

Sutton Libraries, Heritage and Arts Service Adult Volunteer Policy

Background

Volunteers are key partners in helping the Council, schools and colleges provide services. Their help is vital and volunteers contribute their unique talents, skills and knowledge to staff and customers thus connecting people and building a community. Volunteers at the Libraries, Heritage and Arts Service can be involved in a number of roles from running a Rhymetime Session in a Library to assisting with Front of House duties at a Museum.

Volunteers working on behalf of the Council/schools have a similar status to employees for health and safety and insurance purposes.

Aims of the Policy

This Policy is for essential for staff and volunteers. It describes why Sutton Libraries, Heritage and Arts Service involves volunteers and how they will be recruited and managed. The Policy aims to:

- o Provide a framework for involving volunteers.
- o Offer staff and volunteers a greater understanding of how volunteers are involved in our work, and the nature of the relationship between the Service and its volunteers.
- o Provide an introduction to our volunteer management procedures which aim to ensure that volunteers are fully supported during their voluntary work.
- o Help ensure volunteering is accessible to all and that volunteers are treated with fairness and equality.
- o Make sure volunteers have a safe and enjoyable volunteering experience.

About Sutton Libraries, Heritage and Arts Service

Sutton's public library service provides a local gateway to information, learning, reading and cultural development to the benefit of the local community. It aims to contribute towards building stronger communities with each library acting as a local focal point.

Sutton Museum and Heritage Service preserves and promotes Sutton's heritage, ensuring it is accessible, informative, creative and inspirational for local people, recognising that it is a unique and valuable resource that can foster citizenship, civic pride and a sense of belonging.

Sutton Arts Service aims to deliver an inclusive and diverse programme that encourages the public to take part and take pride in cultural activities, and support the creative community within Sutton.

What is a 'Volunteer'?

A volunteer is someone who gives their time for the benefit of others, who does so freely, through personal choice and without expectation of financial reward. Volunteers shall not be considered as, or have status as employees of the Service.

We do not consider as volunteers those undertaking roles such as work experience placements, or community service programmes.

Principles

1. Sutton Libraries, Heritage and Arts Service recognise that it benefits from volunteer assistance and that this work benefits our communities.
2. Volunteers bring a fresh approach and a different perspective, one that reflects the views of local and wider communities and includes diversity of knowledge and experience.
3. Our volunteers are a vital part of the service and work side-by-side with our paid staff.
4. Volunteers provide additional or extended services to support the work of permanent contracted staff and are not employed to replace paid staff.
5. The volunteers scheme offers opportunities for participants to enhance their skills, experience and motivation
6. Volunteers will receive induction training when they join the service and any training to support them in their role as agreed with their supervisor.
7. The Volunteers scheme is separate to the Friends groups. This policy does not affect the constitutions of the Friends groups or our working relationship with the Friends groups.

Volunteering benefits

Our volunteering opportunities aim to be sociable, and offer new opportunities for learning and skills development. Other benefits may include:

- o An invitation to get-togethers and 'thank you' events for volunteers.
- o Role-related training, at the discretion of the Service.
- o Where appropriate, references to future employers if a volunteer has completed 3 months minimum service.

Equal Opportunities

The Council's vision is to build a community in which all can take part and all can take pride. The Sutton Equality Scheme highlights and fulfils our legal responsibilities and requirements for race, gender and disability. We have also incorporated information and actions in relation to sexual orientation, age and faith and belief, creating a comprehensive equality scheme.

We expect all employees and volunteers to understand and promote our Equality and Diversity Policy in their own roles, including undertaking any training where necessary. This Policy amongst others will be covered during the Induction Session.

Age Ranges

This Volunteer policy covers volunteers aged 18 and older. There is no upper age limit for volunteers. We aim to match volunteers of all ages and abilities with suitable volunteering roles. Any volunteers under the age of 18 must have the written consent of a parent or guardian prior to volunteering. Eg Summer Reading Programme.

We may offer some volunteering opportunities to people under the age of 16 through Duke of Edinburgh and Work Experience Schemes. This is covered by a different policy/procedure.

Recruitment of Volunteers

We recruit volunteers in accordance with Sutton's Equality and Diversity Policy and support and guidance from our Human Resources team.

We recruit volunteers to specific roles in the Service. Voluntary positions are advertised as required, and volunteers can also register their interest in volunteering at other times. We advertise in the following ways:

- o Via leaflets and posters at as many venues and outlets as possible, including libraries, museums and community notice boards.
- o Sutton Volunteer Centre.
- o Entering our details onto online volunteer recruitment databases, e.g. the Do-It web site.
- o Establishing links with schools, colleges and universities.
- o Via the London Borough of Sutton website.

Volunteer Roles

There are a number of core volunteer roles required by the service and volunteers will generally be asked to fill one or more of these roles and undertake the duties required as necessary. Training will be provided to ensure volunteers are equipped to perform the duties required.

Volunteer roles will generally be timetabled according to a specific pattern of hours as required by the service, however we will, where possible, try to accommodate the needs of individual volunteers.

From time to time there will be additional specific project based roles which may vary between libraries/museums. These roles will be advertised as required.

In all volunteering roles there may occasionally be some local differences or variations to meet the needs of specific libraries and museums. Any significant changes or differences to volunteering roles will need to be agreed by the Services manager responsible for volunteers.

Applying to volunteer

We will always respond to enquiries by potential volunteers. Wherever possible, we will try and meet the arrangements that are necessary for those with specific access, ability or learning requirements to volunteer.

The most important quality is the volunteer's ability to do the tasks required, or their willingness to learn to do them. It is also essential that volunteers want to be part of the Service and support the achievement of its aims.

The recruitment process begins with the completion of an application form by the prospective volunteer.

Prospective volunteers are then invited to an informal interview conducted by the Volunteer Officer.

Personal Information about Volunteers

In line with our volunteer recruitment procedures, we ask all volunteers to provide information about themselves, including:

- o Two references – usually one employer's reference and a character reference. We are aware that many people, at certain stages of their lives, have difficulty in finding two referees. In these circumstances we will help volunteers find suitable referees, e.g. their GP, local community leader, a teacher or similar person.
- o Volunteers who are not yet 18 years of age must have the written consent of a parent or guardian prior to volunteering. Eg Summer Reading Programme
- o Details of any health issues, medical concerns or special needs requirements and emergency contact details for health and safety purposes.

Disclosure and Barring Procedures

In addition, volunteers who will have regular and direct contact with children or vulnerable adults will require a Disclosure & Barring (DBS) check. There is no cost to the volunteer for this DBS check. The Service will not discriminate against volunteers with a criminal record. The majority of convictions will have no bearing on your ability to volunteer for us. Where a DBS check highlights a potential area of risk, we will discuss this with the volunteer in question, taking into consideration:

- o The nature and seriousness of the conviction or other information disclosed
- o How long ago the incident took place
- o Whether there is a pattern of offending behaviour and the extent to which the person in question has been reformed and rehabilitated in the intervening period.

Support during volunteering

The Service aims to ensure that all volunteers enjoy their time with us and that the experience is beneficial for both parties.

You will have a named person who will be responsible for overseeing your voluntary work, and who will be the main point of contact at all times. Other members of staff will do their best to make themselves available if volunteers need more support at any time during volunteering. The Service welcomes feedback from volunteers.

Value for the organisation and its beneficiaries

Due to the mutual agreement of volunteering there are many benefits that an organisation and its staffing receive:

- o Additional time for employees to complete tasks
- o Diverse pool of people
- o Increases skills base
- o Allows employees to “mentor” make use of management skills or learn new skills e.g. supervising
- o Increase of economic benefit
- o Added value to service through skills and experience contributed by volunteers

Dress code

There is no uniform for volunteers; however, those volunteers representing the Service in front-of-house roles should dress appropriately. All volunteers will be given an identification badge to wear.

Expenses

Unfortunately we cannot reimburse volunteers for travelling expenses to/from the location where they are volunteering.

Code of Conduct

The Service expects all its employees and volunteers to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times, acting honestly, courteously, and without prejudice. Volunteers are representatives of the Service and should perform their tasks in line with the Service's policies. These standards will be covered in the Volunteer Induction Session.

Dealing with complaints by volunteers

The Service aims to take every reasonable step to resolve any problems that arise during the course of volunteering as quickly and as amicably as possible.

If a volunteer has a complaint about their volunteering, or a colleague, he or she should raise the matter with their supervisor who will discuss the matter with them. Every effort will be made to resolve the problem informally. A volunteer who feels they have been treated unfairly or inconsistently will have an opportunity to attempt to resolve their problems and for the service to learn and prevent a recurrence in the future. Should the volunteer wish to take the matter further the Service Manager responsible for Volunteers may be contacted directly. The matter will be dealt with within 14 days. The Service Manager's decision will be final.

Dealing with complaints about volunteers

If a member of staff, the visiting public, or a volunteer makes a complaint against another volunteer, that volunteer will be informed immediately and involved in discussions as appropriate. All alleged incidents will be fully investigated in line with the Service's policy.

If a volunteer is believed to have behaved in a manner that has or could have seriously affected the organisation – for example theft, bullying, or violence – their volunteering will be immediately suspended whilst the matter is investigated. If the complaint against the volunteer is upheld they will not be permitted to continue volunteering with the service.

Volunteers can appeal decisions to the Service Manager responsible for volunteers. The Service Manager's decision will be final.

Voluntary ending of service

In the majority of cases voluntary service is brought to an end by the volunteer. There will be many reasons for this and it will usually be amicable and pre-arranged. For example, volunteers might decide that they would like to move on to other volunteering opportunities, or a job. In these instances, a short exit interview may be held to enable the Service to learn what was enjoyable about the volunteering experience and what could be improved. If possible, when volunteers decide to move on, the Service would appreciate as much notice as possible to allow time to conduct the exit interview and find a replacement volunteer.

Confidentiality

Volunteers are required to treat as confidential any information they come into contact with whilst volunteering that relates to the Service, its staff, volunteers, donors, partner organisations, policies and practices.

Data Protection

To ensure efficient contact with potential and current volunteers, volunteer details are kept on file in paper and electronic format and stored securely. Details will only be used for the express purpose of contacting the volunteer, for contacting next of kin in emergencies, and for providing references if required by the volunteer.

Copyright

All written material, whether held on paper or electronically which was made or acquired by you during the course of your volunteering with us, is the property and copyright of the volunteer, unless previously discussed or stated to be that of the service.

Insurance

The Service is covered by Public Liability Insurance. The insurance covers both accidents to the volunteers themselves and any potential injuries which they might accidentally inflict upon staff or visitors whilst volunteering in the Service.

Security

All volunteers are required to comply with our security procedures helping to ensure the general security of the Service's buildings, other property and their work environment. Volunteers will not be left on their own in a building, there will always be another volunteer or member of staff present.

Fire, Health and Safety

The Service is committed to a healthy and safe working environment and expects all its employees and volunteers to implement and promote its health and safety policy, endeavouring to consider and integrate health and safety in all activities to safeguard employees, contractors, members of the public, property and the environment. Procedures relating to Fire, Health and Safety will be covered during the Induction Session.

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