a gap/barrier between you and the child.
- Do not isolate yourself from the rest of the group.
- Try to find a room with a window in the door, or use a ground floor room with windows.
- If possible consider leaving the door open or ajar.
- Ask a colleague to carry out random spot checks.

### Transport issues

If it is necessary to transport children other than by use of hired transport e.g. bus company, minibus etc then the following good practice should be implemented.

- Drivers should be vetted, in accordance with these guidelines.
- A collection point and drop off point should be identified and all parents notified of these points.
- Drivers should not be left unaccompanied with a child.
- If the return time is not certain then a 'phone round' system should be set up to inform parents when the children will be returned to the drop off point.
- Children should not be left alone at the drop off point; at least two adults should remain until the parents have collected ALL the children.

### Behaviour to Avoid

General behaviour, avoid the following:

- Losing your temper
- Raising your voice unnecessarily
- Inappropriate language or behaviour

NEVER:

- Raise your hand
- Threaten a child
- Hit a child
- Strike or use an implement on a child
- Grab or pull at a child's clothing
- Have inappropriate touching or contact with a child whether 'invited' or not.

Physical contact, avoid the following:

- Hitting
- Inappropriate restraint
- Throwing objects

Emotional comments, avoid the following:

- Sarcasm
- Isolation
- Unfavourable comparisons
- With-holding praise
- Threats/Intimidation
- Berating
- Scapegoating
- Criticism

Sexual behaviour, avoid the following:

- Inappropriate touching
- Suggestive remarks/gestures/materials
- Flattery
- Innuendo
- Sexual harassment