



VOLUNTEERING IN THE COMMUNITY POLICY

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Authors Name(s)	Nicky Morris
Authors Job Title(s)	Communities Partnership Manager
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Rochdale Boroughwide Housing Limited is a charitable community benefit society.

FCA register number 31452R.

Registered Office: Sandbrook House, Sandbrook Way, Rochdale OL11 1RY.

Registered as a provider of social housing. HCA register number: 4607

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to define the approach that Rochdale Boroughwide Housing [RBH] will adopt in supporting volunteering opportunities within our neighbourhoods and communities in Rochdale borough.
- 1.2 The principles of volunteering are key to our mutual values. Our Mutual Future sets out our objective to increase member engagement in our neighbourhoods, enabling our members to demonstrate mutual values within communities.
- 1.3 RBH is committed to demonstrating Corporate Social Responsibility through investments and action within our neighbourhoods. Community volunteering delivers measurable social value to members, customers and communities
- 1.4 RBH defines volunteering in the community as individuals giving time and skills collectively to benefit our members, customers and communities and further Our Mutual Future objectives

2. Methodology

- 2.1 Prior to 2016, RBH supported volunteering activities in our communities through a number of strands, administered by different sections of the Society including:
 - Annual Tenant Participation Grants;
 - One off Tenant Participation Grants;
 - Environmental Grants;
 - Participatory Budgeting;
 - Tenant training budget;
 - Working with children grants;
 - Our Team employee volunteer time;
 - One off annual events such as Give and Gain week and Co-operative Fortnight.
- 2.2 In 2015 a series of short reviews were undertaken that highlighted potential duplication and a mis-match between funding criteria and the corporate objectives of Our Mutual Future, limitations in the opportunities for employees to volunteer effectively and a need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation
- 2.3 Throughout 2016 development work has been undertaken with our members, our Representative Body and key voluntary sector partners to remodel how RBH funds and supports voluntary activities within our communities.
- 2.4 Workshops with tenant and employee members created a new approach to allocating funding to voluntary and community organisations through piloting the Members Community Fund 2016/17.
- 2.5 Partnership work has been undertaken with the Rochdale Council for Voluntary Service [RCVS] to develop the Mutual Recognition Framework with ensures that voluntary and community organisations supported by RBH are enabled to meet all relevant legislation and regulation.

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- 2.6 Feedback has been sought from voluntary and community groups to expand and shape a community volunteering training programme to assist community groups in delivering volunteering activities
- 2.7 As part of Neighbourhoods Together, participatory budgeting has been remodelled to target volunteering opportunities to neighbourhoods with the highest needs in terms of Our Mutual Future objectives.
- 2.8 Feedback from employee members on employee volunteering opportunities identified that current opportunities are too narrow and do not fully utilise employee skills, or differing work patterns and workloads.
- 2.9 Discussions have been held with our Charity of the Year to identify how volunteering in our communities can enable the charity in meeting its charitable aims
- 2.10 A new monitoring and evaluation tool has been developed and implemented to effectively capture and measure volunteering time and activities. This system will have the capacity to develop to measure value of both tenant and employee volunteering time and social value and impact.

3. Aims and Objectives

- 3.1 As a Mutual Society, RBH is committed to enabling all members to contribute towards the quality of life and success in our neighbourhoods. As such RBH aims to promote volunteering which has measurable benefits our members, communities and customers.
- 3.2 Through volunteering RBH will enable people in our communities to develop skills and experience that can help them enter, sustain or progress employment
- 3.3 This aim will be met through ensuring our volunteering resources are effectively aligned to corporate objectives and have measurable outcomes
- 3.4 This policy is based on the following mutual values:

Responsibility – Through the Mutual Recognition Framework, we will ensure that voluntary and community groups are enabled to meet appropriate legislation and regulation for their activities and access training, support and resources. Monitoring, evaluation and scrutiny through the Members Community Funding Panel will ensure the efficient and effective use of our resources;

Equity –Volunteering opportunities will be developed and resourced in a fair and unbiased way. Access to volunteering will be promoted across all communities and abilities;

Democracy – Members are fully involved in decision making through the Members Community Funding Panel and Decide Together participatory budgeting;

Pioneering – RBH will seek to bring together both tenant and employee members to share in volunteering activities, to give members influence on volunteering outcomes;

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Openness and Honesty –The criteria for volunteering and community funding are open to the public through our website. Decisions on community funding are made by the Members Community Fund Panel and all applicants receive feedback on decisions. Participatory budgeting decisions are made through a members vote which will be published on our website. All volunteering opportunities will include the opportunity for volunteers to feedback their experience;

Caring – RBH will provide all volunteers with appropriate support, guidance and training to enable them to effectively volunteer;

Championing – The principles of volunteering are key to our Mutual Values. As such, RBH will promote and celebrate the outcomes and benefits of supporting volunteering for our members and within our communities.

4. Scope of the Policy

- 4.1 This policy is designed to support RBH members, all employees and individuals who wish to engage in volunteering to benefit RBH communities, RBH customers and our Charity of the Year.
- 4.2 This policy does not cover work place volunteering or work experience within RBH, which is covered by a separate policy
- 4.3 This policy does not relate to individual volunteering in activities that are not within Our Mutual Future, RBH communities or related to our Charity of the Year.
- 4.4 To strengthen our Member Offer, we will actively promote the role of members in sponsoring, developing and delivering community volunteering through providing roles as project sponsors, Member Community Fund Panel membership, and direct monitoring of project outcomes.

5. Policy Statement

- 5.1 RBH will support Volunteering the Community through
 - The Mutual Recognition Framework
 - The Members Community Fund
 - Decide Together participatory budgeting
 - Community Volunteering Training Programme
 - Employee volunteering
 - Charity of the Year

The Mutual Recognition Framework

- 5.2 RBH will provide support to community and voluntary groups based in or providing activities within RBH neighbourhoods which benefit our members and customers. This will include:
 - Advice and guidance to members wishing to form a community group;

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- Support to develop policies, procedures and financial management to operate a group within relevant legislation, regulation and good practice;
- Access to independent financial audit of accounts;
- Complete a due diligence check to assist group in applying for RBH Members Community Fund and external funding sources;
- Training through the RBH Community Training programme and through partner agencies;
- An annual Mutual Recognition Grant to support the group with developmental costs such as meeting space, insurances and administration;
- Support to develop projects to submit to the Members Community Fund and Decide Together Vote.

Members Community Fund

5.3 RBH Members Community Fund will award annual grants to community groups and voluntary organisations who apply for projects based in RBH neighbourhoods. All projects must include an element of volunteering. Projects must benefit RBH members and contribute to Our Mutual Future objectives in one or more of the following categories:

- Work and skills opportunities;
- Support services and advice;
- Health and well being;
- Reducing isolation [physical and social];
- Improving green spaces and the environment;
- Supporting families and children;
- Digital Inclusion;
- Building co-hesion and mutuality across neighbourhoods.

5.4 All applications submitted to the RBH Members Community fund will be assessed by RBH Communities Partnership Team to ensure that the applicant meets the due diligence requirements of the Mutual Recognition Framework.

5.5 The Members Community Panel will meet in May each year to allocate the Fund. The Members Community Panel will consist of tenant and employee members, who volunteer to manage and monitor the fund on behalf of all RBH Members. Membership of the Panel is open to all RBH members who do not have a direct role in management of the RBH Community Fund. Where possible an equal number of employee and tenant members make up the panel. The Panel quorate is 15. The Members Community Fund Panel will meet quarterly to review and monitor projects

Decide Together

5.6 Through our Decide Together approach RBH will provide funding for activities that address the key priorities identified within Neighbourhoods Together. Decide Together will encourage tenant and employee members to suggest projects or actions in their neighbourhoods. Although not all projects will be exclusively volunteering, all projects will include a volunteering element. Decide Together will be awarded through an online Members Vote.

Community Volunteering Training Programme

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- 5.7 RBH will work with voluntary sector partners to provide an annual training programme to provide skills and knowledge to our volunteers in their roles. The training programme will consist of core elements covering the key elements of volunteering, plus a range of accredited qualifications and specialist courses to assist with the delivery of projects.
- 5.8 RBH will carry out annual training needs assessment with volunteers to ensure that the training is effective and meeting volunteer needs
- 5.9 RBH will support volunteers to identify how skills gained through volunteering can progress employment opportunities

Employee Volunteering

- 5.10 RBH will enable our employees to volunteer time in communities through Volunteer Together. This will provide our employees with a range of opportunities to work together and with our tenant volunteers to deliver projects.
- 5.11 Employees will be encouraged and supported to spend circa two days per annum in volunteering time. Employee volunteering will be arranged with the agreement of the line manager and in line with the needs of the service. All employee volunteering will be subject to monitoring and review as set out in this policy.
- 5.12 Volunteer Together will offer a diverse range of volunteering in the following Categories:
- Work and skills opportunities;
 - Support services and advice;
 - Health and well being;
 - Reducing isolation [physical and social];
 - Improving green spaces and the environment;
 - Supporting families and children;
 - Digital inclusion;
 - Building cohesion and mutuality across neighbourhoods.

In addition, we will work with Our Charity of the Year to develop options for employees to volunteer within the Charity's volunteering programme.

- 5.13 RBH will promote the Volunteering Together Calendar which will set out all available volunteering opportunities for employees. These will be designed to meet differing work patterns and workload to enable the maximum number of employees to participate regardless of their work role and will include:
- Annual events such as Give and Gain Week, Carol singing;
 - One off events such as information or learning events;
 - Weekly sessions such as homework or luncheon clubs;
 - Individual volunteer mentoring roles.
- 5.14 Activities organised to support our Charity of the Year will be classed as community volunteering. This will include fundraising activities organised by tenant or employee volunteers as well as direct volunteering with the charity. Charity of the Year volunteering

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will be included in the Volunteering Together calendar and monitored and recorded through this policy.

- 5.15 Employee volunteers may participate in the Community Volunteering Training Programme with line manager's agreement.
Disclose and Barring services will be available for any employee volunteering in regulated activities. Any expenses that arise from volunteering should be paid through the project, and not incurred by employee volunteers.

6. Equality and Diversity

- 6.1 The Volunteering in the Community Policy has been subject to a full Equality Impact Assessment. The outcome of the assessment is that this policy has a low to medium impact.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 This policy has been developed over a year using a co-production approach with tenant and employee members, RBH Learning and Development, existing community organisations and voluntary sector partnerships. The key vehicles for involvement and influence in this policy have been:
- Workshops held with tenant members and community organisations in March & April 2015;
 - Individual meetings with tenants and resident associations and community groups;
 - Formation of Members Community Funding Panel in May 2016 and subsequent quarterly meeting with the Panel;
 - Progress presentations to Communities Panel;
 - Partnership meetings with RCVS;
 - Meetings with Charity of the Year;
 - Feedback from employee volunteers;

8. Monitoring and Review

- 8.1 A framework is in place to monitor and review all community volunteering. This framework includes:
- Mutual Recognition Due Diligence system which monitors that volunteering is meeting legislation, regulation and risk management;
 - Grant conditions and project monitoring to ensure project delivery;
 - An online monitoring tool to record and measure individual community volunteering time and outcomes;
 - Performance indicators to measure community volunteering.
- 8.2 This framework will report to Board and Representative Body every six months and to Communities Panel quarterly on:
- Number of voluntary groups supported;
 - Number of volunteering activities delivered;
 - Number of tenant and employee volunteering hours;

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- Number of members and customers benefitting from a volunteering activity;
 - Number of volunteering hours devoted to Charity of the Year.
- 8.3 Where appropriate a social value model will be applied to volunteering time and outcomes to measure and evaluate the Social Return on Investment achieved through volunteering. This will be reported to Board, Representative Body and Communities panel annually.
- 8.4 All RBH strategies, policies and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis in order to ensure that they are fit for purpose and comply with all relevant statutory regulations. The Communities Partnership Manager will be responsible for the delivery of this policy and the further development of supporting procedures, guidance and action plans.
- 8.5 This policy including any other related procedures will be reviewed annually by the Communities Partnership Manager in conjunction with the Members Community Fund Panel. It will be updated where necessary to ensure its continued appropriateness and formally reviewed and submitted to the appropriate approving body at least once every three years.

9. Links to RBH Strategies, Policies and Procedures

- 9.1 The principles of volunteering are key to our mutual values and are closely linked to our Member Engagement Strategy. Volunteering enables our members to demonstrate mutual values within our communities and supports engagement within the Society and across our communities. It has an important role to play in Engagement
- 9.2 Links to other RBH strategies, policies and procedures:
- Social Value Strategy;
 - Neighbourhoods Together;
 - Work Placements and Work Experience Policy;
 - Work and Skills Strategy;
 - DBS for Community Volunteers Policy;
 - Risk assessment;
 - Children's and Adult Safeguarding Policies.