

Volunteering Policy

Heritage and Culture Warwickshire

Introduction

Heritage and Culture Warwickshire (HCW) is part of Warwickshire County Council and includes: Archives; Museum; and Communities, Economy and Learning.

Our mission is:

“Protecting and exploring Warwickshire’s past in order to inspire its present and build for the future.”

We welcome volunteers in a wide range of roles within our organisation. They play a very important part in the way we engage with the people and communities of Warwickshire and we recognise the huge contribution they make to our service.

There are volunteer roles with:

- Market Hall and St John’s museums;
- Learning and Community Engagement;
- Warwickshire County Record Office;
- Archaeology Warwickshire - field archaeology team;
- The Arts team.

Purpose of this policy

This policy sets out how volunteers are involved with the work of HCW. It explains how we recruit and manage volunteers and names other relevant policies. By following this policy we recognise the rights and responsibilities of volunteers, and will be able to offer satisfying volunteering opportunities as well as support volunteers appropriately.

This policy supports the establishment and maintenance of good working relationships between volunteers and staff.

Definition of Volunteering

We define a volunteer as:

“Someone who spends time doing a non-compulsory, unpaid activity which is of benefit to HCW and, through this, the wider community”

Our Volunteers

We welcome and value volunteers of all ages, abilities and from all backgrounds. Our volunteering opportunities will support the mission and priorities of HCW, complement the work of staff and enhance the work of our organisation. Volunteers will not replace paid staff.

Volunteer Roles

Each volunteer post will have a Role Profile, drafted by the volunteer coordinator with the supervisor of that post. This will set out the purpose and tasks involved with a volunteer 'post', including any necessary skills or time commitment required and the benefits that a volunteer could gain. Other duties will be for the volunteer and supervisor (the line manager) to negotiate.

We also welcome volunteers who offer interest, skills and talents beyond these role descriptions. In these instances, and where possible, the volunteer coordinator will collaborate with relevant staff to develop new, useful and interesting roles. In some cases potential volunteers will make contact directly with other members of staff, in this instance the volunteer coordinator should be kept informed so that necessary records are kept up to date.

Equal Opportunities and Diversity

We recognise the diversity of our service users and would like to reflect this diversity in the makeup of our volunteers. We will take steps to ensure that under-represented groups are able to seek volunteering opportunities within HCW.

Volunteers should only disclose health information that is relevant to their volunteering role after an informal agreement regarding the role has been agreed. HCW will ensure that this information is not a barrier to volunteering wherever possible.

HCW is committed to equal opportunities and we ask both volunteers and staff to follow the County Council Equality and Diversity policy and guidelines at all times.

Younger Volunteers

We accept volunteers from the age of 16 with parental consent. The Volunteer Coordinator and the role supervisor will assess whether a role is suitable for someone under 18. Appropriate measures to safeguard the young persons' well-being will be put in place by the Volunteer Coordinator.

Recruitment Process

We will advertise volunteering opportunities in a variety of places such as local newspapers, County Council website, social media and through appropriate volunteer organisations. We recognise that personal approach and referral can be a very valuable to volunteering.

We will send a role description and registration form to anyone who is interested and this will also be available to download from the Internet. We will invite prospective volunteers to meet the volunteer coordinator to discuss their interests, skills, time availability and the details of the volunteering role. Before appointment we will need to confirm identity, usually through a passport. For some roles we may need to take up references. A Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check will be made only if necessary (for example for roles that involve unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults).

We will deal with applications from prospective volunteers as quickly as possible. If it is not possible to offer someone a voluntary position then we will suggest other organisations that may be of interest or WCAVA (Volunteer Centres). We reserve the right to decline offers from individuals wishing to volunteer, and also to terminate any volunteering agreements.

Induction

All new volunteers will receive an induction appropriate to their role and place of work.

Support for volunteers

Each volunteer will have a named supervisor who will provide them with on-going role support.

There will be an initial trial period of three months followed by an opportunity for the volunteer to review their role with the volunteer coordinator and/or supervisor. The volunteer coordinator will keep in contact with each volunteer to ensure their role develops in a satisfactory way and that their skills are developing within HCW.

Volunteers will have on-going opportunities to share their thoughts/ideas/concerns with staff and the volunteer coordinator.

We will conduct an annual survey of our volunteers to gather further ideas and opinions.

Support for staff

HCW will ensure that members of staff who work with, or supervise volunteers, receive any necessary support or training in order to develop a positive experience for all concerned.

Health and Safety

At the volunteer's induction we will explain how, under the Health and Safety at Work Act, volunteers have the same rights to information, responsibilities and protection as employees. This means that volunteers are expected to comply with all relevant health and safety obligations, rules and codes of safe working practice. Risk assessments for any role will be shared with the volunteer. We will ask all volunteers to provide us with an emergency contact.

Problem solving

In the event of problems relating to their role, volunteers should initially raise the matter with their supervisor or with the volunteer coordinator. We always aim for problems to be solved informally and locally, however, if a grievance cannot be resolved the County Council guidelines must be followed.

It is possible that a voluntary role will change over time or come to an end. In this case we will discuss the available options with the volunteer.

Leaving HCW

At the end of a volunteer's time with HCW, we will ask them to complete a 'leaving survey' so we can improve our relationship with volunteers.

References

HCW will offer a reference to any volunteer. This will be written by either the volunteer coordinator or by the volunteer's supervisor.

Internet and Email usage

Where volunteers have a role that requires computer / Internet access we will provide a 'volunteer log-on'. Volunteers must sign the confidentiality agreement document (see below) and must comply with the County Council's Internet and Email policy.

The supervisor/volunteer coordinator will explain that access to WCC IT equipment, any networked files and data, and internet access is for voluntary work only.

The supervisor will manage and monitor the use of IT equipment and the generic volunteer login being used.

Insurance

The County Council's insurance policies cover volunteers in their roles with HCW. They are indemnified against third party claims under the County Council's Public Liability insurance when they are undertaking their voluntary role. Travel to and from a HCW site is not covered.

Confidentiality

Volunteers become part of the team at HCW and may become party to information that is not in the public domain. In this case the supervisor (or other member of staff) should make sure that the volunteer understands that the information is confidential. Volunteers will be required to sign the **County Council Confidentiality Agreement for Voluntary Workers**.

Copyright and Data Protection agreements for Volunteers

Volunteers who undertake research on behalf of HCW will be required to sign a **Copyright Agreement** that assigns ownership of copyright to the County Council. This agreement will state that research done outside the volunteering role remains the intellectual property of the individual. Volunteers undertaking historical research on behalf of HCW will be asked to sign a Data Protection agreement.

Volunteer Records

We will need to keep some records relating to our volunteers. We will comply with current data protection legislation and guidance, specifically the eight principles of the Data Protection Act 1998. We will follow the Council's Data Protection and Privacy Policy.

Expenses

We will offer to reimburse the cost of car parking up to £10 per volunteering session, or the cost of public transport up to £10 per day. Receipts or tickets must be provided. This offer will be reviewed at the end of the financial year. Externally funded projects may offer mileage expenses; details will be publicised with each project.

Policy Review

This policy is reviewed annually. Volunteers and employees will contribute to this review.

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