

Volunteer Handbook



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Please do not hesitate to contact your volunteer supervisor if you would like this volunteer handbook in an alternative format.

Welcome from our Chief Executive

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils.

Your support helps us to bring communities together, help our vulnerable residents, and tackle climate change.

Whether you're working in one of our arts centres, helping to protect nature or keeping our communities safe your time supports us to make a difference in the communities we love.

We want you to feel supported, valued and for you to enjoy your time volunteering with us.



This handbook has been created as a resource to use throughout your volunteer experience with us, especially when you first start. It provides an overview of how volunteering works at South and Vale.

You'll find out more about the councils, the work we do and our vision and values as an organisation and some of our policies which as a volunteer representing us, you should familiarise yourself with.

The handbook is both a guide for our staff working with you as volunteers as well as offering you information about your role.

If you have questions, please speak to your volunteer supervisor. Thank you again for the generosity of your time and contribution to supporting our districts.

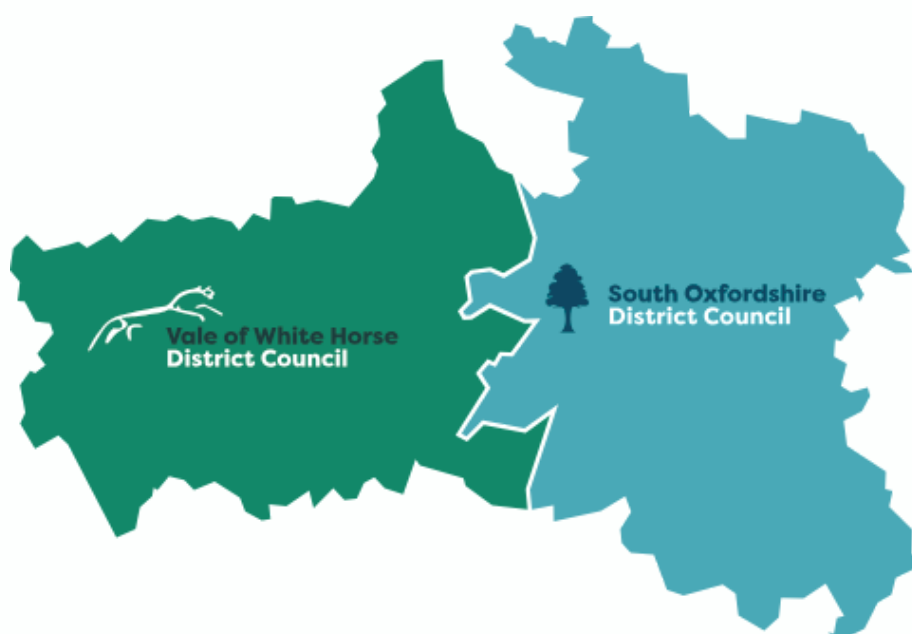
Adrianna Partridge

Who we are

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have been working together since 2005.

The two councils have shared services – for example we have the same recycling collection service, and the same organisation runs our leisure centres – however each council still has its own distinctive identity.

Each District covers an distinct part of Oxfordshire, and champions and values our high quality services and relationships with our residents.



Vision and Values

As a volunteer for the councils, we encourage you to become familiar with our vision and values that are central to our work.

Our Vision: We are customer focused and approachable. We are honest and open and are committed to providing high quality cost-effective public services.

Our values:



Working Together



Respect



Approachability



People and Planet



Accountability

Application Process

We want to ensure that the application process is as smooth as possible, and that we identify a suitable role for you.

- Talk to an officer who is advertising volunteering and they will give you a volunteer description that explains what the opportunity involves.
- Fill out the volunteering application form.
- A volunteer supervisor will have an informal conversation with you to understand your priorities and whether our volunteering opportunities would benefit you.
- The volunteering supervisor will conduct any necessary checks.
- The volunteering supervisor will confirm if you have been successful, and ask you to complete some forms to confirm the volunteering arrangement.
- Sign the volunteer agreement form and start helping out!

It is as simple as that!



Finding the right role for you

We want to ensure that we can offer a volunteering role that suits your needs.

On occasion, the role you are undertaking may end, or may no longer work for you. Under these circumstances your volunteer supervisor will talk through options with you, including whether there is a different role that might be more suitable.

Your commitment with us may also change. If you decide you can no longer continue volunteering with us, you are not required to provide notice. However, it is appreciated so that alternative arrangements can be made if required. It would also be helpful for you to provide your volunteer supervisor with any feedback so we can improve the volunteering experience.



Additional checks

If your role involves working with children or protected adults, we may ask you to complete a DBS check before starting to volunteer with us.

Extra support

Please talk to your supervisor if you have any additional support needs, including any reasonable adjustments which we can make to the role.



Our opportunities

Our opportunities are all about supporting the local community.

Are you a sport lover, or want to get outside more? Our active communities team run different sporting events, walks and other outdoor events that are for everyone.

Do you like art, theatre or indoor community events? If so, our two community centres, Cornerstone Arts Centre (Didcot) and The Beacon (Wantage), offer opportunities to usher and support a variety of events.

Our councils may expand our opportunities to other community-led departments.

Welcome to the team!

Whether your motivation for volunteering is to learn new skills, improve your wellbeing, have fun, or try something new, we hope you will have a great time volunteering with us.

Volunteering with South Oxfordshire and Vale of the White Horse District Councils is open to residents in our local area. It will be based on your ability, suitability and availability to carry out the role.

The councils try to be flexible and work around your personal circumstances. If there are specific expectations related to the role you are volunteering for, your designated officer will let you know.



Volunteer training

You'll be asked to complete some core and role-specific training. This will help you build the skills and confidence you need, and keep everyone safe.

Your volunteer supervisor will guide you through what's required, and you may need to complete some online courses in your own time.

As a volunteer, we expect that you will:

- Maintain respectful relations with other volunteers, employees, and visitors, and be a positive ambassador for the councils.
- Be reliable and responsible, and carry out your role safely to protect yourself and others.
- Attend training necessary for your role.
- Follow the councils' decisions, policies and procedures including confidentiality, and act according to our core values.

If you ever find yourself in a situation where you are unsure about how to resolve a conflict or a problem, please talk to your supervisor.



Council ambassador

Volunteers are important ambassadors for the councils. Please offer a warm welcome and treat everyone with respect and courtesy.

The councils are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion as a Disability Confident Leader, ensuring everyone feels safe, secure and able to engage with us. If you want to learn more, please contact equalities@southandvale.gov.uk.

We also have a legal duty under the Equality Act (2010) and Public Sector Equality Duty to ensure the councils, and anyone representing them, do not discriminate against individuals based on protected characteristics such as age, gender, disability, race, religion or sexual orientation.

When people know that you're volunteering with the councils, they will naturally come to you for your thoughts or opinion on matters relating to the councils. This can be particularly true during politically active times.

Here are some tips on handling these conversations:

- **While volunteering:** If someone asks you a question while you are volunteering, politely let them know that the councils are politically neutral – this means you can't speak on behalf of the councils or share personal views. If they continue to insist, please let your volunteer supervisor or the responsible person on site know.
- **Outside of your volunteer role:** To keep the councils politically neutral, we must not appear to support any political party. Please do not include or reference the councils in any physical or online messages about politically sensitive issues.



Health and Safety

If you have any concerns about your safety during your time as a volunteer, please let your supervisor or other member of staff know.

Volunteers have a responsibility to ensure that they do not put themselves or anyone else at risk, and must comply with any training and instructions they have been given.

If you urgently need to speak to someone other than your supervisor, please contact healthandsafety@southandvale.gov.uk.

Wellbeing

Volunteers can have breaks when needed and should not volunteer for more than six hours without a break.

If you have other specific requirements relevant to your wellbeing or a disability, please talk to your volunteer supervisor or group leader who will try to provide adjustments where possible.

Please contact wellbeing@southandvale.gov.uk if you have any other enquiries.



Safeguarding

We take safeguarding concerns very seriously.

If you see or experience a safeguarding incident, please report it to your supervisor who will follow our Safeguarding Policy.

In an emergency, please contact the police through 999.

If you want to speak to someone other than your supervisor, please contact communitysafety@southandvale.gov.uk.

Bullying and harassment

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils champion that all people should be treated with dignity and respect, and should not be subject to bullying, harassment, or any form of discrimination.



We expect all volunteers to honour and comply with our code of conduct and to behave accordingly. If we suspect you have broken our code of conduct, and have ignored our polite reminders of your agreement with us, we can terminate the volunteering agreement.

Should a situation arise where you feel that you have not been treated accordingly, please discuss this with your volunteer supervisor or their manager.

Insurance

When you are volunteering with us, you will be covered by our insurance for any injuries or accidents that occur.

However, your personal belongings are not insured by the councils. This means we cannot accept responsibility for any items that are lost or damaged on council property.

Your personal belongings should be covered under your own personal insurance policy.



Please contact Insurance@southandvale.gov.uk with any enquiries.

Data Protection

All application forms and agreements will be stored in a secured database following our privacy notice. If you decide you no longer want to volunteer with us, we will remove your data in accordance with best practice and council policies.

We request that, if your volunteer supervisor shares any council information with you to support the volunteering activity, you will keep it confidential and will not disclose it to any third-party individuals or groups.

Please contact data.protection@southandvale.gov.uk with any enquiries if you are unsure about what to do.

