

# Charter for volunteering and workplace relationships:

CLARIFYING AND STRENGTHENING RELATIONS BETWEEN PAID WORKERS AND VOLUNTEERS



## Working together

**Harmonious relations between paid workers and volunteers are essential to the smooth and safe delivery of public services, with each understanding and complementing the other's role.**

Difficulties can arise, for example, when boundaries between paid worker and volunteer roles are not clear, when volunteers are felt to be exploited, or where paid roles are perceived as being threatened or undermined by the presence or activities of volunteers.

These difficulties can be minimised by following the principles set out in this charter.

Where different schemes are offered, such as work experience, educational placements, internships,

user engagement and volunteering, it should be clear whether these meet the criteria for 'volunteer', 'worker' or 'voluntary worker' as defined under minimum wage legislation, or whether an exemption applies.

Regular and robust discussion is needed within each workplace or institution in order to develop services that are fit for the future, making the best of all available resources - paid and voluntary. The involvement of paid workers, volunteers and trade unions helps to ensure the support needed for successful volunteering.



# Charter principles

## Volunteering is strategically planned, not a response to a crisis

- ▶ **Volunteering does not come free:** appropriate resources are budgeted for training, development and volunteers' out of pocket expenses. There is investment in developing leaders of volunteering
- ▶ **Relevant stakeholders agree volunteer roles,** including paid workers, volunteers, trade unions, and these are reviewed on a regular basis
- ▶ **Volunteer roles are designed to attract a diversity of people,** in order to facilitate a wider community engagement
- ▶ **Volunteer roles are assessed** in relation to safeguarding and risk and appropriate measures put in place. Recruitment and screening processes are proportionate to the risks involved
- ▶ **In the case of industrial disputes, volunteers are not used to back-fill the roles of paid workers**

## Volunteers and paid workers have roles that are distinct and complementary

- ▶ **Volunteer roles are flexible and adaptable,** they are not designed to conform to the usual 'working day'. Volunteering is a matter of choice and volunteers have the right to volunteer or indeed not to volunteer

- ▶ **Volunteer activities should not compromise or undermine professional standards,** codes of conduct, pay and conditions or job security
- ▶ **Positive reasons for volunteer involvement have been identified - reducing costs should not be the purpose.** Where there is a contract for service delivery, the nature of volunteer involvement is made clear
- ▶ **Volunteers and paid workers are identifiable** e.g. by their uniform or ID badge

## Volunteering follows recognised best practice

- ▶ **Volunteers, paid workers and their trade unions participate** in the development and review of volunteering policies and procedures
- ▶ **Appropriate training, support and supervision** is provided for volunteers and paid workers, to ensure that the scope, boundaries and expectations of roles are clear, and access to appropriate learning and development opportunities is available
- ▶ **Processes for handling complaints and difficulties are made clear** - there is a distinct process for handling difficulties involving volunteers which is different from the staff disciplinary policy
- ▶ **Volunteers and paid workers carry out their duties in a safe, secure and healthy environment,** free from harassment, bullying, violence and discrimination

This charter has been developed by Wales Trade Union Congress (Wales TUC) and Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA), setting out key principles for successful volunteering and positive workplace relationships.

Paid work is any activity that is directed by an employer and is financially recompensed. Volunteering is undertaken by free choice, for no financial gain and for the mutual benefit of the volunteer and others in the community.

## Our context

There is a strong tradition in Wales of mutual support and volunteering. Volunteering enhances social capital, community cohesion and citizen involvement in the delivery of key public services. It fosters individual wellbeing, social inclusion and skills for personal growth and for employment. Both WCVA and Wales TUC are built upon voluntary activism and the engagement of volunteers.

A Healthier Wales and recent legislation embeds a commitment to seeking new and sustainable models of citizen-centred service delivery. Volunteers may be involved in the design and delivery of services, in improving service - user experience and in creating more holistic and integrated approaches.

Volunteers can have a distinctive part to play in public services, without duplicating or displacing paid workers.



This charter, by Wales TUC and WCVA, is commended for use by public, private and voluntary organisations, and by trade unions, to stimulate discussion and good practice regarding effective, appropriate and mutually rewarding volunteer involvement. It may inform the development of local collective agreements between an employer and their trade unions but does not override existing collective agreements.

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