

# **City of Westminster Libraries Archives and Arts**

## **Volunteer Policy**

**Version 1 July 2007**



City of Westminster

# Introduction

The purpose of this document is to outline the relationship between Westminster Libraries, Archives and Arts 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 Westminster, and it is an important component in Council's 2006 – 2009 themes of Community Engagement and Active Citizenship, and in the Government's emphasis on local participation in service delivery. This policy is intended to provide volunteers, staff and other stakeholders with an understanding of Westminster 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 to one service and at one site. Volunteers who are Westminster residents or employees are particularly welcome.

## Background

Westminster Libraries are open to all who live, work, study or visit Westminster. We offer users nearly a million books, plus CDs, DVDs, language courses and talking books, as well as newspapers, magazines, local information and access to computers (including the Internet and CD ROMs). We have two reference Libraries 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. Our 12 libraries have long opening hours, and five of them are open seven days a week.

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.

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.

# Aims of the Volunteer Policy

- To outline how Westminster Libraries, Archives and Arts 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 add value, support and diversity to the work of Westminster Libraries, Archives and Arts through successful volunteer programmes.
- To define Libraries, Archives and Arts and volunteers' expectations.

## Definition of a Volunteer

A volunteer is a person who undertakes agreed activities on behalf of the City of Westminster Libraries, Archives and Arts under the protection of the Westminster 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 is 16 and there is no upper age limit. Younger people may be taken onto work experience placements when sponsored through a school or education establishment.

## Code of Good Practice

Westminster Libraries, Archives and Arts 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, race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origins, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or disability.

*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 City of Westminster Libraries, Archives and Arts 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 letter
- referral from schools, colleges and universities
- referral through Volunteer Centres
- community networks
- information in libraries, Council website or in the community

All volunteers must go through a selection process of application and informal interview. Westminster Libraries, Archives and Arts have no obligation to accept all volunteers and reserve the right to refuse any applicant.

The selection process will 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 necessary, a trial period can be agreed.

## Selection process

- Complete Expression of Interest Form and send to Site Manager or Project Co-ordinator
- Communicate Volunteers Policy
- Informal interview
- Agree mutual obligations, i.e. nature of experience and time commitment
- Sign Volunteer Agreement -
- Complete Personal Details Form
- Complete CRB form if working with children or vulnerable people
- Agree a start date

## **Volunteers agree to:**

- Work to the organisation's existing Customer Service Standards
- Commit to a period not shorter than 3 months or the duration of a specific project
- Help and support Westminster Libraries, Archives and Arts 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 Westminster Libraries, Archives and Arts confidentiality
- Comply with Westminster Libraries, Archives and Arts 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 Westminster Libraries, Archives and Arts 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

## **Westminster Libraries and Archives 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
- 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 City of Westminster Libraries, Archives and Arts 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**

Site Managers are ultimately responsible for volunteers working in their 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 Site Manager.

The Arts Liaison Officer will be responsible for volunteers working for the Arts Service.

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.

## **Equal 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