

## Belfast City Council

### Volunteering Charter – Illustrative Draft

Volunteering underpins the life of the city of Belfast in youth work, sports clubs, faith based groups, events, older people's work, community and environmental groups and much more. There is a long tradition of Belfast City Council supporting volunteering and involving its citizens in the work of the Council as volunteers.

Volunteering in Belfast is about people choosing to give time to others and their communities so making the city a better place to live. This charter recognises and supports volunteering and works to enhance the positive contribution it has in reducing inequality and strengthening bonds between people across the City. In producing this Charter Belfast City Council seeks to create an enabling and facilitating environment for volunteering across the City, we will seek to improve the quality of volunteering both inside the Council and also through our role in building community capacity and providing civic leadership.

These principles should be used as a framework to develop more detailed policies and procedures that reflect local needs and circumstances.

**Volunteering is defined as “the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society and the community, the environment, or individuals outside (or in addition to) one’s immediate family. It is unpaid and undertaken freely and by choice”.<sup>1</sup>**

#### Charter Principles

1. Belfast City Council values volunteering across the community and recognises the important contribution volunteers are making in sustaining and promoting wellbeing, community development and the many vital services which they deliver. The Council will seek to provide a local environment for volunteering which will enable it to grow.
2. Belfast City Council values the involvement of volunteers in our work because they help reflect the interests, needs and resources of the community we aim to serve and bring a unique perspective to the delivery of our services.
3. Insofar as Belfast City Council benefits from the skills, experience and enthusiasm of volunteers, we believe that volunteers should be able to gain personal benefits from the experience. We are committed to managing volunteers in a way that ensures that the needs of both parties are met.

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<sup>1</sup> “Join In, Get Involved: Build a Better Future. The Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan for Northern Ireland”, Department for Social Development, March 2012

4. Belfast City Council strives to create a diverse and inclusive organisation within a diverse and inclusive community. Therefore, we are committed to ensuring equality of access to volunteer opportunities and equality of treatment for our volunteers in all our policies and practices.
5. Belfast City Council recognises volunteers as an important part of our team, with a distinctive but complementary role alongside paid staff. Volunteers will not be involved as a substitute for paid staff and will not be used to undertake the work of paid staff during industrial disputes.
6. Belfast City Council recognises the importance of having effective structures in place to recruit, support, develop and recognise volunteers and the activities they undertake, and that these should be fully considered and costed when services are planned and developed.
7. Belfast City Council recognises that volunteers, like paid staff, should be able to carry out their duties in safe, secure and healthy environments that are free from harassment, intimidation, bullying, violence and discrimination.
8. Belfast City Council will highlight the importance of good practice in volunteer involvement to recipients of Council funding.
9. Belfast City Council will ensure that organisations seeking to offer services to the Council in response to tendering processes, demonstrate high standards of volunteer management where volunteers are involved.

**This Charter underpins Belfast City Council's role as a civic leader in providing a statement of principles and good practice around volunteering.**

**For more information contact .....**