

REPORT TO: Executive Board
DATE: 5 November 2009
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Health & Community
SUBJECT: Halton Borough Council - Volunteer Strategy
WARD(S) Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To present the Executive Board with a Council Volunteer Strategy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Executive Board agree the Strategy attached at Appendix 1.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The benefits stemming from volunteering activity can be numerous. Firstly it can help individuals in a variety of ways, such as providing them with a sense of satisfaction, enhancing their self-esteem and enable social contact and an exchange of experience, knowledge and skills. It can assist organisations by making use of individuals skills in supporting the delivery of services and activities and in this respect serves to enhance people's lives and choices. It can promote cohesion and a sense of belonging, ownership and the ability to influence decision-making at a local level.

3.2 There are benefits also to the larger community by promoting more active citizenship and an increase in the level of social activity, which could ultimately result in an increase in harmonious living, reduce crime, lower unemployment, increase participation and provide a greater understanding between different cultures and communities. In addition to improving individual health outcomes, volunteering can also act as a springboard for getting marginalised groups such as: the long-term unemployed, individuals with no qualifications and ethnic minorities, back into education and employment.

3.3 The aims of this Strategy are to:

- Improve the quality and diversity of volunteering within Halton Borough Council (HBC).
- Increase the number, age range and utility of local volunteering.
- Centralise all volunteering activity for HBC through a single portal.
- Offer volunteers access to appropriate support structures such

as supervision, training and development etc.

- Enhance Council engagement with the entire concept of volunteering.

3.4 The strategy will promote volunteering within HBC as an activity quite distinct from paid employment. In certain situations volunteers will work alongside other volunteers toward carefully defined goals. In others, they will work together with paid staff, where they will provide an additional value to the work already being carried out by Council employees. An important distinction must be made between the separate yet complementary roles of voluntary and paid staff. This is necessary in order to avoid volunteering being viewed as a substitute for paid employees and volunteers being viewed in the workplace as a threat to current job roles. Thus volunteers must not replace paid staff. Instead they represent an additional resource that can bring a fresh perspective, focus and stamina to a department, office or group. Volunteers may also provide a means of accessibility for service users who otherwise would feel or remain excluded from local or Council activity.

3.5 As part of the development of the Strategy a 'Building Common Ground' workshop was held that involved staff from across the Council and both the statutory and voluntary sector. The workshop spent some time looking at the vision for volunteering that they felt Halton should adopt and the way in which we could create an effective volunteer service, what was currently working well and ways in which current activities could be improved. The work undertaken by this Group formed the basis of the attached draft Strategy.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Strategy demonstrates a "direction of travel" in line with national policy initiatives for volunteering activity. The strategy will standardise and bring clarity to the current volunteering practices across the Council.

4.2 The Adult Social Care Annual Performance Assessments had previously identified a need to further develop opportunities for volunteers in Social Care as an area for development.

4.3 Due to the Care Quality Commission's specific requirements for the Health & Community Directorate to increase volunteering activities within Adult Social Care, the Directorate has commissioned Halton Voluntary Action to undertake a 6-month project, which would address some of the areas within 3.3 and a number of specific points in the action plan.

4.4 Work would focus within the Directorate within two specific service

areas i.e. Community Bridge Building and Sure Start to Later Life and the project would aim to demonstrate that the interventions undertaken in terms of training and the development of systems would lead to an increase in the number and quality of volunteering opportunities within those two areas.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The six-month project commissioned from HVA has cost £25k and has been funded from within existing Health & Community Directorate resources.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

Volunteering can provide a sense of satisfaction, enhances self-esteem and enables social contact and an exchange of experience, knowledge and skills. It can, if desired, offer pathways into education, training and employment.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

Volunteering can act as a springboard for getting marginalised groups such as the long-term unemployed, individuals with no qualifications and ethnic minorities, back into education and employment.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

As a consequence of the positive experiences gained through volunteering, individuals can become better at representing themselves, as well as others. This has the important effect of enabling them to take greater responsibility for their own health and wellbeing.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Volunteering can have a positive impact on the community as a whole through active citizenship, which in turn can significantly increase harmonious living, reduce crime, increase participation and provide a greater understanding between different cultures and communities.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None specifically identified.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are no major risks associated with the implementation of the

strategy. The risks to the Council are more around not implementing the strategy. The present volunteer practices differ widely across the Council and standardised procedures need to be put in place to manage risks connected with volunteering e.g. CRB issues.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 Access to volunteering can enable a range of disabled and disadvantaged groups to improve life opportunities and improve self-esteem.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

9.1 None.