

Guide to Volunteering for MCC - *Information & Advice for Volunteers*



Useful contact information

Your name:

Team:

Office Address:
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Office Telephone Number:

Supervisor's Name:

Telephone Number:

Other useful numbers:

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Welcome

Volunteers are a key resource for Monmouthshire County Council as they offer an opportunity for increased involvement and diversity within the organisation.

There are many services within the Council that involve Volunteers, from a variety of backgrounds and cultures, who wish to gain experience or provide practical assistance across all service areas and directorates.

We recognise the benefits of involving Volunteers in Council led projects and engaging directly with local people.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for offering your time to support the council and its wider goals.

This guide is designed to act as a quick reference guide for Volunteering for Monmouthshire County Council. It sets out what you can expect from Volunteering with us, and in turn what we expect from you. It also introduces and explains some of key duties that Council employees and Volunteers need to adhere to, for example Confidentiality, Safeguarding and Health and Safety.

Documents **underlined** throughout the document can either be downloaded from the council's website, or provided by your supervisor. www.monmouthshire.gov.uk

Volunteering for MCC – What to Expect

Volunteers play an important and valued role within Monmouthshire County Council (MCC). We appreciate the time you give to Volunteering with us, and hope you find your voluntary experience enjoyable and rewarding.

The following text lets you know you what you can expect from MCC and what we hope from you. You will be asked to sign a paper copy for our records and to keep the copy below for future reference.

We, Monmouthshire County Council, agree to the following:

- To introduce you to how the organisation works and your role in it, and to provide any training you need.
- To provide regular support and supervision so that you can discuss your interests, needs and tasks, and gain feedback from us.
- To respect your skills, dignity and individual wishes and to do our best to meet them.
- To pay agreed expenses incurred during your voluntary assignments.
- To consult with you and keep you informed of possible changes.
- To provide adequate insurance cover while you undertake tasks approved and authorised by the department.
- To provide a safe environment for you to complete voluntary tasks in accordance with our Health and Safety Policy.
- To apply our Equal Opportunities Policy.
- To try to resolve, fairly, any problems, grievances and difficulties you may have while Volunteering with us.
- If we terminate your services as a Volunteer this will be done with reasonable notice and explanation.

I, _____ **agree to the following**
(Print your name)

- To perform my Volunteering role to the best of my ability.
- To understand my first six months as a Volunteer is on a probationary basis, and that members of council staff will be unable to provide personal references for me until after this period.
- To follow the department's procedures and standards, including Health and Safety, Equal Opportunities, and confidentiality in relation to staff, service users and other Volunteers.
- To attend Volunteer induction training and any other training if required to carry out the voluntary tasks I have agreed to.
- To meet time commitments and standards agreed to, and to give as much notice as possible whenever I cannot work when expected.
- To bring to the attention of my manager any problems or concerns I encounter during my voluntary work so they can be discussed and, hopefully, resolved between the relevant parties.
- To inform the Service of any relevant change in my personal circumstances which could affect my voluntary role. These may include changes to my health or any changes in terms of my criminal record.
- To give reasonable notice should I wish to terminate my services as a Volunteer.

Note: This agreement is in honour only and as is not intended to be a legally binding contract of employment.

Signed: _____ **Dated:** _____

About MCC – How it all works

Monmouthshire County Council is responsible for education, social services, highways, transport, strategic planning, consumer protection, waste collection and disposal, libraries, local planning, housing, regeneration, building regulation, environmental; health, culture, recreation and more. In short it deals with nearly all day-to-day services and local matters, including setting and collecting council tax.

We are a democratic organisation made of elected councillors and we employ **officers who are responsible for day to day management.**

Our headquarters are in **Usk** and we also have offices in Magor as well as ‘**one stop shops**’ where residents can call in to make enquiries.

We employ around 4,500 people. Where possible, staff have their own laptops so we can operate a policy of one desk to two people – this saves money and allows employees to work whenever and wherever suits them best. The working ethos across the council is that work is something you do, not somewhere you go.

Our main priorities in all our work are:

- Ensuring everyone has access to a great education
- Protecting vulnerable people
- Supporting a strong economy

Details of the structure of the council’s Chief Executive, Senior Leadership Team and service areas are available online, and will be made available to you when you start as a Volunteer. More detailed information about the service area and team/department you are Volunteering for will also be provided for you.

Aims and values of Monmouthshire County Council

“Promoting a better quality of life for all people and communities in Monmouthshire”

Population outcomes

The council is working towards five population outcomes. These are that people in Monmouthshire:

- Live safely and are protected from harm;
- Live healthy and fulfilled lives;
- Benefit from education, training and skills development;
- Benefit from an economy which is prosperous and supports enterprise and sustainable growth;
- Benefit from an environment that is diverse, vibrant and sustainable.

Values

- **Openness:** we aspire to be open and honest to develop trusting relationships.
- **Fairness:** we aspire to provide fair choice, opportunities and experiences and become an organisation built on mutual respect.

- **Flexibility:** we aspire to be flexible in our thinking and action to become an effective and efficient organisation.
- **Teamwork:** we aspire to work together to share our successes and failures by building on our strengths and supporting one another to achieve our goals.

Induction

When you start to Volunteer with MCC you will be given an Induction, which will introduce you to your role, new team and new work base. You will also be given a welcome pack, which will contain useful information relevant to your role, and also further details of what you can expect from induction (as each induction is tailor made and specific to each team).

As part of your induction we aim to make you feel welcome and accepted at all times. We will also provide you with all the information, equipment and skills that you need to carry out your role.

Training

During your Volunteering role, the need for further training may be identified. Training and support will be offered to you, as appropriate to the nature of your role. MCC runs regular Corporate Induction sessions for new staff and Volunteers which you are welcome to attend.

Trial Periods

Trial periods for Volunteering may be set, if either you or your supervisor is unsure the suitability of the role. This will be discussed with you before you Volunteer, and will be flexible.

Supervision and Support

Support will be made widely available to you during your Volunteer role, beginning as part of your induction. There will then continue to be regular opportunities for you to have monitoring sessions to ensure you are being supported correctly, and where any needs can be assessed.

You will have a named supervisor within your team to serve as your main point of contact. Your supervisor will be responsible for arranging any training, resources or equipment you need to fulfil agreed tasks. They will also provide advice, guidance and opportunities for you to give any feedback.

Problems or Complaints

MCC recognises that Volunteering is an entirely voluntary and non-contractual activity, and that it is important for Volunteers to enjoy making their contribution to the service. However it is also important that we maintain agreed standards of service to our clients. The processes below set out what will happen in the event of any problems or complaints:

- **Problems, or dissatisfaction with a Volunteer's input**

You will have regular review meetings with your supervisor, which should include discussion of any areas of dissatisfaction. If there are concerns about your performance or conduct as a Volunteer, your coordinator will arrange a supervision session to find out if there is an underlying problem or to offer further training and advice. If your work still does not meet with MCC standards then you will be asked to leave the service.

If your behaviour is inappropriate or equivalent to gross misconduct, MCC would terminate your Volunteering activity immediately and inform relevant authorities of any illegal activity.

At all times during this process you will be able to freely state your case and can have a friend to accompany you.

- **Complaints, or if a Volunteer is unhappy**

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any issues of concern with your supervisor, through the regular meetings you will have. When a grievance is raised, an action plan will be devised to resolve it.

If this is not appropriate or you are not happy with how the matter is handled, you can take your complaint/concern to your supervisor and a second action plan can be drawn up.

If, after this, the grievance remains unresolved, it would be inappropriate for you to continue to be a Volunteer.

At all times during this process you will be able to freely state your case and can have a friend to accompany you.

Expenses & Mileage

MCC will strive to reimburse any expenses that you incur whilst undertaking your role as Volunteer. This is to make sure that Volunteering is accessible to all, regardless of income. Volunteers will only be reimbursed paid actual out-of-pocket expenses and mileage rates. Further guidance on what, and how, to claim will be provided by your department.

Car users

If your Volunteer role includes driving and you own your own vehicle, you must inform your insurer of your voluntary activities. The insurer should never increase your premium due to your voluntary activities. You are responsible for contacting your insurer to ensure that you are covered by your insurance and your supervisor will need to see confirmation of this before you undertake your role.

Safeguarding

MCC has a statutory duty to ensure the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Our Safeguarding Policies apply to Volunteers who engage with children, young

people and vulnerable adults in their work and will be covered within your initial induction and further training provided wherever appropriate.

- **Vulnerable Clients**

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks must be obtained by all staff and Volunteers working with or around vulnerable clients. References may also be sought, to safeguard vulnerable clients. For further information on safeguarding, see our [Safeguarding Policy](#), which applies to all Volunteers.

- **Working with Children**

Volunteers working with children may need to undergo DBS checks before you undertake their role. Training will also be given in Child Protection and all other necessary information will be given to you before you commence any work with children.

MCC have a responsibility for safeguarding children and promoting the welfare of children and young people. Please see the [Local Safeguarding Children Board's Procedure](#) for more information.

- **Young Volunteers**

DBS checks will be undertaken on the main contact person working with young Volunteers. This is typically your supervisor, but also covers anyone working closely with, and developing a relationship of trust with you. If you are a young Volunteer (aged 16-25) coming into contact with vulnerable people, you may have to undergo a DBS check.

Diversity

Monmouthshire County Council is committed to diversity in all areas of its work. We believe that we have much to learn and profit from diverse cultures and perspectives, and that diversity will make our organisation more effective in meeting the needs of all our stakeholders. MCC are committed to developing and maintaining an organisation in which differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are fostered and valued, and where those with diverse backgrounds and experiences are able to participate and contribute.

Equal Opportunities

Monmouthshire County Council is committed as an authority to offering equal opportunity to Volunteers from different backgrounds to build on establishing a diverse Volunteer 'workforce'. We will strive to welcome and involve people from differing backgrounds, ages, cultures, genders and outlooks so that as an organisation we can adapt new ideas and fresh approaches. You can find out more by reading our Equal Opportunities Policy

Confidentiality

You have the same confidentiality rights and protection of any paid employee, and will be treated with the same respect and professionalism as any staff member.

Data Protection and Corporate Policies on confidentiality will be provided for you if they are relevant to your role.

Any personal information we keep about Volunteers, such as name, contact details and records of Volunteering for the organisation, will be stored in line with the Data Protection Act.

Insurance Liability

Volunteers who are directly recruited by MCC are covered by the council's insurance policy.

If volunteers are working directly for the council under their guidance and control then they are covered under the councils Insurance.

Volunteers associated with the council, but acting independently would not be covered under the council's policies as there is no degree of control.

Copyright

You may be asked to sign a document transferring any copyright rights arising during your role as a Volunteer to MCC. Alternatively you may be asked to agree a license whereby MCC can use any materials produced during your role within agreed limits. This is to ensure that any work you produce whilst Volunteering can be used after you leave the organisation.

Health and Safety

MCC has a duty of care to avoid exposing any Volunteer to risk to their health and safety. As part of your initial training, you will be made aware of health and safety arrangements. This includes the duty to take reasonable care for your own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by what you do, or neglect to, do.

We will ensure that you receive appropriate training, information, instruction and supervision to carry out your Volunteer activities in a safe and proper manner, addressing:

- risks to your safety and health;
- protective and preventative measures implemented;
- emergency procedures to be followed;
- identifying individuals to assist in the event of an emergency (fire wardens, first aiders, etc.)

Some important areas health and safety you need to be aware of are listed below:

- **Smoking**

MCC recognises the risks of smoking tobacco both to smokers and non-smokers. Smoking is therefore prohibited in all MCC buildings and vehicles (with the exception of residential homes). If you choose to smoke you will need to first leave the council premises and change out of any uniform worn. We also ask that you consider the health, comfort and safety of others nearby, and properly extinguish and dispose of cigarette ends.

- **Fire Procedures**

The fire procedures for the area you are Volunteering in will be explained to you as part of your induction. Make sure that you are aware of these procedures, including the location of fire exits and extinguishers.

- **First Aid**

Make sure you know

- Who the first aiders are and how you contact them in an emergency
- Where the first aid kit is kept
- Who you should report any accidents to and how and when you should do so

- **Working with computers and display equipment**

If you will be using a computer frequently, ask for instructions on how to make sure your chair, keyboard, monitor and desk are properly adjusted. It is also recommended that you take regular breaks when using display screen equipment.

Data Protection

As a volunteer you may become aware of personal information about members of the public, staff of the Council and other organisations and your fellow volunteers. You should always treat this information confidentially and do everything you reasonably can to stop it being seen, heard, read or otherwise given to someone who shouldn't have it.

Personal information is any information which would allow a living person to be identified.

There are many ways in which being careless with someone's personal information can cause damage, including identity theft, neighbour problems, embarrassing information appearing in the press or family abuse, and that damage could have every serious consequences for that person. You should also be aware that carelessly or wilfully releasing personal information to the wrong person could lead to fines of up to £500,000 for the Council and up to £5,000 for an individual.

Data Protection Awareness sessions are available and can be arranged by contacting the Council's Data Protection Officer by e-mail at miketrigg@monmouthshire.gov.uk.

Here are some links to useful guidance. Please read them and do everything you reasonably can to follow them.

- [Data Protection Policy](#)
- [Data protection principles \(Part 1\)](#)

- Messages from the Council's Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO)

[Message from SIRO 20130717.doc](#)

[Message from SIRO 20140227.doc](#)

Social Media

You are actively encouraged to consider the use of digital communications to complement other traditional communication methods.

Our [Digital Communications policy](#) helps people make the right decisions about the use of digital communications and understand the impact should they get it wrong. It outlines the standards we expect of people when using social media and publish things on the web, how we will monitor use and what will happen if it is used inappropriately.

Key points for volunteers:

- All digital communications sites that demonstrate they are part of Monmouthshire County Council should be set up using these 'corporate branding' guidelines.
- If you use social networks or blogs for personal use and have indicated that you are working with Monmouthshire County Council, you should consider using a disclaimer that states that opinions on this site are your own. An example: "The views expressed are my own and don't reflect the views of my employer".
- All information posted as part of your role is a council record, evidence of the council's work, and may be used for reference by others in future.
- You are personally responsible for content you publish.
- Don't upload, post or forward any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content. This includes your colleagues, members of the public or MCC as an organisation. It could result in legal action if you do.
- Never disclose commercially sensitive, anti-competitive, private or confidential information.

It's always possible to make a mistake and get it wrong. If this happens, please let a council officer know immediately and agree remedial action to avoid embarrassment and reputational damage.

If you feel you have been harassed, bullied, or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a member of staff or other volunteer through a digital communication platform (whether from a work or personal account), please inform the volunteer coordinator who will investigate the matter.

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