

Volunteer Guidance

November 2023

Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
and Westminster Libraries, Archives,
Arts & Local Studies



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA



City of Westminster

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to outline the relationship between Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster Libraries and Archives and their volunteers. Volunteers have been involved with these services in informal and local arrangements over many years, largely satisfactorily for both parties. There is now an increased focus on volunteering in Libraries & Archives, and it is an important component in Council's objectives of Fairer Communities in Westminster and Putting Communities First in Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea. It is also part of the Community Engagement, Collaboration, Co-location, and Co-delivery services to their communities. This guidance is intended to provide volunteers, staff and other stakeholders with an understanding of the Bi-borough Libraries and Archives approach and attitude to ensure uniformity of process and that good practice is common across both services in all sites, to illustrate the kind of areas volunteers can be involved in and to clarify expectations.

It covers volunteers on a short - or long-term basis and people on work experience or work placements and internships. Generally, volunteers work with one service and at one site. Volunteers who are residents either in Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea or Westminster City Council are particularly welcome. However, our volunteering opportunities are not only accessible to people who work, study, or visit the Bi-borough but anyone that has an interest in our services can volunteer.

Background

Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster Libraries are open to all who live, work, study or visit the boroughs. We offer users nearly a million books including eBooks, eMagazines, eNewspaper, plus a good collection CDs, DVDs, language courses and talking books, as well as newspapers, magazines, local information and access to computers (including the Internet and business databases). We have a dedicated reference Library within the Bi-borough specialising in enquiry work, and online subscriptions to electronic journals and databases, with remote access for members.

We welcome children, and there are many activities for them, especially in the school holidays. We have a total of 12 libraries in Westminster with long opening hours, and five of them are open seven days a week. There also six libraries in the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea with a Home Library Service and a Local Studies & Archives at Kensington Central Library.

Westminster Archives

Westminster Archives' mission is to provide a centre of excellence where archives and local studies materials relating to Westminster and its people are acquired, preserved, interpreted, and made accessible, providing opportunities for lifelong learning and enabling people to participate actively in their communities.

Archives are paper collections, which house the records of organisations, governments, businesses, universities, etc. All these materials have been selected for preservation either because of their importance to organisations or for their broader historical value. They can also contain collections of the papers of individuals

or families, photographs, pamphlets, sketches, drawings, maps, plans or newspapers.

Arts & Culture in Westminster

The City of Westminster is home to a wide range of arts providers, from national and world class institutions to community arts groups. This wide range and high standard of activities attracts visitors from all over the world. Westminster City Council supports arts organisations which offer opportunities for local people to participate in cultural and creative activities. Support is through grant aid and commissioning of services from arts organisations. The Arts and Culture service area aims to increase access to, inclusion in and involvement with creative and cultural events by brokering relationships between youth and community groups, local residents and the arts and cultural organisations based in the City.

Local Studies & Archives

Our local studies and archives at Kensington Central Library has an online catalogue with more than 22,000 records, including 500 digitised images. The collection contains all the borough's material on the history of both Kensington and Chelsea including books, newspapers, illustrations, prints, photographs, paintings and drawings.

It also has the maps including ordnance survey, parish and general maps of London, census returns, electoral registers, manuscripts, ephemera and other archive materials.

Aims of the Volunteer Guidance

- To outline how Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster Libraries, Archives, Arts and Local Studies are committed to supporting volunteers and adopting best practice in volunteer management.
- To adopt a policy of fair and equal treatment of volunteers that avoids exploitation, coercion, or manipulation.
- To act as a guide in becoming an Anti-racist organisation and in bringing about real change for all our communities particularly those have been uncatered for due to existence of systemic barriers
- To add value, support and diversity to the work of the Bi-borough Libraries, Archives, Arts & Local Studies through successful volunteer programmes.
- To define Libraries, Archives, Arts and Local Studies and volunteers' expectations.

Definition of a Volunteer

A volunteer is a person who undertakes agreed activities on behalf of the bi-borough Libraries, Archives, Arts and Local Studies under the protection of the The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster City Council, without financial

expectations or a contract of employment, for their own benefit and that of the services. Volunteers can be involved in routine work, though are more commonly directed towards particular projects or activities.

Volunteers add value to the service and are not seen as a cost cutting replacement for existing staff. They are a valued part of the workforce, extending its range of ages and cultures, bringing new skills, experience and enthusiasm that enhance the services.

The minimum age of a volunteer starts from age 14 for Duke of Edinburgh Awards, and for Summer Reading Challenge and there is no upper age limit. Younger people may be taken onto work experience placements when sponsored through a school or educational establishment.

Code of Good Practice

The Bi-borough Libraries, Archives, Arts and Local Studies accept the Code of Good Practice of the National Volunteering Compact:

Choice: Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual

Diversity: Volunteering should be open to all, no matter what their background is in terms of, race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origins, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or disability. Libraries and Archives have an Anti-Racist Policy which all staff and volunteers should adhere to.

Mutual benefit: Volunteers offer their contribution 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.

Recognition: Explicit recognition that valuing the contribution of volunteers is fundamental to a fair relationship between volunteers, voluntary and community organisations and Government. This includes recognising the contribution to the organisation, the community, the social economy and wider social objectives.

Volunteer selection

The Bi-borough Libraries, Archives, Arts & Local Studies follows best selection practices. Volunteers are selected on the basis of their skills, experience, interests, and availability for a particular project. Selection is done on a local basis within the library or project of choice.

Volunteers may be engaged through a variety of channels, e.g.

- self-presenting in person or by email
- referral from schools, colleges and universities
- referral through Volunteer Centres
- community networks

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- information in libraries, Council website or in the community

All volunteers must go through a selection process of application and informal interview/discussion. Bi-borough Libraries, Archives, Arts and Local Studies have no obligation to accept all volunteers and reserve the right to refuse any applicant if they seem unsuitable.

The selection process will be fairly applied with Libraries & Archives Anti-Racism Policy and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in mind and analyse the motives, expectations, and time commitments of the prospective volunteer. It will outline the kinds of opportunities available and determine if these match in a way satisfactory to both parties. If a volunteer has an expertise and willing to contribute their skills, Libraries & Archives will make necessary arrangement to accommodate given the resources permits. If necessary, a trial period can be agreed and extended or terminated after due evaluation of the activity.

Selection process

- Complete Volunteer Expression of Interest Form and send to the relevant service or site
- Communicate Volunteer Guidance
- Informal interview/discussion
- Agree mutual obligations, i.e. nature of experience and time commitment
- Sign Volunteer Agreement
- Complete Personal Details Form
- Explain about Private & Confidentialities, and GDPR rules
- Explain about the Safeguarding Policies for both Adults and Children
- Communicate Libraries & Archives' Anti-Racism Policy
- Agree a start date

Volunteers agree to:

- Work to the organisation's existing Customer Service Standards and within the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racist Policies
- Commit to a period not shorter than 3 months or the duration of a specific project
- Help and support Bi-borough Libraries, Archives, Arts & Local Studies in delivering its objectives in a mutually beneficial manner
- Adhere to a high standard of behaviour to enable the organisation to maintain its reputation, e.g. Archives' "Centre of excellence" status.
- Adhere to codes of conduct such as the Dress Code
- Respect Bi-borough Libraries, Archives, Arts & Local Studies confidentiality
- Comply with Bi-borough Libraries, Archives, Arts & Local Studies security procedures
- Perform duties consistently and diligently to the best of their ability
- Attend relevant induction and training programmes and take part in any feedback procedure if necessary
- Inform the Bi-borough Libraries, Archives, Arts & Local Studies if unable to undertake agreed activities, and to give adequate notice if resigning earlier than indicated
- Act under the direction of named supervisors and inform them about any problem arising, or of any medical problem or physical disability that may interfere with the work so that support can be arranged
- Operate as part of a team and care for themselves and others around them

Bi-borough Libraries, Archives, Arts &

Local Studies agree to:

- Consider volunteering as mutually beneficial, understanding and facilitating the volunteer's own objectives
- Provide a clearly defined voluntary role and safe volunteering environment
- Select and treat volunteers in accordance with the Corporate Equal Opportunities Policy, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racist Policies & Frameworks
- Give support and supervision with a named point of contact at all times while on site
- Offer an induction session and adequate training for agreed roles and duties
- Communicate health and safety issues in order to maximise safety and welfare
- Monitor the volunteer's attendance

- Acknowledge the volunteer's contribution and make known any further opportunities
- Respect the confidentiality of the volunteer's personal information
- Maintain good communication and ensure adequate feedback
- Provide indemnity cover under the Corporate insurance policy
- To provide volunteers with all essential information, policies and procedures

Relationship between Volunteers and Staff

Volunteers complement the paid workforce but are not a substitute for employees. The Bi-borough Libraries, Archives, Arts & Local Studies do not replace paid staff with volunteers nor should volunteers undermine the working conditions of the employees. The working relations between paid staff and volunteers will be strengthened by mutual trust and clear definition of respective roles.

Management of Volunteers

Library Managers are ultimately responsible for volunteers working in their respective service. They may appoint another member of staff as supervisor, who will be main point of contact and provide the necessary guidance.

Volunteers working on a particular project may be recruited and trained by the Project Co-ordinator, who is the first point of contact. The supervisor will be responsible for feedback and will discuss progress and further opportunities. In addition to this, another named site contact should be identified to the volunteer by the Library Manager.

The Arts & Culture Manager will be responsible for volunteers working for the Arts Service. Similarly, Archives and the Local Studies Manager will have the ultimate responsibility for volunteers at their respective service areas.

Feedback meetings should be offered annually for long-term volunteers, and occasionally during the project for short-term volunteers and a final one at the end of each project.

Equity, Opportunities / Diversity

Westminster Council has a policy of equal opportunity. The Libraries, Archives and Arts are committed to ensuring that the recruitment and treatment of its volunteers are carried out without prejudice regarding gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, age or religious belief or disability, thus making volunteers' opportunities as accessible as possible. Volunteers involved in contact with the general public must have an awareness of the above issues. The Archives Centre and a good number of Libraries is fully wheelchair accessible and comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Health and Safety

Health and safety information about Volunteers is necessary at the initial application to ensure that they do not expose themselves to unnecessary risks and to enable the provision of reasonable additional support to accommodate individual needs.

Expenses

The City of Westminster Libraries, Archives and Arts will reimburse volunteers' travel expenses (with receipts) within the London area.

Criminal Records Check (CRB)

A CRB check is a standard requirement for all staff and volunteers working with children and vulnerable adults.

Confidentiality

Westminster Archives & Libraries regard volunteers' personal data as confidential. Equally volunteers are expected to treat any official information both during and after their period of volunteering as confidential.

Copyright

Volunteers must not download, copy or transmit to third parties the works of others without their permission as this may infringe copyright.

Insurance

Activities of volunteers within the Archives & Libraries buildings are covered by the City Council's corporate insurance policy.

Disciplinary/Complaints Procedures

Any problems arising from either side should be resolved through informal discussion. If the issues prove to be irreconcilable, either side has the option to terminate the arrangement.

Examples of typical Volunteer Roles and Projects

Archives

- Building Plans
- St Martin-in-the-Fields Settlement Records Indexing Project
- Preservation/Conservation Projects - Currently the Conservation Studio offers accommodation to 10 NADFAS volunteers (National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies), and periodically to CAPA (Centres for Academic Programs Abroad) student volunteers. Tasks can include collation of the materials, dry cleaning, re-packaging materials to acid free folders
- Education Projects

Libraries

- Library events - organisation, presentation; new ideas
- Promotion and publicity
- Carrying out public surveys about the library service
- Homework Clubs – helping children with their homework and schoolwork
- Summer Reading Challenge – supporting children in national programme reading for pleasure
- Reading Groups – running a group or helping staff run group
- Providing IT support. e.g. assisting with the Silver Surfers Sessions
- Assisting with day to day delivery of the service, e.g. shelving, stock displays, tidying

Arts

- Researching information for inclusion on arts databases or in publicity
- Compiling reports
- General administration
- Assisting with organising specific projects such as launches or networking events
- Assisting at arts workshops or public events