



Green Volunteers Guide

Contents

Who is covered by this guidance?	2
Volunteers and Paid Staff	2
Recruitment and Selection	2
Volunteering while claiming benefits	3
Supervision, Support and Evaluation	4
Supervision and Support.....	4
Induction and Training.....	4
Meetings	4
Resolving problems from the volunteer	5
Resolving Problems with the volunteer	5
Policies Relevant to Volunteers.....	6
Health and Safety	6
Equal Opportunities.....	6
Insurance	6
Confidentiality	7
Risk Assessments / Safe Working Procedures	7

Preston Green Volunteer's Guide

This guide aims to demonstrate the principles involved as a volunteer working with Preston City Council.

It will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that it reflects the role of the volunteers and any legislative changes.

Who is covered by this guidance?

For the purpose of this guidance, a volunteer is any person engaged to work with the Council, but not receiving payments in return for their time and effort. This includes those who volunteer on one or two day ad hoc projects. At present, the minimum age for volunteers is 16, and there is no upper age limit.

Volunteers and Paid Staff

Volunteers are not a substitute for staff and we do not recruit volunteers to displace paid posts. Volunteers provide support where resources are not readily available and contribute a whole new range of special skills and talents to the community at large.

Recruitment and Selection

Volunteers will be recruited and selected according to equal opportunities principles. We will endeavour to match the skills, interests and talents of each volunteer to a suitable voluntary role. Where this is not possible, or applicants are unsuitable for the work available we will not be able to offer voluntary positions.

Prospective volunteers will be required to complete a standard application form, detailing their experience, skills and the sort of volunteering they are interested in. Suitable applicants will then be contacted by the relevant department to brief applicants on their role and the safety procedure around it.

Volunteers will only be asked questions relating to their health in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. This is to ensure that they are able to complete the tasks intrinsic to the role and determine whether adjustments need to be made once they are in their volunteering role.

New volunteers will receive a copy of this guidance and it will also be available with a copy of the volunteer agreement on Preston City Councils website. These documents may be printed.

When registering a volunteer will have to sign to confirm that they have read and accept the volunteer agreement. If the volunteer agreement is not accepted then the applicant will not be able to become a Preston Green Volunteer.

Volunteering while claiming benefits

You can volunteer for as many hours as you wish, as long as you still meet the conditions to get your benefit or tax credit:

Jobseekers Allowance (JSA): Volunteering should not affect your JSA as long as you are still available for work, are still actively seeking a full-time job, are willing and able to attend a job interview at 48 hours notice and, are able to take up a job at one week's notice.

Income Support (IS): Volunteering should not affect your IS as long as you can still attend a Work Focused Interview.

Incapacity Benefit (IB): Volunteering should not affect your IB as long as you can still attend a Work Focused Interview. Volunteering is recognised as a good way to build confidence and gain work related skills.

Disability Living Allowance (DLA): Volunteering should not affect your DLA. However, if your care or mobility needs have changed you must tell the Disability and Carers Service.

Carers Allowance (CA): Volunteering should not affect your CA, as long as you are still caring for a disabled person, who is getting a qualifying benefit, for at least 35 hours a week.

It is the responsibility of the volunteer to inform their benefits advisor if they are doing voluntary work. Preston City Council will not accept responsibility for this. If you are unsure about any aspect of the benefit rules or you have any problems with your benefits advisor, please contact your Volunteer Coordinator who will provide you with further details.

Supervision, Support and Evaluation

Supervision and Support

The Volunteer Coordinator's role is to act as a primary contact for volunteers. For general enquiries and litter pickers the main point of contact will be Neighbourhood Services, the main mailbox will be available to contact via email: neighbourhoodservices@preston.gov.uk.

Additional Volunteer Coordinators will be dependent on location and activity and will be assigned to you when you begin volunteering

Induction and Training

All volunteers will undergo an induction relevant to the department for which they have volunteered. This could include a tour to the park they aim to work on, instruction on safe equipment handling or introduction to other volunteers or staff members. Such training is role dependant and will be discussed at the induction session and follow up meetings.

Meetings

The Volunteer Coordinator can arrange meetings to raise any concerns or issues that may be relevant to the volunteer programme.

Volunteers can also request meetings or phone calls to discuss any of their own concerns or issues with their task.

In addition each volunteer will have a point of contact at Preston City Council assigned to them at induction depending on their voluntary role. This process is to provide volunteers with the opportunity to feedback suggestions, get advice and help to shape the volunteer scheme.

Resolving problems from the volunteer

1. Any volunteer with a grievance should discuss this initially with their Volunteer Coordinator who will try to resolve the problem.
2. If the volunteer feels unable to discuss the issue with their Volunteer Coordinator or if their Volunteer Coordinator is absent, then a supervisor should be contacted to investigate the problem. If this is unassigned then this can be referred to neighbourhoodservices@preston.gov.uk
3. If their Volunteer Coordinator or Supervisor is unable to resolve the matter, then it will be referred to a senior manager within the department for resolution.

Resolving Problems with the volunteer

1. By signing the Volunteer Agreement, applicants agree to adhere to the standards of work performance and behaviour set by Preston City Council.
2. In the event that a volunteer's conduct is deemed to fall short of these standards in any way their Volunteer Coordinator will, in the first instance, discuss this with the volunteer privately.
3. The aim will be for the volunteer in question to address the shortfall within an agreed timescale.
4. If the volunteer's conduct does not subsequently improve to the required standard this will be further discussed with the volunteer. The Council reserves the right at this stage to terminate the volunteer's involvement.
5. In the case of serious misconduct, the Council reserves the right to terminate the Volunteer's involvement with immediate effect.

Policies Relevant to Volunteers

There are certain Preston City Council policies that volunteers should understand and be aware of. The following provides an overview of main relevant policies. If you would like to see a particular document in full please visit Preston City Council's website.

Health and Safety

Preston City Council recognises and accepts its responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and other subordinate legislation, accordingly it is the policy of the Council to maintain the highest standards of health and safety for all its employees and volunteers.

Volunteers will be provided with sufficient information, instruction, training and supervision to enable them to avoid hazards and to contribute positively to their own safety and health whilst volunteering.

If a volunteer feels that they have been asked to perform a role in which they are uncertain about health and safety, it is also the volunteer's responsibility to ask for guidance and instruction.

Equal Opportunities

Preston City Council is an equal opportunities employer and positively welcomes applications from all sections of the community irrespective of an individual's colour; race; nationality; ethnic, regional or national origins; marital status; disability; political or religious belief; sex; trade union activity; sexuality or class. This is extended to Volunteers.

Insurance

If a volunteer activity has adhered to the correct event procedure and has completed a risk assessment then they will be covered under Preston City Council's Public Liability Insurance.

If a lone volunteer (eg a litter picking volunteer) is conducting activity at irregular dates/ times/ locations then they will not be covered by the Public Liability Insurance of Preston City Council.

Confidentiality

Volunteers will be bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as paid staff as outlined in Preston City Council's Data Protection Policy. If you require a printed copy or to read this in full then visit Preston City Council's website.

Risk Assessments / Safe Working Procedures

Any tasks that a volunteer undertakes and which presents significant risks must be assessed **BEFORE** the tasks are undertaken. The aim of the risk assessment process is to reduce the level of risk to the lowest level practicable. Safe working procedures must be adhered to by both paid staff and volunteers. Failure to observe the correct working procedure could result in harm to the individual or the public and could result in action being taken against the individual who fails to observe the procedure.