

Volunteering scheme

Author: HR Policy and Strategy

Contact: [Corporate Learning and Development](#)

Version: 1.1 (published)

Last updated: April 2026

Document history

| Version | Date | Notes | Prepared by |
|---------|------------|--|-----------------------------|
| 1.0 | July 2025 | Introduction of scheme | Helen Ginty/Eloise Chambers |
| 1.1 | April 2026 | Amended to remove reliance on iTrent for approvals | Helen Ginty |

Contents

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Introduction | 2 |
| 2. Scope..... | 2 |
| 3. Definitions | 2 |
| 4. Responsibilities | 3 |
| 5. Time allowed for volunteering | 3 |
| 6. Travel and associated costs..... | 4 |
| 7. Training, checks and insurance | 4 |
| 8. Procedure | 4 |
| 9. Compliance | 5 |
| 10. Monitoring | 5 |

1. Introduction

- 1.1 We recognise the contribution that volunteers make to the community and are committed to providing opportunities for members of staff to engage in volunteering activities that will benefit the residents of the town and help support the council community leadership role.
- 1.2 Volunteering also provides opportunities for employees to contribute to their local community and in doing so, build relationships, increase confidence and acquire new skills which will benefit you, your team and your community.
- 1.3 The purpose of this scheme is to outline the council's approach to employee volunteering and the process that managers and employees need to follow to agree time off for volunteering.
- 1.4 This scheme should be reviewed in conjunction with the Code of Conduct, particularly the section addressing voluntary work outside the council, which outlines the requirement for employees to inform their management of any volunteering activities they undertake in order to prevent potential conflicts of interest. This scheme does not remove the obligation to provide such notifications to management.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This scheme applies to all council employees of the council on successful completion of their probationary period.
- 2.2 This scheme is not contractual and can be amended or withdrawn by the council at any time.
- 2.3 There are specific provisions for those who also work as magistrates, governors, special constables, reservists and other roles relating to these. For further information see the [compassionate and special leave procedure](#).

3. Definitions

- 3.1 The meaning of some key words and phrases, for the purposes of this policy, are explained below:

Volunteering: any activity that involves spending time, without payment, doing something that aims to benefit individuals (other than close relatives), groups or the environment.

For the purposes of this scheme volunteering will include regular activity at a voluntary organisation or supporting a one-off, specific event which benefits the community and where the work being undertaken is not paid employment.

Volunteer organisation: for the purposes of this scheme a voluntary organisation refers to any group, body or initiative, whether formally registered or informally constituted that operates for the benefit of the community, without the intention of generating a profit for private individuals or shareholders. This includes but is not limited to:

- registered charities and non-profit organisations
- community groups and local initiatives
- schools, nurseries, and educational settings (eg reading support, mentoring, classroom assistance)
- health and social care settings such as befriending services, support groups
- environmental or civic projects such as litter picking, conservation work
- faith-based or cultural organisations offering community services

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Employees are responsible for:

- identifying appropriate volunteering opportunities and for requesting time off in writing to their manager using the employee volunteering form (available as a digital form on iTrent self-service and as a manual form from the intranet)
- ensuring that they adhere to the council's policies and procedures including Codes of Conduct when undertaking voluntary activities. This includes notifying the volunteer organisation and their manager and terminating the arrangement if they believe the activity may represent a health and safety risk or a conflict of interest.
- satisfying themselves that the volunteer organisation has in place its own public and employers' liability insurance.
- ensuring that they are fit and capable of undertaking the voluntary work for which they are seeking time off.
- ensuring they are aware of and follow the rules and procedures of the volunteer organisation whilst undertaking voluntary activities.

4.2 Managers are responsible for complying with the requirements of this policy and procedure and for ensuring that employees are aware of their responsibilities.

5. Time allowed for volunteering

- 5.1 Employees can request a maximum of two days or 14.8 hours paid time away from work during any 12-month period (January to December) for volunteering activities that will be of benefit to the residents of Luton (pro rata for part time employees).
- 5.2 The time may be taken as a whole block or spread across the year but must be a minimum of a half day (3.75 hours) per request.
- 5.3 Where travel to and/or from the activity occurs within the employee's normal working hours this will also count towards the two days or 15 hours allowed.
- 5.4 Time off for volunteering is in addition to other time off allowed under the [compassionate and special leave procedure](#) such as jury service, school governor, magistrate, reservist.
- 5.5 Should an employee wish to undertake volunteering for more than two days per year they may request additional leave in the normal way, for example annual leave,
- 5.6 Please note that time cannot be taken in lieu of volunteering undertaken during normal leisure time.
- 5.7 Most volunteering will be employee led but from time-to-time the council will promote volunteering opportunities. Teams might wish to use volunteering opportunities to promote team building.
- 5.8 Colleagues are encouraged to consider the skills and attributes they can offer to a community organisation – whether in areas such as IT, Finance, HR, decorating or creative arts.

Where specific skills are involved, the Social Inclusion Team may be able to assist with signposting to suitable organisations/opportunities. However, for more general volunteering interests, the team are not able to do this.

- 5.9 In times of emergency the council may ask staff to volunteer to help in the community to support affected individuals such as fire, floods, clinical emergencies. This does not count towards the two days employee volunteering.

6. Travel and associated costs

- 6.1 Travel costs will not be reimbursed by the council however the voluntary organisation may reimburse reasonable out of pocket expenses, brought about through the employees volunteering.

7. Training, checks and insurance

- 7.1 Employees who will be working with children and/or vulnerable adults will require a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check before commencing any voluntary work. This will be the responsibility of the volunteer organisation to arrange.
- 7.2 Whilst the council encourages employees to undertake volunteering activities, we cannot accept responsibility for insuring employees when engaged on activities with other organisations. Individuals must therefore ensure that they are adequately covered by their chosen voluntary organisation.

8. Procedure

- 8.1 An employee who has identified a volunteering opportunity should complete an employee volunteering request form and send it to their line manager to authorise, giving a minimum of four weeks' notice.
- 8.2 The form should include the name of the volunteer organisation and its purpose, the nature of the volunteering work to be undertaken and the dates and time required. The employee must also attach a letter from the volunteering organisation confirming the arrangements.
- 8.3 If the employee intends to take two days off in one block, they only need to complete the form once. If the employee wishes to split the two days over separate activities they should complete a form for each activity, giving a minimum of four weeks' notice on each occasion.
- 8.4 The line manager will consider the application, check that the request complies with the requirements of the volunteering scheme and confirm the decision to agree or refuse the request, seeking further information from the employee first, if required.
- 8.5 When authorising volunteering activities managers must be satisfied that:
- the employee has provided evidence (for example a letter from the volunteering organisation) that the activity being undertaken will be of benefit to residents of Luton and confirming the volunteering arrangements.
 - the employee is not receiving payment for time worked
 - there is no conflict of interest with:
 - the employee's work
 - the council in general
 - that the time allocated will not disrupt or adversely affect service delivery
 - the activity is not part of normal work responsibilities and duties
 - the activity will not bring the council into disrepute
- 8.6 Any employee found to have falsely requested time off for volunteering activities or who act in an inappropriate way whilst carrying out volunteering activities may be subject to disciplinary action.

- 8.7 If the request is refused, the reason(s) will be discussed with the employee and recorded on the form. Reasons for refusal may include (but are not limited to) impact on service delivery, insufficient notice, or lack of cover.
- 8.8 If an employee considers themselves to have been treated unfairly, they should initially raise this informally with their manager. If this is not appropriate or does not result in a satisfactory outcome, they should raise it formally by making use of the council's grievance procedure
- 8.9 If an employee is unable to attend their volunteering activity due to sickness or an unforeseen event, they should inform the volunteer organisation and their line manager as soon as possible following council sickness absence policy. If the employee is unable to attend their voluntary activity due to sickness the time will not be deducted from their volunteer hours 'allowance'.

9. Compliance

- 9.1 Failure to follow this scheme may impact on good employee relations and the reputation of the council as a good employer. Therefore, appropriate action will be taken for employees who fail to follow this procedure.

10. Monitoring

- 10.1 Human Resources will monitor the extent and range of volunteering activities across the organisation on an annual basis.

Please note: we are working to automate the approval process for volunteering leave via iTrent self-service. In the interim, the process will remain manual and managers should ensure that a copy of the authorised form is forwarded to [LBC HR Services](#) to enable monitoring of uptake and the application of this scheme.