

Moray Council Equality Impact Assessment

Important

Under the Equality Act 2010 we must assure that all decisions are taken only after an active assessment of the impact of the decision on people affected by the decision. Where necessary, those who may be affected should be consulted beforehand.

If this is not done, the decision could be unlawful and the council can be prevented from acting upon the decision until the impact has been assessed. This will result in major delays in the implementation as well as financial, reputational and other potential damage and loss to the council.

Service: Council wide

Title of policy/activity: Volunteer Policy

1. What are the aims and objectives of the policy/activity?

The Moray Council Volunteer Policy has been refreshed and has a focus on

1. How Moray Council services will encourage, support and celebrate the work of volunteers who directly volunteer with council services.
2. How the Council will link in with Community Resilience groups and other stakeholders to co-ordinate support to communities in emergency situations.

The incorporation of Community Resilience Planning relates to The [Scottish Government review](#) of Storm Arwen which made a number of recommendations one of which is “*Fuller integration of the voluntary and community sector into emergency planning and response*”. Reference is therefore made explicitly to Emergency Planning within the refresh in recognition of work being delivered with community councils and others to develop local resilience plans.

2. List the evidence that has been used in this assessment

Internal data (customer satisfaction surveys; equality monitoring data; customer complaints)

Anecdotal information would suggest that the number of volunteers in general has reduced since the pandemic. Significant numbers of individuals signed up to be volunteers during the pandemic but obviously their involvement has lessened since the return to normality.

Colleagues in Health and Social care had noted significant reductions in volunteer numbers since (in roles such as alarm responders, befrienders) from a pre-Covid 192 in 2019 to a post Covid 126 in 2022 (-34%) .

Based on feedback from volunteers they have developed clear role descriptions to use more inclusive and respectful language, making the volunteer programme more welcoming and accessible to a wider range of volunteers. The drop in numbers is being reversed with a 7% increase in 2023.

Consultation with officers or partner organisations	An initial draft was developed with input from council services who utilise volunteers, Emergency Planning, Health and Social Care Partnership and tsimORAY. HR also commented on the draft document and on their advice reference to encouraging staff volunteering was removed.
Consultation with volunteers/ groups	<p>Existing council volunteers were engaged through an online consultation with 56 respondents of whom 11 went on to take part in a follow up focus group session. These volunteers confirmed the importance of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clear role definition and expectations (96%) ○ Induction into role and council processes (84%) ○ Access to regular support and supervision (78%) ○ Access to training (84%) ○ The need for PVG in some roles (98%) ○ 91% of volunteers identified their motivation being to make a meaningful contribution <p>Community Councils were consulted on the policy as a whole and specifically in relation to the key role that they play in producing and co-ordinating Community Resilience Plans. They were supportive of the policy and the recognition that community councils have as key points of contact in communities in emergency situations and with their ability to identify vulnerable people in the community.</p>
External data (statistics, census, research)	<p>In March 2023 the TSI Scotland Network produced a Position Statement on Public and Third Sector Cuts and Volunteering. This refers to the STUC/Volunteer Scotland Charter with specific reference that <i>"Volunteers should not carry out duties formerly carried out by paid workers nor should they be used to disguise the effects of non-filled vacancies or cuts in services."</i></p> <p>The refreshed Moray Council Policy is consistent with this in that it states The Moray Council "Will never directly introduce volunteers to replace paid Council employees".</p>
Other	At the annual review of the CLD Strategic Partnership Plan the partnership committed to the national Volunteer Charter to promote quality experience and practice in supporting volunteers. Typical of this process would be ensuring new recruits access appropriate induction, training and support, with accreditation to develop their skills and aspirations to improve delivery and confidence within their volunteering opportunities. Covid taught us that more volunteers are happy to access facilitated on-line training (e.g. Introductions to child protection) , but some subjects are better delivered face to face, most recently in relation to topics such as Food Hygiene, Makaton and Youth Work.

3. Detail any gaps in the information that is currently available?

- a) A number of different council services engage volunteers, but they do so in isolation. Some volunteers reported that they would be open to taking on different/additional volunteering opportunities but were not always aware of what these may be.
- b) There is currently no external validation of the volunteer offer within Moray Council or standardised way to evaluate how inclusive our volunteering opportunities are.

4. What measures will be taken to fill the information gaps before the policy/ activity is implemented? These should be included in the action plan

Measure	Timescale
<p>a) A new cross service Volunteer Forum will be developed to bring together all services utilising direct volunteers and the Emergency Planning Officer in relation to Resilience Planning. The Equalities Officer will also be asked to support and advise the Forum as required. This should lead to better co-ordination of volunteering and relevant training – as well as wider promotion of volunteering opportunities to existing and potential volunteers.</p> <p>b) The Forum will explore the Investing in Volunteers Standard. There are 6 Quality Areas in this nationally recognised Standard. Quality Area 3 has a focus on Volunteer Inclusion - <i>There is a positive approach to inclusion, equity and diversity and a proactive approach to making volunteering accessible.</i></p> <p>If this standard was followed services will be better able to evaluate how good practice is and to gather data on Inclusion which can feed in to any emerging Improvement Plan.</p>	August 2023 (then quarterly)

5. Are there potential impacts on protected groups? Tick as appropriate

	Positive	Negative	None	Unknown
Age – young	✓			
Age – elderly	✓			
Disability	✓			
Race	✓			
Religion or belief	✓			
Sex	✓			
Pregnancy and maternity	✓			
Sexual orientation	✓			
Gender reassignment	✓			
Marriage and civil partnership	✓			

6. What are the potential negative impacts?

Each service is responsible for recruiting and managing their own volunteers – and should work to ensure that people are not discriminated against in relation to their protected group status. Some volunteer roles may have specific requirements (for instance ability to drive) but these requirements are related to the volunteer role rather than the protected group.

7. Have any of the affected groups been consulted. If yes, please give details of how this was done and what the results were. If no, how have you ensured that you can make an informed decision about mitigating steps?

Volunteers in the focus group discussion all volunteer in health and social care settings – often in a 1:1 support role. Some of them identified a need for training and support in dealing with loss in the event that the person they support passes away.

These volunteers also recognised the need for boundaries and safeguarding training to keep both them and the people they support safe – for instance in relation to issues like dementia.

8. What mitigating steps will be taken to remove those impacts? These should be included in the action plan.

Mitigating step	Timescale
These concerns were noted by the service and are the type of things that will be explained in more detail in each service's information for their volunteers and specific setting. The Communities and Volunteering Team are reinstating catch up meetings for volunteers	In place

9. What steps can be taken to promote good relations between various groups? These should be included in the action plan.

An emerging issue in Moray is the introduction of a contingency hotel for Asylum Seekers run by a private business contracted by the UK Govt. The strategic group overseeing this work are conscious of the need to support the young men housed in this hotel to promote opportunities for integration with volunteering being of particular relevance.

10. How does the policy/activity create opportunities for advancing equality of opportunity?

The Policy reaffirms the commitment of the council to promote inclusive volunteering which will be enhanced as a result of the new cross service Volunteer Forum being proposed.

11. What monitoring arrangements will be put in place? These should be included in the action plan.

The Volunteering Forum will be exploring the potential of using the Investing in Volunteers Standard to ensure good practice in relation to key areas and to measure impact and identify areas for improvement.

12. What is the outcome of the assessment? Tick as appropriate.

1	No impacts have been identified	
2	Impacts have been identified, these can be mitigated as outlined in question 8	✓
3	Positive impacts have been identified in relation to the need to:	
	a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Equality Act 2010	✓
	b) Promote equality of opportunity	✓
	c) Foster good relations between groups who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.	✓
4	The activity will have negative impacts which cannot be mitigated fully	

13. Set out the justification that the activity can and should go ahead despite the negative impact?

The Council already has a Volunteer Policy which has been used as the basis for this updated version which takes account of feedback from volunteers, community councils, council services and partners.

Sign off and authorisation

Department	Full Council
Title of Policy/activity	Volunteer Policy
We have completed the equality impact assessment for this policy/activity.	Name: Kevin McDermott Position: Communities (CLD) Manager Date :
Authorisation by Director or Head of Service	Name Position: Date:

Action plan

Action	Start	Complete	Lead Officer	Expected Outcome	Resource Implications
Initiate cross service Volunteer Forum	Aug 23		K McDermott	Cross service group formed and develop Terms of Reference	Staff Time
Explore Investing in Volunteers Standard	Sept 23		Volunteer Forum	Services understand how the Standard works and the requirements if the Council sought to benchmark using this.	If the Council sought the Standard there will be a cost – would need to make a business case on merits of doing so.
Produce annual review	Sept 24		Volunteer Forum	Collated report on volunteer activity over the past year.	Staff time