



## **Rewarding and recognising the achievements of volunteers**

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

### **Key Issues:**

A recent network query on rewarding and recognising volunteers was issued by a local authority. This briefing summarises the responses received from councils and suggests different options available to councils looking to incentivise and provide recognition for volunteering.

## **1.0 Introduction**

Working with volunteers and the voluntary sector has become an ever more important part of local authorities' activity in recent years. Communities want to be more involved and many have developed community action plans to increase engagement, ownership and empowerment of residents. This has also provided some additionality for councils facing budget pressures, and has resulted in some innovative solutions being found to local challenges.

While for many volunteers the work is the reward itself and they don't require or desire any kind of recognition, the topic of rewarding and recognising volunteers for their efforts is worthy of consideration both as a means of encouraging new volunteers and giving something back to people who have added value to the local community.

Below are a few examples that have been undertaken by councils.

## 2.0 Recognition

### Awards and awards ceremonies

One of the most popular approaches taken by local authorities is awards and awards ceremonies. This is a good way of recognising the achievements of volunteers. Central Bedfordshire Council hold an annual Cheering Volunteering Awards which took place for the first time online due to the ongoing pandemic. They produced an online awards video with speakers from the council as well as an [online booklet](#) outlining why each person and group had been nominated. The video can be viewed [here](#).



They have awards for the following different categories:

- Volunteer of the year award
- Young volunteer of the year award
- Volunteer group of the year award
- Sir Captain Tom award for outstanding contribution
- Lifetime Achievement award
- Sports and Wellbeing Volunteer of the Year award
- Supporting Communities during COVID-19 award

## Nominating groups for national awards

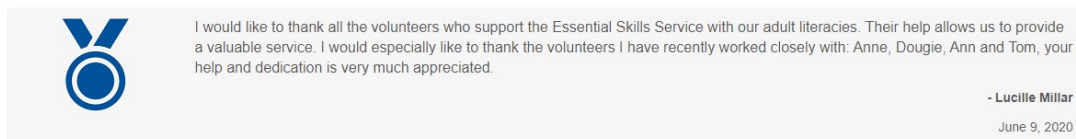
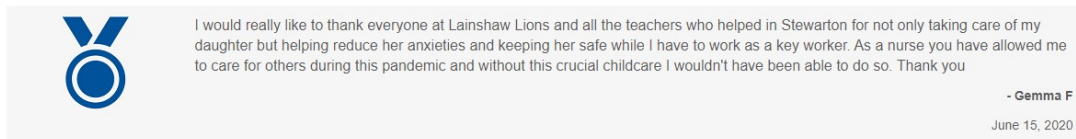
As well as providing your own local awards, councils can also be active in nominating individuals and groups for various national awards. [The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service](#) is an example of this; groups which have been running for at least 3 years, are run locally, meet a need for people living in the local community and are respected can be nominated.

## One-off events

Local authorities also noted that they host a range of 'thank you' one-off events for volunteers such as coffee mornings or annual dinners.

## 'Thank you' website wall and thank you card

East Ayrshire Council have a ['thank you volunteers' wall](#) on their website where people from the community can submit their thanks to volunteers as a way of celebrating Volunteers' Week (1-7 June). These can be submitted either by name or anonymously. The council also provided a [downloadable/printable](#) thank you card to give to people directly.



## 3.0 Rewards

### Time credits

[Time Credits](#) are also a way of recognising the work people do in their communities, these can be earned and spent on hundreds of activities nationally. A number of credits are applied to different volunteering opportunities, and they can be redeemed for things such as free swimming, adult learning courses, fitness sessions, tickets to local sporting events,

museum tours and many more. [Cambridge City Council](#), for instance, offer off-peak room hire for 1 hour in exchange for 1 time credit.

### **Local discounts**

Local authorities such as Portsmouth County Council, Barnet Council and Hackney Council have signed up to offer [ValueYou cards](#), which provide discounts at a range of shops for people who have volunteered for 100 hours. The volunteer recognition scheme provides a way for communities to thank local people who help out. The membership is free of charge and also helps to support small local businesses. Their [website](#) shows a list of the different businesses which includes restaurants, beauty parlours, chemists, fishmongers, greengrocers, florists, opticians, key cutters and more as well as the discount they offer (which must be at least 10% on all purchases excluding pre-existing offers and discounts). Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council signpost how to sign up for a free card on their website [here](#).

## **4.0 APSE Comment**

APSE notes the value that volunteers provide to councils and whilst in many services they can never be a replacement for fully trained and qualified staff, encourages our members to consider how to integrate and involve volunteers in council services. While many volunteer for the satisfaction provided from volunteering itself, it is important to consider how to encourage, recognise and reward volunteering where appropriate. Many of our member councils have found ways of doing this, and we would encourage them to keep sharing what has worked for them through our APSE Network Query service and through our advisory groups.

**Reminder: APSE has set up a COVID-19 Information Hub to deal with frontline service issues as they arise, ensuring greater resilience and learning between each other during this difficult time. You can access this hub by clicking [here](#) and you can also join our WhatsApp Support Network by clicking [here](#).**

Garry Lee  
Research and Coordination Officer

Louise Melville  
Principal Advisor (Scotland)