

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CORPORATE AND PARTNERSHIPS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28 March 2011

RECRUITING AND WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS POLICY

Report of the Corporate Director – Finance and Central Services

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report on the progress made to date in respect of implementing the new volunteering policy.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Work has been underway for some time to bring together different elements of guidance on the use of volunteers within County Council services.
- 2.2 This work has included setting an overall policy for the use of volunteers, providing guidance for the payment of expenses and possible reward elements for some aspects of the volunteering role, and developing a toolkit to assist Directorates in implementing appropriate procedures.
- 2.3 A report was considered by Management Board on the 15 February 2011. A copy of this report is attached as **Appendix 1**. This dealt, in particular, with the overall policy and expenses issues, and makes reference to the full toolkit document.
- 2.4 Management Board agreed:
- That the recruitment and working with volunteers policy be endorsed.
 - That the guidance for expenses, payments and incentives for participation be endorsed.
 - That this guidance and toolkit be recommended to officers for use across the County Council in relation to consultation or community engagement initiatives.
- 2.5 The toolkit is already being used in its draft form, and following the decision by Management Board, is now being implemented formally across the organisation.
- 2.6 Two specific aspects are covered in the report. The first is how the Council should work with volunteers who come forward to assist in providing services. Typically these volunteers are not seeking any payment for their involvement, but there are a range of important steps that the Council must take, bearing in mind our responsibility for the work that those volunteers will undertake. The guidance follows work within the Corporate Risk Management Group. The policy and toolkit

also include the policy for payment of expenses to volunteers that has now been agreed by Management Board.

- 2.7 The second aspect is the involvement of the public in community engagement activity. In some cases this may lead to a suggestion that some “reward” is provided for more significant levels of engagement, and the circumstances in which this might be payable are described in the toolkit. In addition, Management Board has formally endorsed the expenses policy that should apply for such engagement. Members may recall that it was this element of the work that was considered some time ago by the former Corporate Affairs Overview and Scrutiny Committee arising out of a specific piece of work on community engagement.
- 2.8 It will be necessary to keep the toolkit under review to deal with emerging developments in the use of volunteers. In particular, the development of a “Big Society” may change the dynamic of the role of the County Council compared with volunteers, and voluntary or community sector groups or organisations.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 Members to note the progress made on the Recruiting and Working with Volunteers Policy as detailed in **Appendix 1**.

JOHN MOORE
Corporate Director – Finance and Central Services

County Hall
Northallerton

21 March 2011

Background documents – None

North Yorkshire County Council

Management Board

15 February 2011

Recruiting and Working with Volunteers Policy

Introduction

This report sets out a proposal for Management Board to adopt a corporate Recruiting and Working with Volunteers Policy. It also highlights the links between the Policy and wider activities to implement the Government's vision for a Big Society in a way that is appropriate to North Yorkshire. In addition the Council is involved in a range of Community Engagement and consultation. The way in which we pay expenses and incentivise for this, and pay expenses for volunteering, needs to be applied consistently across the Council, and this report details the proposed approach in both situations.

Background

The Recruiting and Working with Volunteers Policy was developed as part of a wider piece of work initiated by the corporate risk management group to manage the risks identified through the use of volunteers in services across the Council. Given the variance in practice, it was felt that a corporate Policy, guidance document and toolkit for staff managing volunteers would be the most effective way of managing risk.

The documentation has been developed by representatives from across the Council and has been tested by services such as the Countryside Service and Library Management (home delivery of library books) over the past year. The aspects of the Policy of particular relevance to Community Engagement and Consultation have also been considered by the Community Engagement Group.

Recruiting and Working with Volunteers Policy

Management Board is invited to consider the Policy statement attached at **Appendix A**. It sets out the Council's commitment to ensuring that volunteering opportunities meet good practice standards and that the Council supports the appropriate use of volunteers in principle and, most importantly, that this requires resources to do this properly. In summary, volunteers are not a free option, although they may well be low cost.

Guidance and toolkit

The guidance and toolkit that sits alongside the Policy will be updated regularly as legislation (e.g. relating to safeguarding) and good practice (primarily developed by our partners in the Voluntary and Community Sector, but also by officers within the Council) are revised or developed. As such, it is not proposed for Management Board to review and sign-off the guidance and toolkit. Review will be overseen by the Corporate Risk Management Group.

Big Society

Since the initiation of this piece of work, the Coalition Government has introduced the concept of the Big Society. Whilst it is still unclear how this will be implemented or supported by Central Government, the financial environment means that the Council will need to work differently with its communities in the future. There is a big difference between services that are run by the Council and supported/expanded by volunteers, and former Council services which are now delivered by volunteers/community groups. The Recruiting and Working with Volunteers Policy should stand alone from policy statements relating to the Big Society, but the Council will need to take a holistic view of this wider agenda. Recruiting volunteers is a potential solution to service remodelling and community involvement, but not the only one, and shouldn't be considered in isolation. A flow chart, attached at **Appendix B**, sets out when the Recruiting Volunteers Policy, Guidance and Toolkit applies.

Risk management

Our aim is to ensure those officers managing volunteers are risk aware, rather than risk averse. We know that 'excessive bureaucracy' around volunteers can deter willing and able individuals from taking responsibility for themselves and their communities. We are also aware that the financial and reputation risks of using volunteers need to be sensibly managed. The Policy, guidance and toolkit enable officers to ensure that there is clarity on who is responsible for those volunteering (their safety and well-being whilst with us) and our service users who may come across our volunteers. Matters such as insurance, CRBs, duty of care have all been clarified.

Equality impact assessment

The benefits of volunteering for those who are recovering from mental or physical illness, unemployed, new to our communities or otherwise experience social isolation are well documented. The equality impact assessment on this policy identified a number of gaps in our data that have limited our ability to assess the impact of our policy on volunteering on protected groups. There is very little central recording of who our volunteers are and how they reflect the communities that we serve. Without this information, we are unable to assess how inclusive our current opportunities are, nor monitor progress. Guidance on how and when to collect this information will be included in the guidance and toolkit to address this problem. The diversity of our volunteers is a demonstration of how we engage minorities in civic life (Equality Framework for Local Government) and is something that is picked up by the Investors in Volunteers accreditation process.

Supporting volunteering

Volunteers, by definition, are unpaid. There are circumstances, however, where those involved in consultation and community engagement activity may justify some element of reward. . The Council should make provision to reimburse reasonable out of pocket expenses incurred. Some individuals have volunteered to participate in roles which have been incentivised to differing extents. In order to promote fairness across the Council, guidance has been developed to assist officers in determining where it might be appropriate to incentivise participation and where, for specific involvements additional payments might be made. **Appendix C** sets out the guidance for volunteers where expenses only are appropriate, and **Appendix D** sets out a policy for involvement in consultation and Community Engagement activity.

Recommendations

Management Board is invited to:

- a) consider the report and its appendices
- b) endorse the Recruitment and Working with Volunteers Policy
- c) endorse the guidance for expenses payments and incentives for participation set out in **Appendices C and D**
- d) recommend the use of the guidance and toolkit to officers considering or currently using volunteers, or involved in consultation or community engagement initiatives.

JOHN MOORE

February 2011

Recruitment and Working with Volunteers Policy

Statement of intent

North Yorkshire County Council is committed to building and maintaining strong and sustainable communities, where everyone has the opportunity to contribute and participate.

Volunteering is widely recognised for its contribution to promoting community cohesion, the development of new skills, improving health, reducing isolation and producing positive outcomes for the individual and community alike. It also enables the County Council to increase awareness and understanding of its activities and extend the reach of current services to meet the needs of the community.

This statement of the Council's aims for the promotion of volunteering as part of its activities is a key step towards achieving our vision for the communities we serve.

Our aims

- ensure good quality volunteering opportunities that are accessible to all
- increase the range of volunteering opportunities available to people across the County and ensure that our Volunteers reflect the community we serve
- develop mechanisms to recognise the contribution made by Volunteers

Scope

This Policy applies to all volunteering opportunities offered by the Council in accordance with the Definition as stated below.

Definition

A Volunteer:

- commits their time and energy for the benefit of others
- gives their time freely, through personal choice
- volunteers without expectation of financial reward
- consultees and people who are involved in engagement activities

A Volunteer is not:

- a paid worker
- on a work placement, work experience or on government sponsored schemes

Volunteer support and management

The Council will ensure that through the implementation of this policy all Volunteers and the communities they interact with will be safe, supported and valued. Minimum requirements are set out in the supporting guidance, which underpins this policy.

Encouraging volunteering

The Council aims to extend the range of opportunities and increase the number of Volunteers taking part in these activities. Staff should consider whether there are opportunities to involve members of the community in their work where Volunteers are not already involved. When Volunteer programmes are already in place, staff should examine the diversity profile of their Volunteers and identify areas for improvement and growth. Mechanisms to recognise the contribution of Volunteers should be built into programmes from the outset.

Working in partnership

There are opportunities to work with partner organisations in the implementation of this policy. Volunteer Centres provide expert advice to support staff working with Volunteers and are able to promote opportunities to potential Volunteers. This policy reinforces the commitments made by the Council in the North Yorkshire Compact.

(For more information on the Compact click here www.nysp.org.uk/compact)

Fundamental principles

The fundamental principles in providing for volunteering are Choice, Diversity, Mutual Benefit and Recognition.

- Choice

Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual

- Diversity

Volunteering should be open to all, no matter what their background, race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origins, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or disability. Potential barriers should be identified and removed where possible.

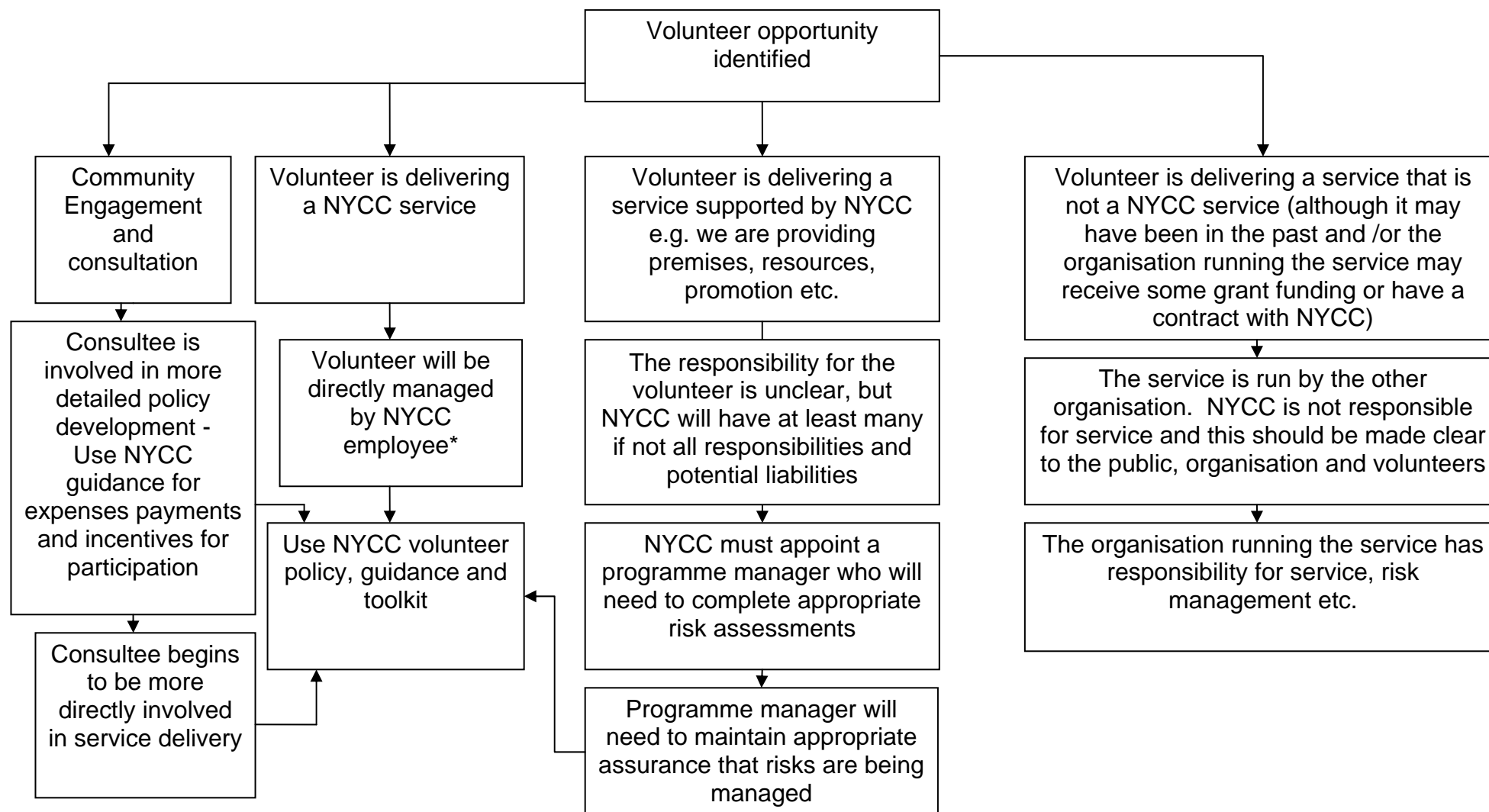
- Mutual Benefit and Recognition

Volunteers offer their time and skills unwaged but should benefit in other ways in return for their contribution. Giving time voluntarily must be recognised as establishing a reciprocal relationship in which the Volunteer also benefits and feels that his or her contribution is personally fulfilling.

 **Note:**

Services that are thinking of establishing a Volunteer programme should seek approval of their Directorate management team. Services considering or currently using volunteers should use the 'Recruiting and Working with Volunteers' NYCC policy guidance and toolkit for managers / headteachers.

When do I use the Recruiting and Working with Volunteers Policy, Guidance and Toolkit?



*Direct management by NYCC employee does not mean constant supervision, but that NYCC has responsibility for recruitment, health and safety, assigning tasks and ensuring that the work is delivered to appropriate standards

REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES TO VOLUNTEERS

Notes of Guidance

Introduction

Being involved as a volunteer in providing an aspect of a County Council service is based on an assumption that the volunteer gives their time freely, through personal choice, and without expectation of financial reward. The County Council does consider that out of pocket expenses should be met in appropriate circumstances should the volunteer wish to claim.

These Notes of Guidance cover the arrangements for the payment of expenses to volunteers.

Details are also provided on the rates payable, and the practical arrangements for claiming and making payments.

Separate Notes of Guidance apply to those involved in consultation events and other community engagement activity ([add link](#))

Claiming Expenses and Amounts to be Paid

All claims for expenses must be made on an official claim form ([add link](#)) which must be signed by the volunteer and authorised by the responsible officer coordinating the volunteering activity.

Receipts must be attached, where appropriate, for public transport and out of pocket expenses.

Where mileage is claimed, the responsible officer must check that the distance claimed is reasonable. To ensure that no issues arise in respect of a profit element, which may affect the payment of benefits, or the volunteering status, mileage will be paid at the allowable rate set by H M Revenue and Customs (HMRC) which is currently 40p per mile up to 10,000 miles per annum and 25p per mile thereafter.

Anyone using their car to get to a volunteering activity must satisfy themselves that they are licensed to drive the car, that their insurance is adequate for this purpose, and that they have a valid MOT certificate where appropriate. They will be required to sign to this effect on the claim form. Further details and notes of guidance are shown on the form.

Where it has been agreed that subsistence expenses for food and refreshments can be paid, this is on the basis that additional expenditure has been incurred, and the maximum payable will be set in line with the scale of subsistence allowances payable to County Council employees.

Costs should be charged to the cost centre of the service organising the volunteering activity.

Normal Payment Arrangements

Authorised claims will normally be paid through the County Council's standard invoice payment procedures, although the terms of payment will be set at immediate payment rather than the usual 30 day payment term.

Volunteers should be asked to sign an authorisation form for the payment to be made by bank transfer (BACS) ([add link](#)), wherever possible.

Payment in Cash

In some cases it will be appropriate to make arrangements to pay expenses in cash. For example, this may be necessary where the person involved in the volunteering activity is a young person, or a person on benefits, where payment on the day may be of particular importance.

The responsible officer, must ensure the need for this approach has been recognised **in advance**.

A suitable float should be withdrawn from the local petty cash account.

Cash should be paid at the point of attendance, at the end of the activity.

A claim form ([add link](#)) should be completed by the volunteer who must also sign to show they have received cash reimbursement. The form should be authorised by the responsible officer.

The responsible officer will be expected to reconcile the float against payments made as soon as possible after the event, and account for the balance to the officer managing the petty cash account.

🔗 See Toolkit for:

- [expenses claim form](#)
- [authorisation form for the payment to be made by bank transfer \(BACS\)](#)

For further clarification of the guidance please contact Geoff Wall, Assistant Director – Central Finance (geoff.wall@northyorks.gov.uk) in respect of finance related queries and Jo Swain (jo.swain@northyorks.gov.uk) in respect of legal and employment status related queries.

REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES OR PAYMENT FOR INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

Notes of Guidance

Introduction

These Notes of Guidance cover the circumstances in which payment of expenses, or other payment for involvement in community engagement or consultation, will be considered by the County Council.

Details are also provided on the rates payable, and the practical arrangements for claiming and making payments.

Public Consultation

Where the County Council holds an open meeting with an invitation to the public in general, or to a range of interest groups, then it would **not** expect to reimburse expenses of those attending.

Specific Stakeholder Consultation

Where the County Council holds a specific consultation event aimed at an identified group of stakeholders, then it would expect these organisations to make appropriate arrangements to meet the expenses of their representatives, who may be paid officers of that organisation, or volunteers to that organisation. In line with the Compact, the County Council should ensure that the need for appropriate resources for proper consultation are considered in any agreements on funding for these voluntary and community sector organisations.

In some cases individuals not connected to any organisation may be involved in the specific consultation event. In this case it may be appropriate to meet expenses. This should be agreed **in advance**.

Involvement in More Detailed Policy Development

Where the nature of the consultation process and, therefore, an individual's involvement is in excess of this – for example, more detailed input into policy development, then a different approach may be required, but must always be agreed **in advance**. In such circumstances the reimbursement of expenses should be offered. The question of some sort of 'reward' element may also arise.

In some cases it may be appropriate to make such a reward in the context of a 'one off gift' whilst still considering the input to be voluntary.

Guidance from the Department of Health may be helpful in identifying an example of this in the context of service user involvement in health related consultations.

“Sometimes service users want to be involved for a particular event or brief activity such as consultations, attendance at seminars or conferences. Providing this is a genuine “one off” arrangement, and the service user is not employed by the organisation, it is possible to provide a cash gift in appreciation. This is similar to the practice that some market research companies use for example when engaging members of the public in a survey etc. Providing the gift is made voluntarily and not in payment for work, and is within the capital rules for income support, income based job-seekers allowance and Pension Credit, it will not affect any benefits nor be described as payment for work under the Minimum Wage Act.

Costs should be charged to the cost centre of the service organising the consultation.

Paid Involvement

For anything over and above such a ‘one off’, the question of the nature of the relationship and its status in employment law will arise. In addition issues affecting tax liability and the impact on benefit entitlement may also arise. In these cases it is vital that the employment law implications of the arrangement are addressed, and that any hourly or sessional rates conform with national minimum wage legislation where required. In essence, therefore, arrangements falling into this category cannot be seen as voluntary, but must be seen as paid involvement. Advice should be sought from Legal and Democratic Services on the proposed arrangements.

It is not possible to set out a standard approach to determining the rates of payment or the framework in which these will operate. These must be agreed in the light of the service requirement being met by the involvement.

Any payments made under arrangements of this sort need to be paid through the payroll system to ensure the payments are accounted for correctly. Costs will be charged to the cost centre of the service organising the involvement in the consultation process.

Partnership Issues

When working in partnership with others in respect of a consultation, it is important that the parties concerned are clear about who is to be the lead body to take responsibility for the proper management of the activity, consistent with the advice contained in this guidance. In the case where paid involvement may indicate that the activity is an employment, this will include a decision as to which body will act as the employer.

Claiming Expenses and Amounts to be Paid

All claims for expenses must be made on an official claim form ([add link](#)) which must be signed by the person involved in the consultation process and authorised by the responsible officer.

Receipts must be attached, where appropriate, for public transport and out of pocket expenses.

Where mileage is claimed, the responsible officer must check that the distance claimed is reasonable. To ensure that no issues arise in respect of a profit element, which may affect the payment of benefits, or the volunteering status, mileage will be paid at the allowable rate set by H M Revenue and Customs (HMRC) which is currently 40p per mile up to 10,000 miles per annum and 25p per mile thereafter.

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Where it has been agreed that subsistence expenses for food and refreshments can be paid, this is on the basis that additional expenditure has been incurred, and the maximum payable will be set in line with the scale of subsistence allowances payable to County Council employees.

Costs should be charged to the cost centre of the service organising the consultation event.

Normal Payment Arrangements

Authorised claims will normally be paid through the County Council's standard invoice payment procedures, although the terms of payment will be set at immediate payment rather than the usual 30 day payment term.

Consultees should be asked to sign an authorisation form for the payment to be made by bank transfer (BACS) ([add link](#)), wherever possible.

Payment in Cash

In some cases it will be appropriate to make arrangements to pay expenses in cash. For example, this may be necessary where the person involved in the consultation is a young person, or a person on benefits, where payment on the day may be of particular importance.

The responsible officer, must ensure the need for this approach has been recognised **in advance**.

A suitable float should be withdrawn from the local petty cash account.

Cash should be paid at the point of attendance, at the end of the consultation event.

A claim form ([add link](#)) should be completed by the consultee who must also sign to show they have received cash reimbursement. The form should be authorised by the responsible officer.

The responsible officer will be expected to reconcile the float against payments made as soon as possible after the event, and account for the balance to the officer managing the petty cash account.

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