

Derbyshire County Council

Equality Impact Analysis on the new Countryside Service Volunteer Policy

Introduction

This Equality Impact Analysis has helped to inform the preparation and priorities of the new Countryside Service Volunteer Policy to cover the period from 2014-2019.

Background to the Draft Countryside Service Volunteer Policy

Over the last three years, volunteering with Derbyshire County Council's Countryside Service has generated an average of 4,090 volunteer days per year, with an equivalent value of £775,537 per year. The target for 2013/14 is 4,840 volunteer days.

The Countryside Service currently works with volunteers in two ways:

- firstly, with individuals volunteering directly with the Service; and
- secondly, with community-based volunteer groups working for and on behalf of the Service.

The Volunteer Policy sets out the proposed key principles and objectives for working with the first group and provides a framework for best practice. It will be underpinned by guidelines for volunteers and managers, and will be reviewed at least every five years. It was subject to a six week public consultation carried out through the County Council's website and distribution to interested groups and organisations from 29 July 2013 to 6 September 2013. This consultation included a question about how the proposed Policy could impact on any of the protected characteristic groups identified in this Equality Impact Analysis.

Comments from the public consultation and from the Directors of Legal Services and Human Resources within the County Council have been incorporated into both this Equality Impact Analysis and the final Volunteer Policy, in addition to those made by the two Local Access Forums for the County. The Forums have a statutory advisory role in strategic access and outdoor recreation issues. Informal discussions have also taken place with some of the Countryside Service's key volunteers and with partners with existing Service Level Agreements (e.g. Peak District National Park Authority, Groundwork and The Conservation Volunteers).

Equality Impact Analysis

The Scope of the Analysis

This report considers the principles and objectives that are in the draft Volunteer Policy and assesses:

- What impact the principles and objectives will have on any of the Protected Characteristic Groups, and how well they meet the needs, requirements and expectations of the different groups. Throughout the process, consideration was also given to groups classed as 'social deprivation'.

- If there are any potential barriers and whether there is scope to mitigate their effects.
- Are resources available to facilitate any mitigation required?

Additional data

The following sources of data have been referred to as they are relevant to this assessment:

| Source | Reasons for using |
|---|---|
| Countryside Service Code of Practice E11: Working With Volunteers | Document currently used to guide volunteer management in the absence of an approved policy. |
| The Compact (2010) | National document (originally 1998) setting out the agreement/partnership between Government and Civil Society Organisations. |
| A Compact for Derbyshire 2003 | Background information on the relationship expected between statutory organisations and the voluntary/community sector in Derbyshire. |

What impact will the Policy have on any of the Protected Characteristic Groups and what scope is there to mitigate their effects?

Race:

Members of the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population are less likely to do unpaid voluntary work outdoors than are the rest of the UK population¹. Potential barriers include a lack of awareness or interest, cultural attitudes, feeling unwelcome and a perceived risk of racism.² Furthermore, for people from many Eastern European countries, volunteering has negative associations as it was once compulsory in the Soviet Union.²

As the majority of the BME population live in large urban areas,¹ they are perhaps less likely to visit most of our countryside Sites. Consequently, they are less likely to come forward as volunteers for the Countryside Service. Elvaston Castle Country Park is arguably the only site with a BME population within its volunteer catchment area. Hence, we need to ensure that any pro-active volunteer recruitment for Elvaston Castle addresses the needs of the nearby BME population. Any literature should be in an appropriate format/language and deal with the potential barriers. Any images used should dispel the perception that the countryside is mainly for white/middle class people.

Religion/Belief:

For the most part, the issues and barriers discussed above (Race) apply here. Some members of the BME population, for example Buddhists and Hindus, have beliefs that promote respect and appreciation for nature.² They may well

find countryside volunteering a worthwhile and rewarding experience if other barriers can be overcome.

Any pro-active volunteering literature should be in an appropriate format/language and address the potential barriers to volunteering. It should also promote the benefits of volunteering. Any images used should dispel the perception that the countryside is mainly for white/middle class people

Gender:

Experience suggests that women often lack the confidence to become a countryside volunteer and feel that it is physically demanding and therefore only suitable for men. For volunteering in general, women are more likely than men to cite threats to safety as a reason for not volunteering.³

When women enquire about volunteering, they will be assured of a safe and supportive environment in which to volunteer and encouraged to work within their own limits. We will discuss their individual needs and make every effort to find them a suitable volunteer role: not all volunteer opportunities involve hard physical work.

Age:

Nationally, participation in outdoor volunteering increases with age.¹ Examination of Countryside Service volunteer data shows that a significant number are over 65. This is particularly the case for long-term volunteers. Younger people tend towards short-term, episodic volunteering⁴ often in order to gain essential experience for a countryside career.

We will ensure that wherever possible, volunteering opportunities are available to meet the needs of all age groups. We will encourage different age groups to volunteer together so that they may learn from each other's life experiences.

Disability:

There is little information on the numbers of disabled people volunteering in the countryside but, in 2005, the National Trust monitored its volunteer figures and found that 11% of its volunteers were disabled.⁵ By its very nature, practical countryside volunteering may be difficult and sometimes impossible for disabled people to access. However, there are frequently volunteering roles that disabled people can carry out, such as digital archiving, exhibition, educational and visitor centre support. Many people with a learning disability may also be able to make a valuable volunteering contribution. When disabled people enquire about volunteering, we will make every effort to find them a suitable volunteer role. We will ensure that volunteering literature is accessible and easy to understand. This will help support getting the information about volunteering over to people who may have reading or learning difficulties

Sexual Orientation:

A person's sexual orientation or gender identity will not be a factor in determining their suitability to volunteer. However, within the lesbian, gay,

bisexual and transgendered community there is a perception, often based on experience, that unless it promotes itself as such, an organisation will not be inclusive of LGBT people.⁶ Therefore, any volunteering literature will present an LGBT-inclusive approach through use of appropriate text and images.

Social Deprivation:

The Natural England - Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) research has identified that people living in areas of greatest deprivation are less likely to do unpaid voluntary work outdoors than people from the least deprived areas: they tend to see time outdoors as less important.¹ Whilst arguably not a factor in their disinclination to volunteer, a perception of being 'out of pocket' may be an additional barrier. We will ensure that potential volunteers are aware that they will not be 'out of pocket' through volunteering and reimburse eligible expenses incurred during the course of volunteering duties. However, only in exceptional circumstances will the cost of travel from home to the volunteering base be reimbursed. This may include when a potential volunteer is in receipt of benefit and would otherwise be unable to volunteer.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

No information is collected or is available in order to assess the impact of the Countryside Service Volunteer Policy on this Protected Characteristic Group but it is not considered that there will be any adverse impacts on this group as a result of volunteer recruitment and management.

Pregnancy and Maternity

Pregnant women and new mothers will not be excluded from volunteering, but a specific risk assessment will be carried out to identify safe, appropriate activities.

Social Relationships/Community Cohesion

Volunteering can have a positive influence on the physical and mental health of those involved.⁵ Also, volunteering activities, such as community tree planting and woodland management, can improve community cohesion and social relationships.⁵ This Policy and subsequent documents provide a framework for the development of these societal benefits.

Are resources available to facilitate this?

We are producing the Countryside Service Volunteer Policy during what is a very challenging time for local authorities as we are faced with significantly reduced budgets over the next five years. However, by assisting staff (though not substituting for them), volunteers help us to deliver our services and hence make us more effective. In addition, the specific post of Community engagement / Volunteers' Officer is in place both to facilitate and develop volunteering, and support and advise volunteer managers.

Consultation and Feedback

Comments from the public consultation (29 July 2013 to 6 September 2013) and from consultation with the Local Access Forums and key volunteers, resulted in a re-write of the main Volunteer Policy to make it more accessible and easier to understand. This will help support getting the information about volunteering over to people who may have reading or learning difficulties.

As a result of the analysis above, a list of actions will be included within the Equality Impact Analysis to address the issues identified.

Identified Actions

| Actions | Lead Officer | Timescale |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Any literature about volunteering should be in an appropriate format/language and address the potential barriers to volunteering by the protected groups. It should also promote the benefits of volunteering. Any images used should dispel the perception that the countryside is mainly for white/middle class people | Steve Cresswell | 2014-2019 as required |
| 2. When people from protected characteristic groups enquire about volunteering, we will make every effort to find them a suitable volunteer role. They will be assured of a safe and supportive environment in which to volunteer and be encouraged to work within their own limits. | Steve Cresswell | 2014-2019 as required |
| 3. Carry out a periodic review of how we are engaging with the volunteers (potential or actual) from Protected Characteristic Groups to ensure that this work remains high profile. | Steve Cresswell | |

Implementation

This Equality Impact Analysis will be incorporated into and help define the final Countryside Service Volunteer Policy 2014 - 2019

¹ Natural England - Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) Survey 2012/13

² Woods, Forest & Countryside Access: Issues of the Perceptions of Black and Ethnic Minority Communities. Maxwell A Ayamba & Ian D Rotherham. A World of Trees, issue 18 (No date)

³ Helping Out: A national survey of volunteering and charitable giving (2007)

⁴ McCurley, Steve, Rick Lynch & Rob Jackson (2012). *The Complete Volunteer handbook, 3rd Edition*. The Directory of Social Change

⁵ Ockenden, Nick (2007). *Volunteering in the natural outdoors in the UK and Ireland: A literature review*. Institute for Volunteering Research.

⁶ *Involving LGBT volunteers*. The consortium of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered voluntary and community organisations. No date