

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Staffing Committee – 22 September 2021

Report Title

Employee Supported Volunteering (ESV)

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

Report Author(s)

Leanne Dudhill, HR Business Partner OD
01709 822372 or Leanne.dudhill@rotherham.gov.uk

Martin Hughes, Head of Neighbourhoods
01709 255012 or martin.hughes@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

None

Report Summary

This report provides background on Employee Supported Volunteering and a proposal to introduce into the Council.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

1. Approve the introduction of the Employee Supported Volunteering Policy (Appendix 1).
2. Promote Employee Supported Volunteering and encourage uptake of opportunities when available.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Employee Support Volunteering Policy

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Employee Supported Volunteering (ESV)

1. Background

1.1 In June 2019, the Chief Executive and members of the Strategic Leadership team facilitated a series of staff engagement events called 'Working Together'; with over 300 staff from across the Council attending. These events were focused on raising awareness of the Council's Thriving Neighbourhood's Strategy and ways of working.

1.2 A focus of the events was to obtain employee feedback on the strategy, alongside suggestions for ways in which to improve the levels of trust with residents. A consistent piece of feedback from staff engagement events since has been that employees would like to engage more with local communities, potentially through voluntary work.

1.3 The Council does not currently offer any provision for employee supported volunteering but many organisations, including other Local Authorities, support their staff to volunteer or engage with voluntary bodies. Employer-supported volunteering (ESV) is when employers actively support and encourage staff to volunteer in local communities, or further afield in activities such as, but not limited to:

- Coaching and/or one-to-one mentoring
- Skills workshops
- Schools career talks
- Community youth projects
- School governor / trustee positions
- Supporting charity infrastructure
- Offering work experience
- Volunteer days e.g. River or Park cleaning
- Social Care work
- Team building exercises

1.4 The Office of National Statistics calculated the economic value of volunteering to be £23.9 billion per year, accounting for 1.5% of the UK's gross domestic product (ONS, 2016) and is expected to undergo unprecedented growth, driven by a blend of economic, technological and policy factors. Organisations who embrace this change have a tremendous opportunity to make a greater social impact, while also benefiting their organisation (Accenture, 2020).

2. Key Issues

2.1 There is a strong business case for the Council to implement an ESV scheme (CIPD, 2015; 2016), which has the potential to deliver positive impacts for both the Council and the local community as well as wellbeing benefits for those undertaking the volunteering, creating a win-win situation for all involved.

- 2.2 Through an ESV the Council can support its work towards creating social value and contribute to achieving the outcomes set out in the Year Ahead Plan.
- 2.3 The Rotherham Together Partnership brings together the Council, public services, housing associations, businesses, the voluntary and community sector, and a range of other groups to ensure strong communities and a vibrant, caring, safe and creative borough. ESV has a role to play in achieving this aim.
- 2.4 Recipient organisations, whether charities, public sector bodies or community groups, gain skills, advice, and expertise, whilst employees achieve a sense of giving back and making a difference. In return, employers enhance their employer brand and reputation with their employees, local residents, and wider society.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 It is proposed to introduce an ESV for the Council which is primarily focused on creating opportunities for the workforce to collectively engage in social action days/events which have a direct impact on local communities within the borough.
- 3.2 The ESV will be administered by the HR Organisational Development Team with support from the Neighbourhoods Team during the implementation stage of the policy, including liaising with the Voluntary Sector and identification of volunteering opportunities.
- 3.3 HR will identify case studies which can be used as positive promotion both to the workforce and communities to include on a dedicated ESV intranet page. HR will also monitor and analyse associated data and provide reports to SLT on the uptake and impact of Employee Supported Volunteering.

Volunteering Approaches

- 3.4 Managed appropriately the social action events would provide an opportunity to call to action/mobilise a number of the workforce in a collective effort to support an identified community project. Dependent upon the nature of the project there would be the potential to link in with partners to deliver a high impact, visible and reassuring approach to an identified community need.
- 3.5 This approach will aid the workforce volunteers in feeling a sense of achievement and being an integral part of a collective force for good, as well as having a positive impact on the community and demonstrating the how the council is putting the community at the heart of service delivery.
- 3.6 Social action opportunities may be staffed by teams as part of a team building exercise, or by a number of staff from across a range of services. Advice on the suitability of a specific opportunity being used as a team building exercise will be provided by HR & OD.

Individual Volunteering

- 3.7 The ESV will make provision for individual staff members to identify potential volunteering opportunities within the borough area which would be undertaken during working hours. Where an individual wishes to undertake an individual volunteering opportunity they must refer to the staff volunteering policy and seek line manager approval before any commitment is made.
- 3.8 HR Consultants and OD colleagues will provide general advice and guidance in these instances and to both the individual staff member, line manager and the key lead representing the recipient organisation.
- 3.9 Following assessment of the individual opportunity including appropriate risk assessments, the Council may consider that this is suitable for social action and it may therefore be offered on a Council wide basis.

Promotion of Opportunities

- 3.10 All volunteering opportunities identified will be promoted on a dedicated ESV intranet page with additional communication support provided by HR Organisational Development (OD) via internal communication channels.
- 3.11 All opportunities promoted will state the location and nature of the volunteering activities, length of commitment e.g., 3 hours/1 day, the number of volunteer places available and how to apply.

Line Managers

- 3.12 Where an individual identifies a volunteering opportunity which will be undertaken in working hours, line managers should refer to the staff volunteering policy and seek advice from HR before they give approval to proceed. This must take place prior to the individual giving a commitment to volunteering.
- 3.13 When a social action opportunity is offered by the Council, line managers will be required to approve an individual volunteering prior to the individual applying to take part.
- 3.14 Line managers will need to give consideration to the impact on team deliverables and staffing levels – however managers are strongly advised to facilitate/support individuals to undertake volunteering if they wish to do so.
- 3.15 In all cases line managers have the discretion to support an individual in volunteering up to a maximum of 3 working days per calendar year. All volunteering must be recorded on the HR system.

Team building:

- 3.16 Line managers should consider how social action volunteering opportunities offered by the Council may be used as team building exercises. General advice on the benefits of team building can be sought from HR & OD.

- 3.17 Prior to any decisions being taken on teams taking part in social action volunteering opportunities, the proposal should be discussed and approved by the relevant Assistant Director.
- 3.18 HR Consultants and the OD team will provide advice to line managers on the benefits of team building, promote opportunities as they are made available and provide advice in relation to risk assessments. OD will provide internal communication support to promote the opportunities across the workforce.
- 3.19 Depending on the nature of the volunteering opportunity, not all will be suitable for all staff depending on reasonable adjustments. HR will be able to offer advice and support to individuals and managers when assessing suitability.

Benefits of volunteering

- 3.20 Ongoing workforce engagement is a priority for the Council. A key enabler of workforce engagement is for individuals to have a sense of being part of a collective movement with a compelling narrative giving direction of travel and a reason why action is being taken. This ultimately increases productivity and discretionary effort which leads to increased customer service, levels of innovation, positive outcomes in public services and staff advocacy.
- 3.21 On an individual level volunteering can help to support wellbeing and mental health by providing an opportunity to participate in social and community life. Research into actions promoting happiness and feeling of wellness has shown that committing an act of kindness or giving is associated with an increase in wellbeing, (Mind, 2021).

Covid-19

- 3.22 The impact of Covid has been far reaching and more sustained than was envisaged twelve months ago. There are still many unknowns related to Covid including the transmission of emerging variants and ongoing restrictions. There is potential for levels of restrictions to vary according to the time of year over the next two to three years. The types of ESV activities which are offered/supported may need to be adjusted over time dependent on the Covid situation and restrictions which are in place.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 Consultation has taken place with recognised Trade Unions, Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR), Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance (REMA) and Rotherham Federation of Communities (ROTHERFED) have indicated their support and VAR have agreed to help identify suitable opportunities.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 Key aspects of the ESV process which will be developed including the launch of an intranet page which will be used to promote the opportunities and be a

call to action to the workforce, in conjunction with a range of internal communication channels.

5.2 If agreed, the policy, dedicated intranet page and promotion of volunteering opportunities will begin in October 2021.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications (to be written by the relevant Head of Finance and the Head of Procurement on behalf of s151 Officer)

6.1 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report.

6.2 There are no additional financial impacts on the Councils budget as a result of the recommendations within this report. Council employees who embark on an ESV will already be budgeted for, as such the cost to the Council, is the opportunity cost of staff time spent on an ESV placement rather than fulfilling their substantive post. Therefore, the role of the line manager as identified within the report, is vital to ensure that ESV placements are carried out having ensured the impact on day to day Council work is minimised.

7. Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)

7.1 Legal Services have no issues with the content of the report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 The HR implications are in the main body of the report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 Employees volunteering for community projects may have a positive impact on the welfare of children and young people, depending on the nature of the project

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 In making any decision the Council is required to have due regard to its equalities duties and in particular with respect to the Equality Act 2010, section 149, part 11 of the public sector duty:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and eliminate any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act,
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who are a protected characteristics and persons who do not share it and to
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

10.2 The recommendation before the Council will not have any adverse impact on anyone with one or more protected characteristics, namely age, disability,

gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

11. Implications for Partners

11.1 There are no implications for partners

12. Risks and Mitigation

12.1 There is a risk employee's may not take up volunteering activities. To mitigate uptake will be reviewed to inform future publicity.

13. Accountable Officer(s)

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	14/09/21
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	09/07/21
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Stuart Fletcher	30/06/21
Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)	Lee Mann	08/07/21
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)		Click here to enter a date.

This report is published on the Council's [website](#).