

Volunteering for Staffordshire County Council

A Guide for Volunteers

2023

Introduction:

Staffordshire has a strong and passionate volunteering base, and we recognise the incredible value and contribution which volunteers have to our communities.

As part of recognising the importance of our volunteers, Staffordshire County Council has worked with our current volunteers, our staff, and our partners in the voluntary sector to develop a set of new **Volunteering Principles**.

We hope that these principles will help us to provide the best experience possible for people who volunteer for the county council and encourage more people to volunteer with us.

This document sets out our volunteering principles and also provides some helpful information and advice on what you can expect if you volunteer with us.

Staffordshire County Council – Our Volunteering Principles:

We will...

Have clearly defined expectations, roles, and boundaries for all our volunteers

Be inclusive and accessible for all residents who want to get involved

Be flexible where possible, with different opportunities depending on how much time people can give

Be personalised, taking into account the different experiences, skills, motivations, and capabilities of each volunteer

Ensure our volunteering opportunities are mutually beneficial for both volunteers and the Council's work within communities

Ensure that volunteers have the opportunity to provide feedback on their experiences with the Council

Have volunteer focused policies and processes, including recruitment, induction, and training

Recognise the positive contribution of our volunteers

Co-ordinate our approach to volunteering with existing Council resources, such as Open Door, Staffordshire Connects, and #DoingOurBit

Volunteering for Staffordshire County Council – what to expect at each stage:

As a new volunteer taking on a placement at Staffordshire County Council, you should expect the following support from at each stage of the process:

Expression of Interest:

When you have expressed an interest in a volunteering role, we will look to contact you to discuss further within 3-5 working days where possible.

Initial Conversation:

We will contact you for an initial conversation, going through the role in more detail and agreeing the activities you will be involved in. We will also discuss when and where you will be volunteering and how your involvement will make a difference.

Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) Check:

Depending on the type of volunteering tasks you will be doing, you may be required to agree to undertake a DBS check. This is to make sure our residents remain safe. As part of this check we will request any information stored by the Police with regards any convictions / cautions etc.

Placement Start:

When starting a new volunteering role with the Council, we will look to provide you with an 'induction' to make sure you have all the information and training you need. This induction will usually take place on your first day and will be an opportunity to see where you will be volunteering and meet the people you will be working with.

Supervision:

While you are volunteering for the Council, you will always have a named officer who will be your point of contact if you have any issues or concerns. The officer will keep in touch with you to see how you are doing and help with any concerns you might have which could impact on your placement.

End of your placement:

If anything changes and you unfortunately need to end your volunteering placement with the Council, we will be very sorry to see you leave.

Your named officer will look to meet with you to collect any equipment / ID badges or anything else given to you by the Council for the placement.

Further information about Volunteering:

To find out more about the types of volunteering opportunities available at Staffordshire County Council, please visit our website on the link below:

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Community/Volunteer/PeopleHelpingPeople.aspx>

If you don't think you have time to volunteer formally, please visit www.DoingOurBit.info to find out more about some simple ways you can help yourself, your family, and the place you live.

If you are interested in volunteering somewhere else, please visit Support Staffordshire for information and opportunities to volunteer with voluntary groups across the county:

<https://www.supportstaffordshire.org.uk/volunteering/i-want-volunteer>

Additional Useful Information:

Volunteering & Claiming Benefits:

You can volunteer while receiving state benefits without those benefits being impacted if you continue to meet all the conditions of the applicable benefit.

Those conditions can vary depending on the individual benefit and should always be checked with the benefit administrator before undertaking any placement – this is usually the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). We would also recommend checking the DWP website for any changes to the below information –

www.gov.uk/guidance/volunteering-and-claiming-benefits

The two main types of state benefit you may be on and how they are impacted are:

Universal Credit (UC):

If you are claiming Universal Credit, you will need to make sure you are in one of the following four work-related activity groups:

1. “No work-related requirement group” – for people who are unable to work.
2. “Work-focused interview group” – this is for people who are being prepared for work via regular interviews with their assigned work coach.
3. “Work preparation group” – this is people who are in an intensive work preparation group but are not required to actively look for work.
4. “All work-related requirements group” – for people who must do work preparation activities, be looking for work and be available to start a job straight away.

People who are in the “all work-related requirement group” have to undertake “work search” activities on a weekly basis – this tends to be for around 30/35 hours per week. Volunteering can count as a “work search activity” for up to half the time they have agreed to spending looking and preparing for work – known as the “claimant commitment”.

It’s important to note that there isn’t a limit on how many hours a person can volunteer for and still claim state benefits, but it just means however many hours they do it can only account for 50% of their work search commitment.

As a basic example, if someone volunteers for 30 hours a week and the claimant commitment states they’re required to do 30 hours a week work searches and/or work preparation activities, then only 15 (50%) of those 30 hours voluntary work should be able to be counted toward their 30 hours work search requirements.

You should always consult your work coach about your individual circumstances before starting any placements.

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA):

If you have a health condition or disability, you can still volunteer.

The Social Security (Incapacity for Work) (General) Regulations 1995 & The Employment and Support Allowance Regulations 2013 confirmed volunteering was in the category of “exempt work” meaning those claiming the benefit are allowed to carry it out and people on this benefit can volunteer for as many hours as you wish. However, in all cases they would need to let the DWP know about any placement before starting.

Irrespective of which benefit you are claiming you must ensure that you inform your local benefits office or DWP main contact line before undertaking any placement.

The DWP will need to know the following information from you to update your record and advise you correctly in terms of how any placement could impact you:

1. How many hours a day will you be volunteering for?
2. How many hours a week will you be volunteering for?
3. Will you be volunteering for the same hours and days each week, or will they change?
4. What will your volunteering role involve?
5. Will you get paid any expenses?
6. Will you receive any money on top of any expenses?
7. Will you receive anything else you are given – this may not be money?

After commencing any placement, you would need to inform the DWP if there are any changes to the number of hours or days they are volunteering and if you stop volunteering – again this is your responsibility only.

DWP Useful Contact Information:

Employment & Support Allowance	Telephone: 0800 169 0310
	Textphone: 0800 169 0314
	Monday – Friday 8am – 5pm
Universal Credit	The primary method for contact with Universal Credit is through the individual's “online account”
	Telephone: 0800 328 5644
	Textphone: 0800 328 1344



VIVup Platform:

New access to VIVUP Platform for lifestyle benefits and access to health and wellbeing support

As part of our commitment to supporting our volunteers, we have reviewed the benefits we can offer and are pleased to announce access to our VIVUP platform which offers support with lifestyle benefits and health and wellbeing support. We are doing this to make sure that you as volunteers feel valued and supported and as a thank you for helping the council to deliver its Strategic Plan offering your time to help our communities and the people of Staffordshire.

Vivup is a new benefits platform and a one-stop-shop for health and wellbeing support that offers exciting new lifestyle benefits to help people save money and support their financial wellbeing. The platform also hosts all of the benefits and health and wellbeing support we can offer to volunteers.

Volunteer can register now for Vivup at <https://staffordshire.vivup.co.uk/>. When registering, in the organisation drop down please choose “commissioned services/volunteer” and in the section requiring an employee number, please state volunteer.

Please use your personal email address to register so you can use Vivup at home and on the go and get discounts sent directly to your email address or your own mobile phone or other device.

The three main sections on the platform are:

1. Notice Board of key messages.
2. Lifestyle savings - a range of discounts across major retailers and places to eat and drink, including Tesco, Marks & Spencer, Morrisons, Argos, Boots, Pizza Express and Costa Coffee.
3. Support and wellbeing – all the health and wellbeing support we offer, on physical health, mental health, financial wellbeing and social wellbeing.

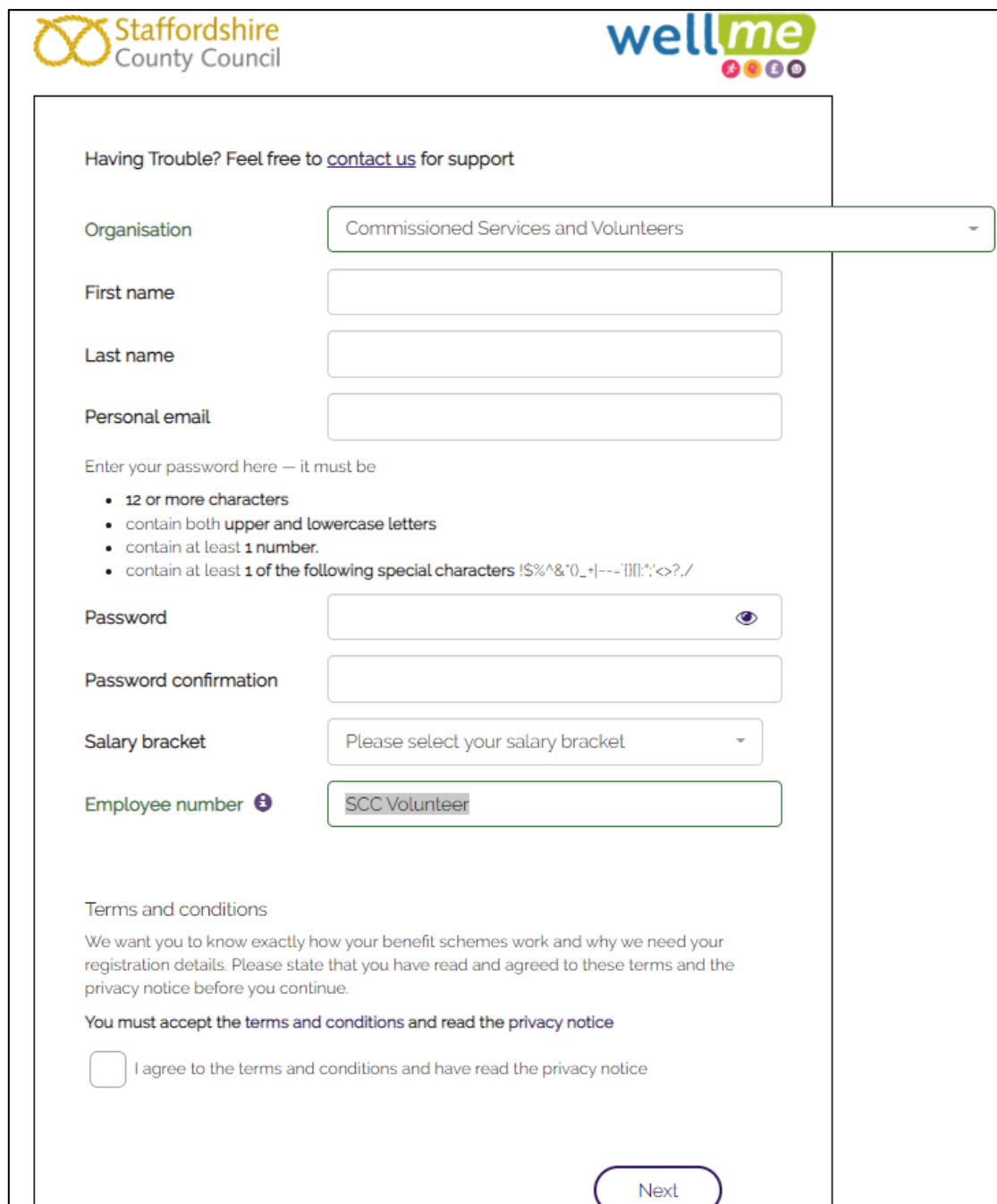
We've also partnered with Salary Finance which provides access to their “Money Insights-Learn Platform” that can help educate individuals on how to make their money work for them. The Salary Finance Learn Platform provides videos, tools and guides to manage money better. Check out their financial tips, achieve your savings goals and budget effectively.

Sign up today to access all the benefits and saving on the go






Platform Sign-Up Guide:

In order to sign up with VIVup you will need to complete the below application form on the website. Under “Organisation” please select **Commissioned Services and Volunteers** and under “Employee Number” please just type in **SCC Volunteer**.



The screenshot shows the VIVUP sign-up form with the following fields and content:

- Staffordshire County Council logo and wellme logo at the top.
- Text: "Having Trouble? Feel free to [contact us](#) for support"
- Organisation: Dropdown menu with "Commissioned Services and Volunteers" selected.
- First name: Text input field.
- Last name: Text input field.
- Personal email: Text input field.
- Text: "Enter your password here — it must be"
- List of password requirements:
 - 12 or more characters
 - contain both upper and lowercase letters
 - contain at least 1 number.
 - contain at least 1 of the following special characters !\$%^&'()*_+!@!:";.<>?./
- Password: Text input field with an eye icon for visibility toggle.
- Password confirmation: Text input field.
- Salary bracket: Dropdown menu with "Please select your salary bracket" selected.
- Employee number: Text input field with "SCC Volunteer" entered.
- Terms and conditions section:
 - Text: "We want you to know exactly how your benefit schemes work and why we need your registration details. Please state that you have read and agreed to these terms and the privacy notice before you continue."
 - Text: "You must accept the terms and conditions and read the privacy notice"
 - Form: I agree to the terms and conditions and have read the privacy notice
- Next button at the bottom right.


Home My Account


You have been sent a link to your email with subject
Confirmation instructions from noreply@vivup.co.uk.

Please click the link in the e-mail to confirm your registration and start using
Vivup.

If you have not received this email, please click here to resend it.

Once you click “next” the webpage (above) will change and direct you to go to your personal e-mails to confirm your account:



Your Vivup account

Welcome !

Welcome to Vivup! Just one more step until you're ready to browse your wide range of benefits!
Simply click the link below to confirm your account:

[Confirm my account](#)

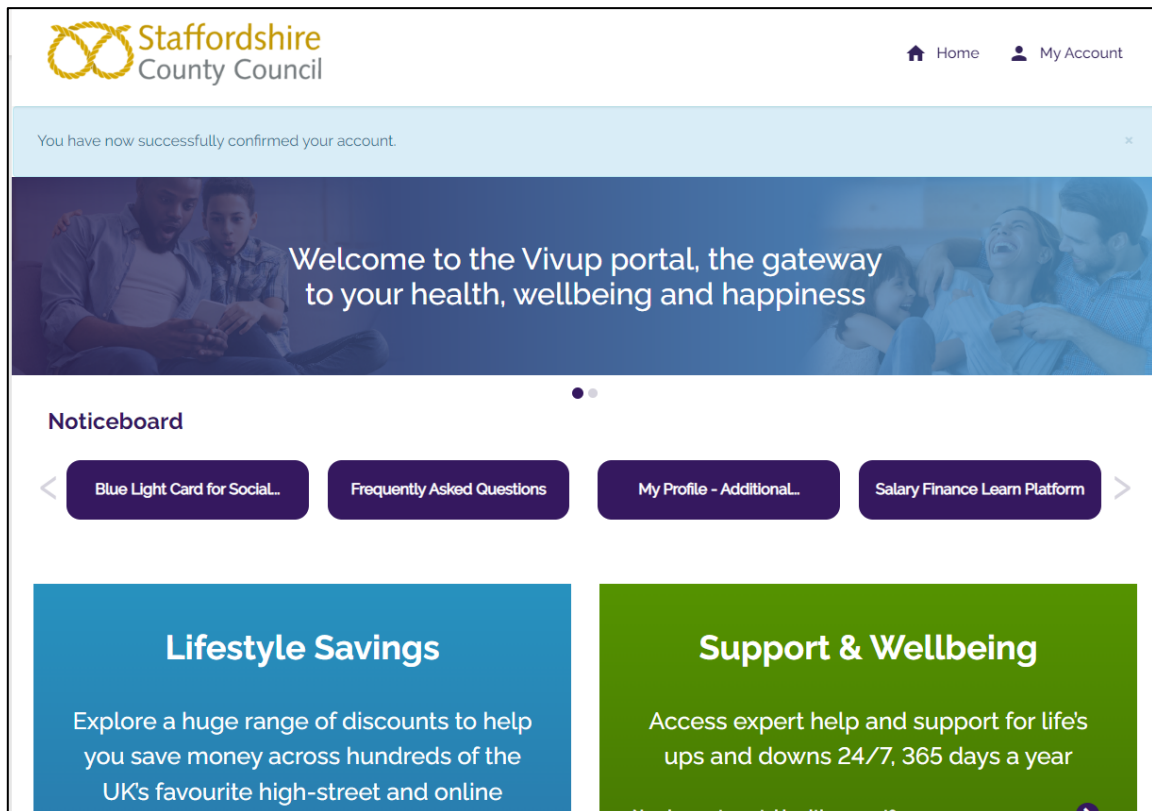
Vivup provide your benefits and health & wellbeing initiatives on behalf of your employer. Each benefit is designed to support your mental, physical and financial wellbeing.

We look forward to supporting you with your exciting range of benefits.

Thank you,

The Vivup Team

Once you have confirmed your account you will be able to log into the platform and you will find you have access to a noticeboard with useful information as well as savings / discounts and support and wellbeing information:



The screenshot shows the Vivup portal dashboard for Staffordshire County Council. At the top left is the council's logo. On the top right are navigation links for 'Home' and 'My Account'. A light blue banner at the top of the main content area displays the message: 'You have now successfully confirmed your account.' Below this is a large blue banner with a family photo and the text: 'Welcome to the Vivup portal, the gateway to your health, wellbeing and happiness'. Underneath is a 'Noticeboard' section with four dark purple buttons: 'Blue Light Card for Social...', 'Frequently Asked Questions', 'My Profile - Additional...', and 'Salary Finance Learn Platform'. The bottom of the dashboard features two large colored boxes: a blue box for 'Lifestyle Savings' and a green box for 'Support & Wellbeing'. The 'Lifestyle Savings' box contains the text: 'Explore a huge range of discounts to help you save money across hundreds of the UK's favourite high-street and online'. The 'Support & Wellbeing' box contains the text: 'Access expert help and support for life's ups and downs 24/7, 365 days a year' and a partially visible link: 'Need urgent mental health support?'.