

WELSH GOVERNMENT HR GUIDANCE AND PROCEDURES

Employee Volunteering Scheme

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A. Policy - EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING SCHEME

It is the Welsh Government's policy to encourage employees to take an active role in their communities and to share their skills, knowledge and experience with the wider community. Activities should be focused on making a difference to local communities and be linked to an individual's personal development.

The Welsh Government encourages its employees to take part in employee volunteering activities and allows staff to apply for up to 5 days (pro rata) paid Special Leave per annum (1 April to 31 March) to carry out activities that:

- Bring us closer to our communities and customers
- Produces business benefits
- Provides development opportunities for our people that would not otherwise be met through usual training routes
- All our policies are fully inclusive of all staff regardless of age, marriage and civil partnership (both same sex and opposite sex), pregnancy and

maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, whether they have an impairment or health condition, are neurodivergent or use British Sign Language, their gender identity or gender expression. We acknowledge that the terms 'gender identity' and 'gender expression' are not protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, however, we believe that Government policy which includes provision for those persons who identify within the 'trans' umbrella (rather than on the basis of binary gender) is a more inclusive approach and one which ensures the Welsh Ministers are in a position to comply with all their statutory duties related to equality and the promotion of well-being in Wales. If you have any feedback on the inclusivity of this policy, please email EqualityintheWorkplaceTeam@gov.wales.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Guidance sets out the procedures for employees wishing to undertake volunteering activities.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Welsh Government (WG) is keen to encourage employees to take an active role in their communities and to share their skills, knowledge and experience with the wider community. Activities should be focused on making a difference to local communities and be linked to an individual's personal development.
- 2.2 The WG encourages its employees to take part in employee volunteering activities and allows staff to apply for up to 5 days (pro rata) paid Special Leave per annum (1 April to 31 March) to carry out activities that:
 - Bring us closer to our communities and customers
 - Produces business benefits
 - Provides development opportunities for our people that would not otherwise be met through usual training routes

3. Categories of Employee Volunteering

- 3.1 The WG currently has two routes through which employees can undertake volunteering activities using paid Special Leave:
 1. Individual Community Volunteering
 2. Team Challenges

B. Types of volunteering

4. One – Individual Community Volunteering

- 4.1 For the purpose of this guidance, individual community volunteering means spending time on a community activity that:
 - Benefits others in that community and/or
 - Brings business benefits for the WG - addressing business issues, enhancing the WG's reputation or improving customer understanding of our role
- 4.2 Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. Volunteering is open to all WG employees.

4.3 Community activities for which paid special leave is sought should:

- “Give back” to the community
- Enhance the relationship between the WG and the local community
- Provide an opportunity to enhance the WG’s understanding of its diverse customer base
- Staff who volunteer to serve in the Reserve Forces are eligible to apply for up to 5 days paid Special leave under this policy to undertake additional training or voluntary operations. Please refer to the Reserve Forces Policy for further information.

4.4 Please see C ii) below for details of the procedures for individual community volunteering.

5. Two – Team Challenges

5.1 Team Leaders may utilise volunteering as a team building exercise or as an alternative to traditional “away days”. Team Challenges can strengthen an understanding of how the team works together, develop leadership and management skills and provide business benefits to the Welsh Government.

5.2 Team Leaders are responsible for organising the Team Challenge activity. Team leaders must ensure that a range of activities included in the Team Challenge guarantee that all team members are able to be included and participation is not limited for some team members.

5.3 Team Leaders organising a Team Challenge are responsible for the health and safety of the team and should complete a site visit and risk assessment prior to undertaking the activity. It is the Team Leader’s responsibility to adequately assess the level of health and safety risk.

5.4 Please see C ii) below for details of the procedures for individual community volunteering.

6. After Completing Volunteering Activities

6.1 Within 14 days of completing a volunteering activity, you must:

- Complete the relevant Evaluation Form.
- Consider drafting a Case Study to share the experience with Welsh Government Colleagues.

6.2 Submit forms to the volunteering support team will use this information to monitor and evaluate volunteering activity across the WG.

C i) Guidance for Line Managers

1. What is community volunteering?

For the purpose of this guidance, community volunteering means spending time on a community activity that:

- Benefits others in that community
- Brings business benefits to the Welsh Government – addressing business issues, enhancing the Welsh Government's reputation or improving customer understanding of the Welsh Government
- Provides an opportunity for development of an individual

The activity may not achieve all the above, primarily community volunteering is about giving a commitment of time & energy for community benefit, without financial gain.

2. What are the benefits of community volunteering?

These activities have positive outcomes for individual volunteers, teams through the Team Challenge & the host organisation. It can also have benefits for the Welsh Government, raising our profile and “giving back” through sharing of experience, knowledge and skill.

3. Who can apply to undertake community volunteering?

Every member of staff is eligible to apply for up to 5 days paid Special Leave (pro rata) per annum to undertake volunteering activities. Work teams may also apply, with the benefit that this type of volunteering does not count towards an individual's 5 days paid Leave eligibility.

4. What is the role of the Line Manager?

As the line manager of an individual employee looking to volunteer / or the manager of a team leader who is organising a Team Challenge, your role is to ensure that the Special Leave Request is in line with the Employee Volunteering Scheme Policy and Guidance and that the following forms are completed:

- **Online Special Leave Request Form** – This must be completed by Individual Volunteers undertaking Individual Community Volunteering. [Special Leave Form](#)
- **Notification and Risk Assessment Checklist Form** (Individual Volunteers)
The Notification section of this form must be completed. Please encourage the completion of the Risk Assessment Checklist section although, for some volunteering opportunities, a full risk assessment may not be required.
- **Risk Assessment Checklist**
For Team Challenge – This form must be completed
- **Notification of Team Challenge** – This must be completed by the team leader and submitted by the Deputy Director.
- **Evaluation Form** – Please ensure your staff have completed this form to indicate how they/the organisation has benefitted from the volunteering activity.
- **Case Study** – Please encourage your staff to complete this form to share their experiences with colleagues.

5. Civil Service Code and Staff Code of Conduct?

As a line manager you may wish to highlight the requirements of the Civil Service and the Staff Code of Conduct to your staff to remind them that they still apply when volunteering. You may also wish to consider the business needs at the time of the application.

6. PMR

You may consider reflecting volunteering activities within their PMR as skills development depending on what the volunteering actually involved.

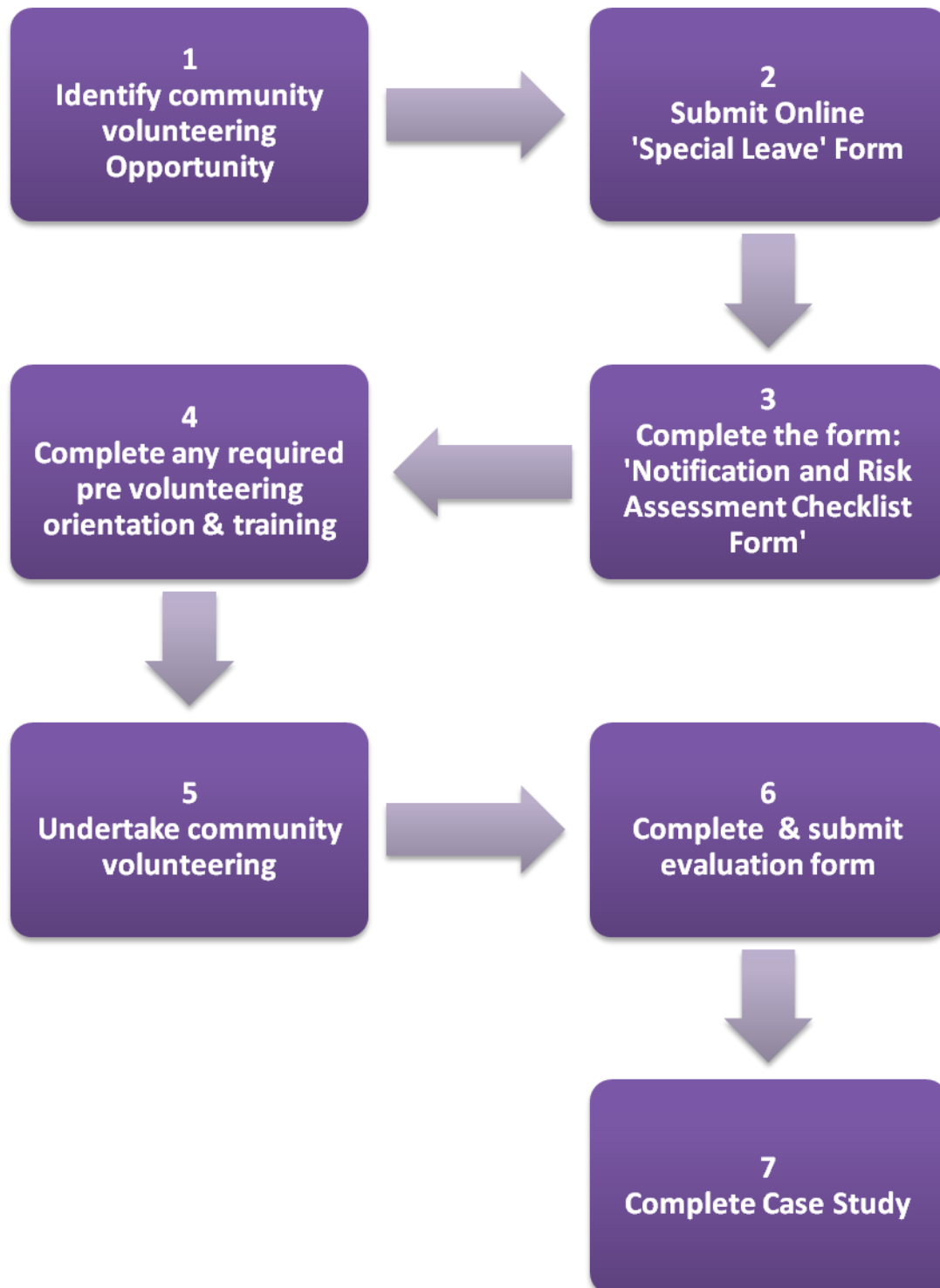
7. For further information

email: ourvolunteers@gov.wales

C ii) Individual Community Volunteering

Process outline

The diagram below highlights the process required to participate in community volunteering using the Welsh Government Individual Community Volunteering Guidance.



On the following page the above process is expanded with all the required document links and detail.

Individual Community Volunteering guidance

Process detail

1. Identify community volunteering Opportunity

This can be achieved in several ways:

- You may have direct knowledge of organisations welcoming volunteers
- You may already be volunteering in your own time in an appropriate organisation.

Contact the organisation directly to discuss the volunteering opportunity, and please consider the Civil Service Code and Staff Code of Conduct and any possible conflict of interests.

2. Complete and submit the: [Online Special Leave Request Form](#)

Before you submit this form, please discuss your community volunteering opportunity with your line manager.

3. Complete and submit form: [Notification and Risk Assessment Checklist Form](#)

The first part of this form, the Notification section, has to be completed. This is important, as it details the activity you will be participating in, the activity location, the contact details while participating, and the learning / development opportunities it offers. The Risk Assessment Checklist section should be completed, although, for many opportunities, a full risk assessment may not be necessary.

4. Complete any pre volunteering orientation & training required by the host organisation

If required, this may help ensure that you maximise your impact during the community volunteering opportunity and also ensure your health and safety considerations are taken on board.

5. Undertake community volunteering

While undertaking the volunteering opportunity, please note any thoughts or suggestions that you may want to make known to the host to assist them in achieving their future goals. Also note any learning that you may be able to bring back into the Welsh Government

6. Please complete and submit the [Evaluation Form](#)

This is very important, as it assists us to evidence how important this volunteering work is to the host organisation, and also how WG staff skills and experience are being developed thus bringing new skills into our organisation.

7. Complete and submit the [Case Study](#) template

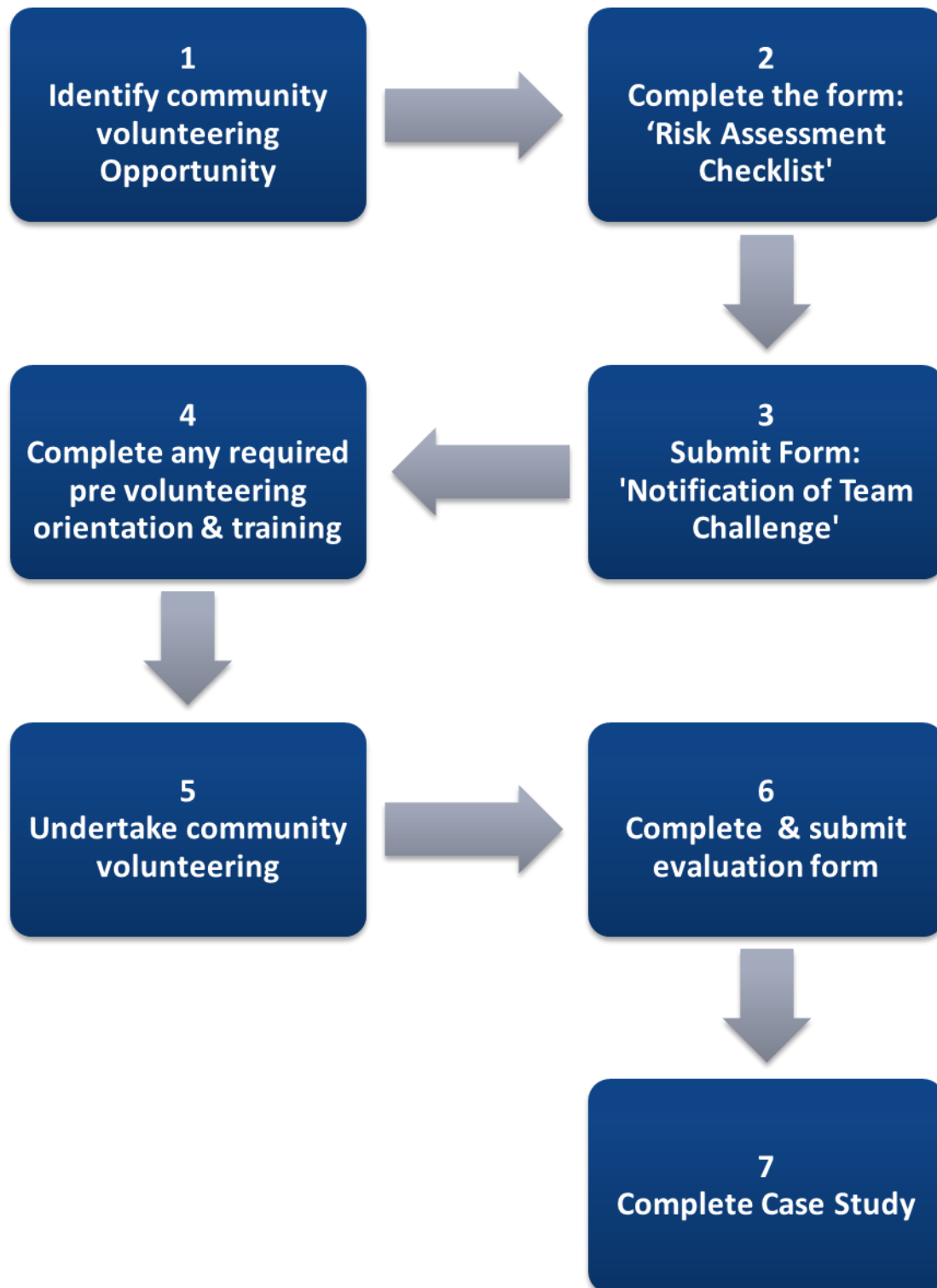
You may wish to share your volunteering experience with others in the WG. Creating a case study is a great way to achieve this. It may also have the effect of encouraging other people to volunteer for that or similar host organisations. If possible, and with permission, please include photographs.

Forms to be sent to: ourvolunteers@gov.wales

C iii) Team Challenge Volunteering

Process outline

The diagram below highlights the process required to participate in community volunteering using the Welsh Government Team Challenge Volunteering Guidance.



On the following page the above process is expanded with all the required document links and detail.

Team Challenge Volunteering – Process detail

1. Identify community volunteering Opportunity

This can be achieved in several ways:

- You may have direct knowledge of organisations welcoming volunteers
- You may already be volunteering in your own time in an appropriate organisation.

Consideration needs to be given to inclusivity to ensure all team members can participate. Please do not choose activities that limit some people's participation.

The team leader should contact the organisation directly to discuss the volunteering opportunity. Please consider the Civil Service Code and the Staff Code of Conduct and any possible conflict of interests.

2. Complete and submit form: [Risk Assessment checklist](#)

Discuss the Team Challenge volunteering opportunity with the host organisation and then complete this form.

3. Complete and submit the form: [Notification of Team Challenge](#)

The Deputy Director submits form to the HR Shared Service Centre notifying them of the date of the activity, and the names and HRIS numbers of those participating. Also please email the form to the volunteering team, email address below.

4. Complete any pre volunteering orientation & training required by the host organisation

If required, this may help ensure that the team maximise the impact during the community volunteering opportunity and also ensure health and safety considerations are taken on board.

5. Undertake Team Challenge community volunteering

While undertaking the volunteering opportunity, please note any thoughts or suggestions that you may want to make known to the host to assist them in achieving their future goals and also how Welsh Government staff skills and experience are being developed thus bringing new skills into our organisation.

6. Please complete and submit the [Evaluation Form](#)

This is very important, as it assists us to evidence how important this volunteering work is to the host organisation, and also how Welsh Government staff skills and experience are being developed thus bringing new skills into our organisation.

7. Complete and submit the [Case Study](#) template

You may wish to share your volunteering experience with others in the Welsh Government. Creating a case study is a great way to achieve this. It may also have the effect of encouraging other people to volunteer for that or similar host organisations. If possible, and with permission, please include photographs.

Forms to be sent to: ourvolunteers@gov.wales

D. General

7. Special Leave

- 7.1 The WG has a Special Leave Policy. Individuals considering applying for paid special leave to undertake volunteering activities should refer to the Special Leave Policy.
- 7.2 Individuals should recognise that Special Leave is discretionary and consideration will be given to the needs of the business at the time of the application for Special Leave.
- 7.3 Individual Special Leave applications are not required when undertaking a Team Challenge but participating in a Team Challenge event needs to be recorded centrally, so that our overall volunteering activity can be recorded. Deputy Directors must inform the HR Shared Service Centre of the date of the planned activity, the activity and the names and HRIS numbers of those participating.

8. Conduct and Behaviour – responsibilities of participants

- 8.1 Before undertaking any volunteering activity employees and team leaders should consider if there may be media interest in the volunteering activity. Contact your Department's Communications Team if you require any advice.
- 8.2 Whilst undertaking any volunteering activity individuals/teams must, at all times:
 - Demonstrate WG values
 - Abide by the Civil Service Code and the Staff Code of Conduct and ensure that activities are consistent with WG Values and Policies
 - Avoid any conduct or behaviour that could bring the WG into disrepute or give grounds for suspecting dishonesty or abuse of trust.
 - Non-compliance with expected standards of conduct may result in consideration of action under disciplinary procedures.

9. Insurance

- 9.1 Employees participating in volunteering activities, with paid special leave, are considered to be on-duty.

10. Travel and subsistence

- 10.1 Before starting any volunteering activity, staff should be clear about any out of pocket expenses the voluntary organisation will pay.