

## **Volunteer Essex**

### **Volunteering Centre for Excellence for Essex**

Volunteer Essex is a network of locally based centres making up the county's leading experts on volunteering. The network provides countywide cover across administrative Essex and the two unitary authorities of Southend and Thurrock and supports over 2000 groups with volunteer recruitment and management. Annually the network supports an average of nearly 9000 people interested in volunteering and makes over 7500 referrals to opportunities for not for profit organisations in Essex.

### **Code of Practice**

Volunteer Essex adheres to a high standard of practice to ensure that volunteering is promoted, recognised and coordinated across the county. Commitment to this code of practice aims to ensure individuals have a positive volunteering experience and organisations benefit from consistent expert support.

All individual centres working in the county of Essex subscribe to the below code of practice.

### **Support for Volunteers**

**Any individual wishing to find out about volunteering has access to friendly, impartial information and ongoing support.**

#### **Effective Brokerage service**

- All individuals interested in volunteering are able to access information about the range of volunteering roles through a variety of different media; including, but not limited to, web based, telephone, email and face to face.
- Potential volunteers will receive impartial person centred advice on guidance on a range of volunteering options taking into account preferred times, travel implications, interests and motivations
- Potential volunteers will receive ongoing support, advice and encouragement prior to taking up a volunteering position to ensure a smooth and positive application process.
- Opportunities listed by Volunteer Essex will have undergone a quality check prior to promotion.

#### **Ongoing support**

- Volunteers are regularly contacted post placement to provide ongoing support and information.
- Regular communications such as newsletters and promotions are circulated to potential and existing volunteers.
- Volunteers can access good practice advice and mediation support from a named individual as appropriate.

## **Support for Volunteer Involving Organisations**

**Volunteer involving organisations are supported to develop interesting and mutually beneficial volunteer roles that are promoted to a diverse range of potential volunteers.**

**Volunteer involving organisations benefit from countywide representation through close partnership working and a joined up approach.**

### Promotion of opportunities

- Organisations looking for Essex based volunteers will have access to the full range of Volunteer Essex promotional media.
- Organisations will receive support to write attractive volunteering role descriptions to maximise interest in their roles.
- Volunteer Essex will represent each organisation impartially ensuring all opportunities are given the same level of promotion unless there is an urgent or time limited need.
- Organisations will be represented across the Volunteer Essex network as appropriate without the need for multiple registrations and forms.

### Good practice advice/Volunteer management

- Organisations will have access to expertise in relation to managing volunteers including reimbursement of expenses, correct use of DBS checking, volunteer agreements, inductions and policies relating to volunteers and volunteering and recruitment and retention of volunteers.
- Organisations will have the opportunity to be recognised on a county wide level for good practice through the annual High Sheriffs Award for Good Practice in Volunteer Management

### Quality checking

- Volunteer Essex will work with Volunteer Involving Organisations to ensure a minimum standard is met with relation to their volunteering opportunities and where appropriate provide support to exceed this standard.

The minimum standard endorsed by Volunteer Essex is:

- Organisations have a named contact responsible for managing recruitment to a volunteer role.
- Volunteers expressing an interest in a role are contacted within 5 working days of their referral.
- Volunteers are given a clear role description
- Volunteers are covered by the organisations insurance whilst undertaking their role
- Volunteers are given training and induction relevant and appropriate to their role
- Volunteering is embraced as a key part of an organisation and the integrity of volunteering is maintained.
- A clear policy of reimbursement of expenses is available and made known during the recruitment process
- Organisations are committed to equal opportunities in relation to the involvement of volunteers.

## **Development of Volunteering**

**Volunteering is accessible to all though a diverse range of volunteering options and tailored individual support**

### Diversification of volunteering opportunities

- Volunteer Essex will continually explore ways to maximise participation in volunteering through the management of projects that provide additional support to volunteers and volunteer involving organisations. For example this could include:
  - Informal volunteering schemes such as Time banks
  - Youth volunteering support
  - Support for people with disability or mental health issues
  - Support for Job seekers
  - Support for ex-offenders.
  - Employer supported volunteering schemes

Volunteer Essex will work with VCS and statutory partners to promote investment in the diversification of volunteering, monitor trends in volunteering and undertake development work to respond to demands from both volunteer involving organisations and people wishing to volunteer.

### Tailored support

Volunteer Essex will provide person centred support to potential volunteers and will endeavour to find appropriate volunteer matches within the local voluntary sector that utilise an individual's expertise and skills. Where a volunteer is able to offer a skill that doesn't match existing volunteering roles being promoted Volunteer Essex will utilise its networks to identify a match.

## **Representation and Voice of Volunteering**

**Volunteering is recognised as playing a vital part in the development and maintenance of thriving communities and the benefits of volunteering to the individual are recognised.**

### Countywide representation

Volunteer Essex will:

- represent volunteering and the interests of volunteers at countywide level and influence the development and implementation of local strategies.
- facilitate the voice of grass roots and volunteer led organisations being acknowledged at county tables
- champion community mobilisation and resilience

### Information cascade

Volunteer Essex will :

- keep the local Voluntary sector informed about national and local promotions, strategies and developments that impact volunteering and volunteers
- act as a conduit for strategic partners to liaise with grass roots volunteer involving organisations and volunteers
- feed local concerns and development needs up to strategy and policy makers as appropriate.
- Ensure individual volunteering stories and experiences are heard to demonstrate the added value of volunteering.

### Community development

Volunteer Essex will:

- work to embed volunteering into the heart of local communities

### **EVIDENCE AND EVALUATION**

Volunteer Essex will undertake an evaluation process and work in partnership to ensure standards are maintained across the county. There will be a formal mentoring process in place to mitigate the impact of staff and funding changes and the network will work within an ethos of good practice and resource sharing.

There will be an annual self assessment and formal peer review process in place to ensure Volunteer Centres are complying with the code, the associated Volunteer Essex customer care policies and supporting documents. Where improvements are needed these will be assessed and managed through peer support, training and mentoring. This will be managed within locality clusters

Partners are invited to comment on the Quality Standard code of practice at any time and ongoing input is welcome to ensure the standard remains relevant to the county's needs.