



I am writing to make a formal Freedom of Information (FOI) request under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). I kindly request information related to staff volunteer incentives, encouragement, and measures in place within your organisation. Specifically, I would like details on the following:

1. **Staff Volunteer Incentives:-** What are the current incentives or benefits provided to staff who participate in volunteering activities? Please provide a comprehensive list.

Our Employee Volunteering Scheme provides staff with up to three days leave per year (pro-rata) to take part in volunteering activities in the borough.

Volunteering is a great way to give something back to the local community
Staff can use their existing skills to benefit others or learn something new - sharing skills with a community group or individual helps to build strong resilient communities.

Volunteering is great for both physical and mental wellbeing.

Another benefit is that volunteering allows our staff the opportunity to get to know our residents and communities more which could support them in their role.

Volunteering can be a great team building exercise too and is a great a way to build relationships outside your team and beyond.

2. **Encouragement Strategies:-** How does the organisation actively encourage staff to partake in volunteering? Are there specific programs, campaigns, or communication channels used for this purpose?

We continuously promote volunteering throughout the year across all of our communication channels, linking in with our Communities team to identify team and individual volunteering opportunities from the VCSFE, using social awareness days/weeks such as Volunteers Week, Mental Health/Wellbeing awareness days, and regularly promoting the Our Town Directory and Volunteers Hub.

We have a webpage dedicated to the scheme to provide staff with all the information they need and this is regularly updated with the latest volunteering opportunities.

Our Senior Management Team continuously endorse the use of volunteer days, using real life examples of community organisations that need support and staff case studies to demonstrate the impact.

3. **Blockers and Challenges:-** What common obstacles or blockers do staff encounter when considering volunteering opportunities? Please share any insights or challenges faced by employees.

Staff have fed back that taking time out of work to volunteer can be a challenge, especially for those employees working part-time or in front-facing roles that would require shift cover to take any time out of day-to-day responsibilities.

4. Effective Measures:- What successful measures or initiatives has the organisation implemented to ensure that staff take advantage of volunteering schemes? Examples could include flexible scheduling, recognition programs, or targeted support.

Staff can take up to three days paid leave each year (pro-rata for part time staff), to take part in volunteering activities across the borough.

The scheme is flexible and can be tailored to suit individual needs of employees and the community i.e. volunteering time can be split down into hours.

We work closely with the Communities Team to identify any targeted support needed to try and match the skills of our workforce to community needs.

We have also supported the launch of the Our Town Directory which is one of the tools staff can use to find local volunteering opportunities.

We continuously reinforce the message on our communications channels, including manager specific messages from our senior management team to enable managers to be accountable in driving volunteering forward within services.

In terms of recognition, we have an annual awards ceremony where staff can nominate other teams/individuals for an award, we tend to have one community based award category each year which would be suited to a team/individual with a passion for giving back. Each directorate also has its own 'Star of the Month' recognition scheme and similar to the awards but less formally, staff can nominate each other and shout out about the good work they've done, this could be used to recognise volunteer contributions.