



Volunteer Handbook

Why does Brentwood Borough Council need volunteers and what can volunteering offer you?

- Volunteers can bring a different perspective to our work; often one that reflects the diverse views of the local community.
- Volunteers can help to extend services the Council currently offers.
- Volunteering empowers our citizens to actively influence decision making and service provision.
- Volunteering provides opportunities for skills development within our local community.
- Volunteering can be a valuable pathway to employment or training opportunities.
- Volunteering can provide opportunities to meet like-minded people.
- Volunteering can provide an opportunity to be involved with something interesting, absorbing and rewarding.
- Volunteering can improve general health and wellbeing

Tasks, locations and time

As Brentwood Borough Council has a number of varied services, there is a wide range of volunteering opportunities that it can offer, such as:

- Befriending or mentoring citizens in need, such as in sheltered housing schemes
- Helping providing services, such as litter picks or graffiti removal
- Stewarding at community events
- Assisting with delivery of community projects
- Administration support, such as distribution and design of marketing materials and mail outs
- Community website / newsletter content management
- Leading consultation initiatives and focus groups
- Street Pastors to reduce anti-social behaviour and ensure safety of young people

Location and times can therefore vary hugely, but Brentwood Borough Council will try to find you an opportunity that suits your availability and access requirements.

Signposting

There may be some occasions where Brentwood Borough Council does not have any opportunities suitable for a prospective volunteer. In such situations, the Council will signpost the individual to external organisations who will be able to support them.

The skills you need

The skills you need would depend on the volunteering option that you choose, but generally, the volunteer would be desired to have professional knowledge, experience or a qualification (or are studying for it) in the relevant theme/subject that they wish to volunteer in. It would be essential for volunteers to have a friendly disposition and good interpersonal skills.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and references

Brentwood Borough Council will need to take up 2 references before you start your volunteering opportunity.

DBS check will be carried out on any volunteer who, in the course of their appointment, will have substantial, unsupervised access to children and young people under the age of 16 and vulnerable adults on a regular basis.

You will also need to be aware of the Council's Safeguarding policies and procedures. Your supervisor will show you how to access this in your induction.

What Brentwood Borough Council expects

Brentwood Borough Council expects any volunteer to not put us in disrepute, behave reasonably and adhere to the Council's Code of Conduct. Your supervisor will show you how to access this in your induction.

What if you can't come in?

If you are sick, or something unforeseen happens, which means that you cannot volunteer, you should contact your supervisor as soon as possible, and certainly within one hour of your expected time of arrival.

If you are going to be away on holiday, please give your supervisor as much notice as possible. When planning a break please think about how this might affect our work.

Dress Code

Volunteers' dress code will be at their supervisor's discretion and should be appropriate to their role.

Confidentiality

Please remember that Information that you have access to whilst volunteering is confidential. You must not give away any information about employees, clients, Councillors, council finances or any other Council business, either directly or by talking to someone. It is especially important that you keep sensitive information to yourself. However, if you find something out that might be a risk to others then you need to report this to your supervisor immediately.

Equal Opportunities

Brentwood Borough Council does not discriminate against clients and colleagues on ground of race, nationality, gender, disability, sexuality, age, belief or culture. We hope you will help us and that you will not make remarks or comments about, or to, clients or colleagues that may be considered offensive.

Please let us know if you have any illness or disability which might affect you on your placement so that we can provide appropriate support if possible.

Health & Safety

Brentwood Borough Council takes Health and Safety seriously. Safety cannot be compromised. Therefore, all staff and volunteers must follow all Health and Safety rules and accident reporting procedures (your supervisor will show you how to access this in your induction).

If you come across any unsafe situations, unsafe working practices or have any accidents please tell your supervisor.

Brentwood Borough Council has a no smoking policy. This means that employees and volunteers are not allowed to smoke in Brentwood Borough Council buildings, premises or locations where work is carried out. Staff and volunteers should not smoke in the view of children and young people.

Insurance

Volunteers appointed to Brentwood Borough Council will be covered under the Council's employers, public liability and professional indemnity insurance where appropriate.

Driving Licence & Vehicle Insurance

If you have to drive council vehicles as part of your volunteering we will provide insurance. If you have to use your own vehicle whilst volunteering, it must be legal and fit for the purpose. You must also make sure that it is insured for business use. Volunteers must provide their driving licence, motor car insurance policy and current certificate of insurance for examination on request.

Support, Supervision and Training

We hope to give you enough support and supervision to help you make the most of your volunteering and develop your skills and experience. If you feel you need more support, please let your supervisor know. We may ask you to take part in regular support and assessment sessions so we can identify your support needs. You may have to take part in training if we think that it is essential to enable you to carry out your tasks safely and to our standards.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask your supervisor for advice and support.

Expenses

Volunteers will be entitled to travel expenses, and subsistence allowance in accordance with the Council's policy for its employees. Please keep all receipts and complete and return an expenses form to your supervisor to claim your expenses.

Representing the Council

Unless you have confirmation in writing, no volunteer has the authority to represent the Council or to commit the Council in any way.

Ending your volunteering

Both you and Brentwood Borough Council can end your volunteering at any time and without any notice. However, unless there is an emergency or misconduct, we will give you at least 1 weeks notice and ask you that do the same to us.

However, your volunteering role may be terminated immediately where your behaviour has been equivalent to gross misconduct. In all cases the volunteer will be entitled to an explanation of the decision and action taken.

Evaluation of your volunteering experience

It is important that all volunteering experiences offered by Brentwood Borough Council are effectively evaluated to help us improve our services and opportunities. There is an evaluation form for you to complete at the end of your experience, and we would ask that you please complete this fully and to the best of your ability.

We hope you enjoy your volunteering experience with us!