

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

2024 - 2029



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Introduction

Hello and Welcome!

Dumfries and Galloway Council values the fantastic contribution over 800 volunteers make to our communities and we want to make sure our volunteers have everything they need to do a great job.

Firstly, we want to thank you for making the choice to volunteer with Dumfries and Galloway Council and for choosing to give your time, skills, and enthusiasm.

Volunteering is a choice. A choice to give your time to something that will help others. Volunteering is one of the most rewarding things you can do. It can bring enormous benefits and enjoyment, not only to those you volunteer for, but also for yourself. It can enable people to give back to their local community, improve people's mental and physical health and support the development of skills for life and work.

This handbook has been designed to help you as you start your volunteering role with our Council; answering any questions you may have about what to expect and providing important information about volunteering with us. So, you might want to keep it somewhere handy to refer to in the future.



My Volunteer Profile

You and your volunteer supervisor can use the table below to record your volunteer role information:

My Volunteer Profile							
My Volunteer Role					My Volunteer Start Date		
Volunteering Location							
Volunteering Routine (if regular)	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
	Hours Worked						
Volunteering Responsibilities							
My Volunteer Supervisor Details							
Volunteer Supervisor Name							
Telephone							
Email							
Working Days	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
If your Volunteer Supervisor is absent, please contact:							



What is it like to volunteer with Dumfries and Galloway Council?

We know that our volunteers come from all walks of life and have many different reasons for volunteering, and we will do our best to understand your needs and help to meet them. As a volunteer, you will be treated as an equal member of the team and our staff will support you to carry out your role. To ensure that all our volunteers are treated fairly, our Council has adopted a consistent approach to volunteering.

Dumfries and Galloway Council Volunteer Strategy:

Our Volunteer Strategy outlines our commitment to volunteering and the outcomes we want to achieve to ensure that we are continuously improving our volunteering experience.

- Volunteers are highly valued and complement the services provided.
- Volunteers are given a positive experience.
- Volunteers are treated with respect and regarded as equal members of the team.
- Volunteers are supported in a flexible way that meets the needs of each individual.



When You Start Volunteering

How will the Council support me to Volunteer?

It is important to us that all our volunteers feel supported while they are with us. You will be very much part of a team made up of staff and other volunteers all there to support you in your role. We promise to respect, value, and support all our volunteers and work with you to overcome any potential barriers to volunteering. Every volunteer is matched to a **supervisor** who will be your main point of contact throughout your volunteering experience with the Council.

What does my supervisor do?

It is the supervisor's job to make sure the staff, the volunteers, and the people they work with are working well and keeping safe. They will support and guide you in your role and lead you through the induction process. Remember – there is no such thing as a silly question!

As a volunteer, the Council will support you on a daily basis and please feel free to contact any staff member for assistance.



What should I expect at my Volunteer Induction?

Before any volunteer starts their volunteering role with our Council, they will be invited to meet with their supervisor for an Induction. The Induction is an opportunity for you to learn more about your volunteering role and the team you will be working with; it is also a chance for you to ask any questions. The type of things that will be discussed at a Volunteer Induction are:

- What you want to get out of your volunteering role.
- The tasks you will do as part of your role.
- The Council's vision, values and aims.
- Who you will be supporting you and where you will be volunteering.
- The level of support you can expect from your supervisor, other staff and volunteers.
- Any necessary training you may need to carry out your role.
- How to keep yourself and others safe and healthy.
- The importance of confidentiality.
- How to let us know your suggestions or concerns.



How will the Council keep in touch with me?

As part of your induction, your supervisor will discuss the best way to keep in touch with you. As a volunteer with the Council, it is important that you are kept informed of information that may be relevant and of interest to you in your volunteering role. You can agree to be included in team Whatsapp groups, via social media, email or telephone. Your supervisor can also give you advice on how to receive our newsletters which will let you know what's going on within the Service you are volunteering with and the wider Council.

What kind of training is available to me?

As a Council we want to make sure that you have the necessary skills and are confident to carry out your volunteering role. Your supervisor will agree with you the amount and type of training that you will need. For example, this could be spending time alongside staff or volunteers to watch how they do things; online training or attending workshops or courses. Any training needs will be discussed with you in advance and will only be required to carry out your volunteer role and better help our customers and communities.

As a volunteer, we are keen to help you to develop your skills and knowledge in preparation for future jobs or further education. For example, your supervisor, may be able to assist you with building up a portfolio of evidence-based training for helping you to work towards Saltire, Duke of Edinburgh or other awards.



What does it mean to be a volunteer?

Volunteering is a two-way process. We are very thankful for the time and support you are giving to Dumfries and Galloway Council, and we want this to be an enjoyable experience for you! Like any partnership, it is helpful to outline what we can expect from each other.

What you should expect from Dumfries and Galloway Council...

- We will adopt the Volunteer Strategy approach in working with you.
- Help you to volunteer in a way that fits around the time you can give.
- Assign you with a volunteer supervisor who will be your point of contact whilst volunteering.
- Ensure you are supported in your volunteering role.
- Ensure you are kept safe while volunteering with us.
- Make sure that you are not out of pocket through your volunteering.
- Provide you with any training you might need and help you to develop your skills within your volunteering role.
- When appropriate, provide you with a reference that you can use for future education and job opportunities.



In return, we ask that you:

- Treat staff, other volunteers and those you are helping with respect.
- Sign a Volunteer Agreement. Your supervisor will read it through with you before you sign it. The Volunteer Agreement is a promise between you and us.
- Before starting your role, make sure you know what you are doing and feel able to carry out the task – don't do anything that you are not sure about, and don't be afraid to ask!
- Keep yourself safe by following the health and safety requirements. If at any time you feel unsafe, you should let your supervisor know immediately.
- If you are unable to attend an agreed volunteering session due illness or any other reason, you should tell your supervisor as soon as possible.
- Let us know of any concerns you may have or suggestions of how to improve your volunteer experience.



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Volunteers and Employees

It is important to emphasise that our volunteers will never replace paid staff or take on roles that are meant for staff members. A Volunteer's role is complementary to the work produced by paid staff. Employees provide the framework, day to day guidance and support within which volunteering can thrive. Our Council recognises volunteers as an important part of our team with roles that complement the work of Council employees. Managers and supervisors will be mindful that:

- volunteers will not be asked to work in ways which directly facilitate a decrease in paid employment.
- volunteers will not be used in times of industrial action to do the work of paid staff. They may continue with their regular role but should not be asked to undertake additional duties.
- volunteers are involved at appropriate levels of the organisation in relation to their skills and interests in roles that complement the work of paid staff.
- volunteers have responsibility for carrying out defined pieces of work and will not be asked to do anything that is not defined in their role description or that they have not been given training to do.
- training will be delivered for Council staff to ensure that all employees are clear about best practice in supporting volunteers. Staff responsible for training or supervising volunteers should be competent and qualified to do so safely.

How many hours do I need to Volunteer?

Whether you're able to give a little time or a lot, your help makes a real difference. Volunteering sessions can last for a few hours, a full day, or anywhere in-between. They can take place on a morning, afternoon, or evening and, on any day of the week. Before you begin volunteering, talk to your supervisor about how often you can volunteer, and together agree how many volunteering sessions you would like to take part in.

Your supervisor will let you know in advance if there needs to be any changes to your volunteering hours. We will always ensure that the number of hours that you are volunteering fits in around your other responsibilities whether it be work, school or studies. You can contact your supervisor at any time to discuss reducing or adapting your volunteering hours to fit around any other commitments.

What about training sessions and other meetings?

You may be asked to attend training sessions and meetings relevant to your volunteering role; these will be agreed in advance with your supervisor. Any training and meetings will take place on dates and times that suit your requirements. If you cannot make a training session, please discuss with your supervisor so they can rearrange.

What if I can't make a Volunteering Session?

We appreciate that you may not always be able to attend a volunteering session, either due to illness or other commitments. If this is the case, we ask that you call your supervisor in plenty of time to allow them to make other arrangements. Your supervisor will contact you to make sure you are okay if you do not attend a session and haven't let them know in advance.

Your supervisor will ask to meet you if you haven't come to a few volunteering sessions. If you are no longer able to volunteer in your current role, there may be other volunteering opportunities which would suit your needs better.

What if I want to take a break from Volunteering?

We do expect and encourage our volunteers to take short breaks such as going on holiday. However, if you are looking to take a longer break from your volunteering role, we are happy for you to do this but can't promise that your role will still be available when you want to start back again. Your supervisor, however, will always support you in finding an alternative volunteering opportunity.

If you have any questions or worries about your volunteering hours, you can talk them through with your supervisor.



Keeping Safe while Volunteering



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Health and Safety

You will be provided with the health and safety training as part of your volunteering role, including how to use any equipment to help keep you and the people around you safe. As part of your Induction, your supervisor will advise you of the safe working procedures for the role you are doing to ensure you are kept safe. We ask that when you are volunteering to always remember your training and follow health and safety rules. If at any time you have any questions or worries about health and safety, you should talk to your supervisor about them as soon as possible.

PVG Checks

Before starting some volunteering roles, it may be necessary for a Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) check to be carried out. A PVG will be necessary for volunteering roles which involve working with:

- Individuals under the age of 18 (children)
- Individuals over the age of 16 who are provided with care, health, community care or welfare services (protected adults)

PVG checks are in place to ensure the safety of everyone involved and your supervisor will be able to advise you whether a check is needed to be carried out for your volunteering role and make the necessary arrangements for the PVG check to be carried out.

Emergency Contact Details

When starting in your volunteering role, your supervisor will ask you to provide contact details of a family member, partner, or close friend who they can contact in an emergency. We ask our volunteers to ensure that the emergency contact is happy for their details to be given.





Dealing with Expenses

Will I be paid back for money I might spend while Volunteering?

Any money that you spend as part of your agreed volunteering role is known as expenses and we will refund you for the amount you spent.

For example, if you have to travel away from your main place of volunteering as part of your role, these travel expenses will be reimbursed. In order to have your expenses refunded, please ensure that you keep all tickets or receipts. Wherever you can, please choose the method of transport which costs the least. Your supervisor will explain all about expenses and how to claim them back.

Can I give or accept a gift as a Volunteer?

In the interest of fairness and consistency, we ask that volunteers don't give or receive personal gifts to or from staff, partners or customers.

Dealing With Difficulties

What if my volunteer role isn't working out like I hoped?

Most people's volunteering experiences are positive. If you experience difficulties with any part of the role, however, you should talk to your supervisor as soon as possible for advice and support. Your supervisor will be able to support you in looking to make things better. If you don't feel comfortable talking to your supervisor, then contact their line manager listed in your volunteer profile.

If the role isn't working out as you hoped, please let your supervisor know. Together you should try to sort out any difficulties. Your supervisor may be able to adjust the role into something that suits you better.

What if I have a serious problem or concern?

While we will try our best to make you have a positive volunteering experience with us, we understand that sometimes things can go wrong. We believe that if a volunteer wishes to raise a complaint, concern, they should find it easy to do so. This problem-solving procedure explains what will happen if a challenge arises:

Step 1 – Informal Process

If you have a problem or concern, it is important to speak to your volunteer supervisor as soon as possible to see if you can work things out together. Your supervisor will take your problem seriously and make arrangements to meet with you at a time and place that is suitable in order to speak to you privately. The purpose of this meeting will be to listen, understand and establish the facts surrounding the issue and agree any next steps to be taken forward. If you feel uncomfortable raising the issue with your volunteer supervisor, then you should contact your supervisor's line manager.

If the issue is satisfactorily resolved during the informal process, it may be necessary to move to the next which is the formal process in dealing with difficulties.

Step 2 – Formal Process

The informal complaints process will hopefully allow for issues to be resolved quickly. However, if you feel your concerns have not been resolved or properly listened to, you may want to escalate your concern to a formal process.

To do this, you should email our Community Development and Empowerment Manager using communityempowerment@dumgal.gov.uk who has responsibility for volunteering. You might want to use the template form on the following page.

Our Community Development and Empowerment Manager will find a suitable time to meet with you to discuss your concern within 10 days of receiving your email. This meeting will give you an opportunity to explain your concerns and to discuss how things should be put right. You are welcome to bring a friend along to this meeting.

Following the meeting, our Community Development and Empowerment Manager will send you a written response outlining what you discussed at the meeting and any actions to be taken.

In the exceptional circumstance you are still not satisfied by the outcome of the process, you can escalate the matter to the relevant Director. This should be done within 30 days of receiving a written response from our Community Development and Empowerment Manager.



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Volunteer FAQs

Will I be covered by insurance while I volunteer?

Volunteers need to be properly trained and their activities risk assessed (with records kept) so they can do their roles safely. As a volunteer who has signed the Council's Volunteer Agreement and assuming you are carrying out agreed volunteering tasks in the way you have been trained to do so, you are covered by the Council's employee and public liability insurance.

However, for tasks such as driving others, age limits and specific restrictions may apply. In these situations, your supervisor will carry out a risk assessment and make their decision to ensure the safety of all.

What happens if I suffer an accident while volunteering?

In the event of an accident, you must report the incident to your supervisor as soon as possible and they will complete an incident report to record the accident and any action that was taken as a result to ensure that it does not happen again.

Anyone covered under the Council's insurance can make a claim for any injury, property damage or financial loss they have suffered.

Am I allowed to smoke/vape/drink alcohol while volunteering?

You **cannot** smoke or vape anywhere inside Council buildings or vehicles, community venues and shared buildings where the Council delivers services. In addition, smokers are not permitted to smoke at and around entrances, including the connecting

access points of Council buildings. You **must not** smoke or vape near to other people, especially customers. The Council offers advice and signposting for those wishing to cease smoking or vaping.

The consumption of alcohol while carrying out your volunteer role is **not permitted**.

Young Volunteers (12 – 25)

As a young volunteer, we acknowledge and respect your rights under the United Nations Convention of the Rights of a Child, we will endeavour to ensure that these rights are protected and enforced throughout your volunteering experience.

Will I need IT equipment for my volunteering role?

If a volunteering role requires IT equipment, volunteers will be provided with access to a Council desktop/laptop as appropriate.

Can you write me a reference if I want to apply for a job or a school/college/university course?

As a Council we are keen to support our volunteers' development and future career prospects. If you need a reference, you should discuss the request with your supervisor in advance of completing any job or further education application. It should be noted that it is at the supervisor's discretion to provide a reference for a volunteer.

Policy Information



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What is confidentiality?

Confidential information is information which must stay private. It must only be told or shown to people who have the right to see it. This could be contact details, such as addresses, telephones and email addresses, information about the place where you volunteer, or information about its customers. It can be handwritten or typed and could be stored in filing cabinets or on computers.

Confidential information must not be taken out of the office or given or shown to people who do not have the right to view it; this includes chatting, emailing, texting, or writing about it. As a volunteer you might be told confidential information about people or the Council. Remember: You must not talk to people outside of where you volunteer about confidential information.

Privacy Notice

You will be asked to read and sign a privacy notice. This Privacy Notice sets out how the Council will collect and treat your information.

Personal information about our volunteers is kept securely and no personal information will be shared with other organisations/ individuals without the consent of the volunteer unless we are legally obliged to do so.

Equality and Diversity

Dumfries and Galloway Council is committed to equality of opportunity for all people within our community. Equality means ensuring everyone in your setting has equal opportunities, regardless of their abilities, their background, or their lifestyle. Diversity means appreciating the differences

between people and treating people's values, beliefs, cultures, and lifestyles with respect. We value diversity in employment, volunteering and in the delivery of our services.

We recognise that we have a duty to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation
- promote equality of opportunity
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

You can expect fairness and respect throughout volunteering with the Council. This means that we actively encourage diversity among our volunteers and will respect and support diverse needs and preferences relating to aspects of life such as:

Age Race Disability Religion or belief

Gender reassignment Sex

Marriage and civil partnership Sexual Orientation

Pregnancy and maternity

Thank you once again for choosing to become a volunteer. We hope you have found this handbook useful. But if you have any questions we haven't answered here, please remember you can always talk to your supervisor.



If you would like some help understanding
this document or require it in another
format please contact 030 33 33 3000