

Report of Head of Engagement and Inclusion

Subject: Volunteer Safety Management

Purpose of Report

This report updates members on the processes and procedures in place to ensure the health and safety of volunteers working for the Authority.

Introduction/Background

Members of the Audit and Corporate Services Committee requested that an update on volunteer safety management and was presented to this Committee following a discussion on health, safety and wellbeing of volunteers at a recent Audit and Corporate Service Committee meeting (17.5.23).

Volunteering activity undertaken

Volunteering has been a core activity for the Authority since the Voluntary Warden Service was established in 1964 to deliver events and practical tasks such as path maintenance. Since that time voluntary roles and volunteers have diversified substantially, with over 200 registered volunteers who are regular participants. Roles undertaken include practical conservation tasks, wildlife and site or monument condition monitoring, site maintenance at our Centres, leading and supporting walks and events and providing mentoring and support to enable volunteers with differing needs and abilities to take part.

In addition to our regular volunteers, the Ranger Service supports a number of groups to undertake volunteering or practical social action activities. These include Duke of Edinburgh Award participants, school groups, corporate volunteering groups and community organisations.

Our obligations to volunteers

In terms of their health, safety and wellbeing our obligations to volunteers are the same as to our employees; their tasks must be risk assessed, personal protective equipment provided and there must be no detriment to their health and wellbeing.

Volunteers also have a responsibility to inform us of any issues which might affect their volunteering such as health conditions, disabilities, or additional support required so that we can make appropriate adjustments to ensure that the tasks we ask them to undertake are suitable.

The obligations of the Authority and our Volunteers are set out in the Volunteers handbook which is issued to all volunteers on registration.

Prior to any group volunteering activity, PCNPA staff leaders will work with the group/organisation leader to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clear and that any health, wellbeing or additional support or access needs can be accommodated and risk assessed.

Outline of Current Processes

	Staff	Volunteers
On registration	Meet all volunteers and match them to a suitable volunteering role. Explain our processes and policies and support volunteers to understand them. Guide volunteers through the online registration process.	Disclose any information regarding health, disability or additional support required. Provide emergency contact information. Read and acknowledge that they have read the Volunteer Charter.
Before the activity	Provide information about the activity. Risk assess the activity and the site and communicate this to the volunteers. Explain the task and how to do it safely including use of any tools and any other safety or emergency information. Check that everyone is prepared and able to do the task.	Come prepared for the activity. Let the leader know of any issues in advance such as medical or health changes.
During the activity	Monitor and adapt the activity, rotating tasks and ensuring everyone takes regular breaks.	Let staff know if any issues or concerns arise.
After the activity	Report any near misses, incidents or issues promptly. Review and adapt the risk assessment if needed. Share any learning with colleagues and volunteers.	Report any issues or concerns promptly.

Summary of recent reported incidents

03/04/2022 - Castlemartin Range Recce

A volunteer became unwell. He was escorted back to his vehicle and offered a lift home. Follow up doctor's appointments and he has since kept us informed.

13/05/2022 - Pathways volunteer session

Inappropriate language and attitude displayed by a volunteer. Disciplinary procedure subsequently followed.

14/11/2022 - Scrub Clearance, Tower Point – Ruptured Tendon

A volunteer took part in scrub clearance on a scheduled monument. While moving scrub he injured a tendon in his arm. This wasn't reported until 3 months after the accident. He didn't appear visibly injured during the activity.

03/03/2023 - Voluntary Warden trip

A volunteer tripped on a branch while returning to vehicles at the end of a volunteer session and cut her knee. First aid applied, and family members contacted.

06/08/2023 - Activities and Events – public walk

The backmarker volunteer became unwell. He communicated with the walk leader who then managed the group of participants. After a rest, the volunteer was able to continue.

Financial considerations

The financial costs of providing safely managed volunteering opportunities are largely from staff time devoted to implementing robust processes and providing appropriate tools and personal protective equipment. These fairly modest costs are far outweighed by the social, environmental and economic value of the work achieved by volunteers.

Risk considerations

Without the procedures and processes outlined above the Authority could be exposed to considerable risk from working with volunteers, however robust procedures are in place to reduce this risk to acceptably low levels. Tasks undertaken by volunteers are generally low-risk and do not require use of specialist machinery or technical equipment.

Compliance

Volunteering is a cornerstone of the Authority's corporate wellbeing plans and features in all operational delivery plans. All relevant Authority policies recognise and are applicable to volunteers.

Human Rights/Equality issues

As part of our diversification of volunteering we provide tasks for volunteers with a wide range of differing needs and abilities.

Welsh Language considerations

There are opportunities for people to volunteer through the medium of Welsh.

Conclusion

This report outlines the processes and procedures in place to ensure that the Authority manages the health, safety and wellbeing of volunteers in a robust and people-centred way so that the well-being, social and environmental benefits of volunteering are not compromised by risk.

Recommendation:

That Members note this report and are invited to join a volunteer activity to see our processes in action and meet some of our volunteers.

Background Documents

Minutes of Audit and Corporate Services Committee 17 May 2023
Report 12/23 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Quarterly Report

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