

Explore York Libraries & Archives Mutual Ltd Volunteer Policy

Introduction

Explore York Library and Archives Mutual Ltd ('Explore') is a not for profit Industrial and Provident Society responsible for delivering library and archives services on behalf of City of York Council.

This document outlines our policy for recruiting volunteers and managing them within our organisation, and is subject to review and revision every 24 months. If you require a copy of this policy in another language or format please let us know.

Volunteers in Explore

Our volunteers are an important and valued part of Explore, and we recognise that we cannot provide many of our additional services without your support. Volunteer support also enables us to:

- strengthen community participation
- bring new skills and perspectives to our work
- increase our capacity for developing new library and archives projects and activities in York
- enhance services in our libraries, archives and reading cafes

We realise that people decide to volunteer for many different reasons, including:

- enhanced well-being
- social interaction – an opportunity to meet new people
- the acquisition and development of skills
- to share their own knowledge and skills with others

When you become a volunteer with us we will:

- do our best to help you develop your skills within your role.
- respect your skills, dignity and individual wishes and do our best to meet them.
- ensure that you are treated in accordance with our equal opportunities guidelines
- provide you with adequate training and feedback to help you carry out your role.

In return we ask that you:


- perform your volunteering role to the best of your ability.
- follow our procedures and standards in relation to our staff, volunteers and customers, including health and safety and equal opportunities.
- safeguard any confidential information about us and our customers.
- notify us of any days when you will be unable to undertake volunteering work as soon as possible.
- agree to your personal information being held by Explore York Libraries and Archives in line with our Data Protection policy. This would be for the duration of the time that you are volunteering with us only.

We don't use volunteers to replace our paid staff, but you will help us grow new projects and enhance the work we do in our libraries and archives.

Our recruitment of volunteers

We welcome volunteers from all of York's communities, especially those looking to gain additional skills to get back into work. Our volunteer opportunities will be advertised publicly on our website (www.exploreyork.org.uk), in our libraries and through our local partner organisations. We may also choose to advertise certain roles through our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/ExploreYorkLibrariesandArchives) or via Bluesky for Archives @yorkarchive.bsky.social. For some specific roles we will identify groups which are underrepresented in our volunteer workforce or who have the specific skills we require and advertise those roles to them directly.

All our roles will include a role description, giving you further details of the tasks involved, the skills required and libraries where the work is located. Some of our roles will require Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, and where



this is the case details will be clearly stated on the role description. We only take criminal records into account where the conviction is relevant to the role. We do not require the disclosure of convictions which are spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. A 'spent' conviction will not necessarily prevent you from volunteering with us as this will depend on the circumstances and background to your offence(s).

If you are interested in a particular role, you should complete the simple form on our website, giving details of your name and address, the role you are interested in supporting us delivering and the library you would like to volunteer at. You will then be contacted by a member of staff at that library and you will be invited to a role trial and an informal discussion so that you can see if it's for you.


If the role trial and informal interview are successful and you are happy to start volunteering with us we will ask you for details of up to two referees who we can contact. If your role does not involve a DBS check, you will not necessarily have to wait for your references to be returned to us before starting your volunteering, but you will have to sign a copy of our Volunteer Agreement and provide us with your contact details (including an emergency contact).

In cases where we feel that you are not suitable for a particular role, we will tell you at your work trial. In these circumstances we might suggest an alternative role that is more suitable where we have one, but this cannot be guaranteed. We will also refer you to opportunities with other volunteer providers in York where we feel they might be more appropriate for you.

If you are receiving state benefits volunteering may impact on the payments you receive. It is your responsibility to identify whether you may be impacted by this before you start volunteering with us.

Equality and diversity

We are firmly committed to diversity in all areas of our work. We believe that we have a lot to learn from diverse cultures and perspectives, and that diversity will make us more effective in meeting the needs of all our stakeholders. We are committed to developing and maintaining an organisation in which differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are



fostered and valued, and where those with diverse backgrounds and experiences are able to participate and contribute.

We will treat all our volunteers, including those with additional needs or a disability, equally and fairly, and will make reasonable adjustments to role descriptions where necessary to accommodate specific volunteers.

We may occasionally gather equal opportunities information about our volunteers for statistical monitoring purposes, to help us identify areas where we need to improve.

Induction and training

As a volunteer with Explore you will receive a thorough induction on our work, our staff and your role. A generic risk assessment for your role will have been carried out before you start, and this will be shared with you as part of your induction. We will also carry out further risk assessments if you have specific circumstances or needs that require it.


You will also undertake role-specific training and Health and Safety training. If you are asked to complete any tasks for which you have not received adequate training or you feel are unrealistic you must refuse them and tell us of your needs. We will then make any reasonable adjustments required or provide you with additional training or support.

Volunteering patterns

Your volunteering work patterns will be set out in your role. For guidance, we expect that volunteers will work for us for no more than one day a week, or for no more than sixty days in total over a year. Working patterns for each volunteer opportunity will be discussed and agreed in advance between you and the library manager as part of the recruitment process.

Supervision and support

When you start volunteering with us you will be allocated a supervisor to provide you with support during your volunteering. Supervisors will be members of paid staff of Explore. You will be given the opportunity to have



regular feedback meetings with your supervisor to discuss your progress, to identify any future training or development needs you may have and to make sure you are still happy in your role.

We will provide regular opportunities for you to meet other volunteers in our service, to share your experiences and to provide us with feedback on our services and processes where appropriate. You will also have the opportunity to attend additional training opportunities.

We will also give you regular updates on the work of Explore.

Expenses

We recognise that our volunteers should not be out of pocket when they volunteer with us. We will reimburse your travel expenses from home (within the City of York Council boundary) to your usual place of volunteering, up to our current maximum price of a day ticket on the bus. Out of pocket expenses will be reimbursed on the production of relevant receipts.

Insurance


All our volunteers are covered by Explore's Employers Liability Insurance, full details of which are available on request.

What happens if things go wrong?

We aim to provide all our volunteers with a good experience, however we recognise that occasionally issues may arise. We will try to resolve fairly any problems, complaints and difficulties you may have whilst you volunteer with us. In the event of an unresolved problem, we will offer you an opportunity to discuss the issues with us.

Data Protection

We require records of each of our volunteer's personal details to help us manage our volunteer programme. These records include next-of-kin and/or emergency contact details, which we will hold in a secure place so that they can be accessed rapidly by your supervisor in the event of an emergency.



All our volunteer information will be managed in line with our Data Protection policy, and will include:

- Your signed Volunteer Agreement
- Induction checklist
- A record of your name, address, and contact details on a password protected spreadsheet (which we will retain for 12 months after you finish your volunteering before we delete them, in case you require a reference from us)
- Equalities information which is kept as a statistical tally only and separate from your personal details.

This information will be kept electronically and password protected by Explore. Access to these files will be limited to managers responsible for volunteers.

When you stop volunteering

If you decide to stop volunteering with us, you will have an opportunity to meet with your supervisor to discuss your reasons for leaving. If your role is time limited and comes to an end, you will have the opportunity to provide feedback on your experience.

We will offer continued support to you in the form of references for future employment, up to 12 months after you leave Explore. In return, we will ask if you are willing to provide a short summary of your volunteering experience to help us in the future development of our volunteer programme.

If you have any questions regarding this policy, please contact Sarah Garbacz, Chief Operating Officer – sarah.garbacz@exploreymork.org.uk