Volunteering Toolkit for Museums & Heritage Sites

Produced as part of ‘Accessing Rutland’s Museums’, in collaboration with volunteers and staff from Rutland County Museum, Oakham and Rocks by Rail: The Living Ironstone Museum, Cottesmore.

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Rutland County Council
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1. Introduction: why a new toolkit?

Rutland County Museum in Oakham and Rocks by Rail: The Living Ironstone Museum in Cottesmore have secured Arts Council funding to undertake ‘Accessing Rutland’s Museums’, a project to support and promote the museums and heritage of Rutland.

One of the key parts of the project is to support good practice in the recruitment, management and engagement of volunteers. The project aims to ensure:

- sustainable systems
- improved access to heritage in Rutland
- increased diversity in the volunteer workforce (with a particular focus on engaging young people in the heritage sector)
- that knowledge and learning gained from the project is shared

This Museum Volunteering Toolkit is aimed at volunteer managers alongside museum and heritage volunteers and is designed to provide accessible and comprehensive guidance as well as links to further relevant information.

As well as research into best practice across the museum and heritage sector, this toolkit is based upon case studies from a small local government run museum and an independent museum.

The toolkit will be available as a downloadable PDF on the Museum Development East Midlands website at www.mdem.org.uk. The toolkit will complement the Renaissance East Midlands Flagship Volunteers E-book and take account of the Arts Council’s museum Accreditation Standard.

Our aim is to equip colleagues working in museums across the region with simple, accessible, editable resources that can be adapted for use in museums and other heritage environments, particularly those aiming for formal accreditation.
2. Museum Accreditation & the workforce

The definition of ‘workforce’ within the Accreditation Standard includes both volunteers and paid staff. The Arts Council’s Accreditation Standard for museums and galleries in the United Kingdom contains good practice and agreed standards, aimed at helping museums to develop: www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-museums/accreditation-scheme/

The Accreditation Standard demands that a museum must have an appropriate workforce to run it effectively. It must have effective employment procedures and roles in place to meet its responsibilities. The museum must have:

- an appropriate workforce
- clear agreements for each member of the workforce, setting out their roles and responsibilities
- formal induction procedures for new recruits to ensure that all members of the workforce have basic information about the museum and understand their role in it
- appropriate development opportunities for its workforce

Taking the Accreditation Standard as a base, this toolkit will be broken down into six key headings to help museum volunteers and volunteer managers find the information they need to work through the accreditation process or to develop and update their current approach:

- Recruitment
- Safeguarding
- Selection
- Induction
- Supervision
- Training, Development & Exit
3. Recruitment

What is a volunteer?

“Whatever they do … anyone who donates their time freely to an organisation in order to benefit others is a volunteer”.¹

In our sector, we are often looking for - and recruiting - volunteers who already share our interests, skills and experience in collections, museums and heritage. Volunteers who have previously worked in research, or engineering and technology, or teaching etc. are often the mainstay of volunteer museums and heritage groups.

However, when we think about volunteer recruitment in museums, it’s worth bearing in mind that there are many different motivations for volunteering, some of which are not necessarily related to previous careers, the objects on display or the documents on file. Motivations include:

- learning some new skill or gaining new experience and knowledge (and helping others to learn)
- keeping fit and getting healthy
- giving something back to the local community (and/or being recognised by the community)
- finding paid employment
- socialising and building confidence

Thinking about why people volunteer in museums and heritage groups can help us to be creative in how we try to recruit volunteers – particularly those groups of people, like young people, who are under-represented - and how we make sure they get the appropriate support once they’re involved in our organisations.

¹ ‘Volunteering in the Arts’.
How to recruit?

Many museums and heritage groups will have well established networks and contacts that can be used to recruit volunteers, formally or informally. It can be beneficial to circulate volunteering opportunities to other museum and heritage volunteer groups:

- Derbyshire Museums Forum:
  ros.westwood@derbyshire.gov.uk
  Twitter: @MuseumsForum
- Leicestershire & Rutland Heritage Forum:
  chairman@lrhf.org.uk
  Twitter: @LRHeritageForum
- Lincolnshire Heritage Forum:
  http://lincsheritageforum.org.uk/
  Twitter: @LincsMuseums
- Northamptonshire Museums and Historic Houses Forum
  info@prebendal-manor.co.uk
- Nottinghamshire Heritage Forum
  http://nottsheritage.co.uk/
  bev.baker@nccl.org.uk
  Twitter: @NottsHF

Local volunteer centres, like Voluntary Action Rutland\(^2\), are dedicated to supporting volunteering and museums can benefit greatly from a pro-active relationship. Volunteer centres often offer regular forums for volunteers working with young people; they can advertise your volunteering opportunity for you at a local and national level and provide guidance, training and sometimes funding for groups working with volunteers. Details of organisations like Voluntary Action Rutland can be found using the NCVO website at http://www.ncvo.org.uk.

There are a range of other ways to circulate and promote volunteering in your organisation; the wider you cast your net the more likely you are to find diverse volunteers:

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\(^2\) [www.varutland.org.uk](http://www.varutland.org.uk)
**Faith Groups:** Local churches, Hindu temples, synagogues, gurdwaras, mosques and other places of worship have good links to their wider communities and can be a good source of volunteers, including one-off projects.

**Online and Social Media:** [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk) is the national volunteering database. They have over 700,000 registered volunteers and around 1,000,000 opportunities to volunteer. It’s free for voluntary groups and easy to navigate – you can post your volunteering opportunities yourself and receive direct replies to your advert; alternatively, your local volunteering centre can do this for you.

Many heritage groups and museums, as well as other cultural organisations and individuals now use Twitter, Facebook and other social media platforms to promote their work and keep in contact with volunteers and other groups. Using these tools can be straightforward and valuable; there is a lot of support available online and from organisations like Museum Development East Midlands ([www.mdem.org.uk](http://www.mdem.org.uk)).

The London Museums Group website has several useful blogs and articles showing how social media can benefit small, volunteer-involving museums: [www.londonmuseumsgroup.org/category/social-media-2/](http://www.londonmuseumsgroup.org/category/social-media-2/)

Guides like this one are available as a free download from [www.culturehive.co.uk](http://www.culturehive.co.uk).

A case study about how a small local government museum used Facebook to engage young people can be found at [http://mdem.org.uk/more-information/case-studies/#CYP](http://mdem.org.uk/more-information/case-studies/#CYP)

**Press Releases:** Templates and guidance for writing effective press releases are available free of charge from internet sites and through software packages like Microsoft Word. Keeping local radio stations and newspapers informed of your opportunities can help create a ‘buzz’ about your group and what it has to offer.
Equalities

In 2011 Renaissance East Midlands developed a Flagship Volunteers eBook aimed at supporting “better management of volunteers from recruitment and induction to role definition and retention”.

28 museums and heritage centres were involved in the project, including independent, local government and university museums. In their study of equality and diversity amongst volunteers the project found that while no deliberate barriers were being put up by museums, there were areas that could be improved. Four years later, these issues are still ‘live’ and worth consideration by trustees and volunteer managers:

- Changing attitudes and preconceptions/stereotypes about certain groups of people as volunteers- e.g. young people, unemployed people, people from particular local areas, people who can’t commit to regular open-ended volunteering
- Being clear about roles for volunteers, where there were fears about them replacing paid employees
- Improving physical and intellectual access for people with disabilities.
- Creating volunteer roles that cater for people with disabilities
- Working to encourage younger volunteers when previously the museum had an older group of volunteers
- Encouraging specifically disadvantaged young people to participate in volunteering
- Reaching out to different audiences – Children with Special Educational Needs and their families
- Exploring working with minority ethnic groups who are part of the community, but not represented in the volunteers (and under-represented in audiences)
- Emphasising that the museum needs volunteers who have transferable skills from other work
- Creating volunteer roles that can be done at home too

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• Increasing volunteer responsibility for all areas of the museum, putting systems in place that allow volunteers to access keys where appropriate and make their own tea and coffee.
• Showing positive images in recruitment materials of a mix of different Volunteers.

Museums discovered that many simple and often small steps could go a long way to opening up volunteering more widely. Clear and agreed procedures for working with volunteers also ensure that all volunteers are treated fairly. Much of the work in this area made a positive contribution to creating a welcoming, friendly and open environment for volunteers.

Young People

While there has been much progress up and down the country, museums still report a lack of young people volunteering, often because they don’t know about opportunities, do not feel their local museum is relevant to them or a place where they belong other than on school trips.

vInspired is the national project that helps volunteer organisations promote their opportunities direct to young people. vInspired believes that volunteering is a way of developing young people’s skills and potential and helping them prepare for work. [https://beta.vinspired.com/](https://beta.vinspired.com/)

There is much you can do within your organisation to engage with young people, small changes can have a big impact: 4

• Think about what current volunteer roles can be adapted for young people; what barriers might exist to them volunteering (school commitments etc.) and act accordingly.
• Consider if your organisation is ready to work with young volunteers – do you need any support?

• Get involved with national initiatives [www.kidsinmuseums.org.uk](http://www.kidsinmuseums.org.uk) and their Takeover Day, or projects like [www.bigdraw.org](http://www.bigdraw.org).

• Create a social environment for volunteering, providing young people with an extra incentive to attend regularly.

• Use technology – most young people will be familiar with new technology. Interested young people will be able to help you manage your website or social media accounts, make videos, write blogs, and help you to contact other young people.

• Training – small adaptations to your training and induction can help young people – and your other volunteers – to understand potential issues like confidentiality. Local youth and museum development agencies will be able to help.

• Rewards – can you arrange an awards evening that young volunteers can attend and be recognised at? Think about what qualifications or accreditation might be appropriate.

• Try not to create only long-term volunteering opportunities – other commitments sometimes mean young people can only give their time to limited or one-off activities.
Schools, colleges and youth groups are often looking for one-off and ongoing volunteering opportunities for their young people. The schools’ standards agency, Ofsted, has produced a report called ‘Choosing to Volunteer’ which gives interesting insight into the experiences of young volunteers…

“Although linking volunteering with accreditation motivated some young people, many students spoke about the basic value of volunteering and how it had nothing to do with gaining a qualification.”

Many museums have successfully combined volunteering opportunities with the learning and development activities they provide to young people. Asking a school group to pilot activities on behalf of other learners, or to work with museum volunteers in developing engaging tours and activities can be a great way of widening your volunteer base and building your relationships with schools and families.

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5 Ofsted, Choosing to Volunteer, 2011
Engaging children and young people in decision making and co-production around the way your museum runs or the activities you offer is an effective way of developing your service and being responsive to your audience. An ‘active participation’ approach to young people is also a means of attracting younger volunteers who might wish to be involved at a more organisational level either as a trustee or a member of a young people’s steering group.

Mini case study

The Framework Knitters’ Museum in Ruddington, Nottinghamshire has collaborated with students and teachers from Rushcliffe School. Young people acted as volunteer consultants to the professional team that created film scripts, education materials, interactives and displays as part of the museum’s redesign.

Paid staff and volunteers worked with the young people in school and at the museum, resulting in an ongoing relationship. Due to good planning and persistence, the museum was able to attract over 60 students to audition for their new film, which can be seen online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Je3lgBYB14

Museum Development East Midlands (MDEM) runs an Engaging Children & Young People Programme that supports regional museums to work better and more often with young people. MDEM can provide project funding and learning consultants to help you plan, deliver and evaluate your work with young people – helping you to keep abreast of changes to the curriculum and new developments to support the active participation of young people in your museum.

Each region of England will have an Arts Council funded ‘bridge’ organisation responsible for engaging more young people with arts and culture. In the East Midlands, The Mighty Creatives takes the lead on how museums can become involved in Arts Award and also offer training specifically for museums on how to increase young people’s participation. 7

Student Volunteering Week takes place every February and provides a good springboard for museums to approach universities and student organisations about

6 www.mdem.org.uk
7 www.themightycreatives.com
volunteering. You can register your organisation via the SVW website at

Undergraduates studying museum studies and related subjects at universities in the East Midlands regularly volunteer at regional museums, and can provide a pool of enthusiastic and knowledgeable volunteers (see Appendix 1). Many university Students’ Unions will organise volunteering action groups - such as Loughborough’s LSU Action – who can provide volunteers for one-off and ongoing activities including fundraising, promotion and campaigning events, construction projects, tidy-ups etc.: http://www.lsu.co.uk/action/

**Organising recruitment**

In order to ensure that the recruitment and induction run smoothly - and that new staff and volunteers understand the process – many museums create checklists or flow diagrams; this example is from Rutland County Council:
Volunteer Recruitment process.

RCC Culture and Leisure
4. Safeguarding & DBS

Some museums, particularly independent museums and those led by volunteers are often daunted by the perceived complexity of child protection and safeguarding requirements. Safeguarding is important, but should be seen as a means of engaging with young people rather than a barrier to their involvement.

There is lots of help available, and common sense can often be your best guide.

Safeguarding of children and young people

All organisations working with children and young people must ensure that they have safe practices and child protection procedures in place. This includes young people who volunteer with museums as well as some volunteers who work with young visitors.

Museums that are part of a Local Authority will be able to take advantage of their Council’s safeguarding policies and practice; volunteer managers should have access to council-wide support to help them make sure that recruitment and supervision of paid staff and volunteers is as safe as possible, and that any existing risks have been assessed and addressed.

Every locality comes under a Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). These boards were set up under the Children Act 2004:

“LSCBs are now the key system in every locality of the country for organisations to come together to agree on how they will cooperate with one another to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The purpose of this partnership working is to hold each other to account and to ensure safeguarding children remains high on the agenda across their region”

8 http://www.safenetwork.org.uk/training_and_awareness/Pages/lscbs.aspx
LSCBs are made up of organisations like local authorities, NHS, Police, Youth Offending Team, Connexions etc. However, LSCBs also have a remit for voluntary and community organisations, and can provide you with support and access to training.

For voluntary and community groups like independent museums, the Safe Network provides easy-to-use online tools to help groups assess what their organisation needs, including safer staff and volunteers. You can register at: www.safenetwork.org.uk/resources/safe_network_standards/self_assessment_tool/Pages/default.aspx

**DBS**

The Disclosure and Barring Service replaced the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) in December in 2012. The DBS is responsible for:

- processing requests for criminal records checks
- deciding whether it is appropriate for a person to be placed on or removed from a barred list

The prime role of the DBS is to support employers and voluntary organisations to make safer recruitment decisions and to prevent ‘unsuitable people’ from working with vulnerable people, including children. There are some key changes under the DBS system, including a new definition of ‘regulated activity’:

- Unsupervised activities: teaching, training, instructing, caring for or supervising children. Providing advice / guidance on well-being, or driving a vehicle only for children.
- Work for a limited range of establishments with opportunity for contact with children and young people, for example schools, children’s homes, childcare premises.

**Regulated activity does not cover work by supervised volunteers.**
There are also things under the DBS system that have not changed, including an organisation’s ‘Duty to Refer’. For a full guide to voluntary organisations and the DBS go to www.safenetwork.org.uk/help_and_advice/DBS/ or contact your local volunteer centre for advice (see Page 5).

DBS checks for eligible volunteers are free of charge, although ‘umbrella bodies’ undertaking checks with the DBS on behalf of volunteer-involving museums may charge an administration fee.

The Home Office provides a list of umbrella bodies at https://dbs-ub-directory.homeoffice.gov.uk/.

**Risk Assessment & Management**

Using the DBS appropriately is important, but is only one part of a safe system that also includes:

- safe interviewing
- references
- induction (policies and procedures)
- supervision

The ‘Our Decision’ resource contains a helpful flowchart to help Trustees and volunteer managers decide on the level of DBS check and supervision required for your volunteers, depending on their role. You can download the ‘Our Decision’ guide to using the DBS and managing safeguarding in the voluntary and community sector. The guide has been produced by the Safe Network, Children England, DBS and the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services:

http://www.safenetwork.org.uk/resources/Pages/our-decision-resource.aspx

Volunteering England (www.volunteering.org.uk/goodpractice) produces a ‘Good Practice Bank’ which provides volunteer-involving groups with guidance and example policies. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations also provides support through its website at www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/volunteering.
5. Role Descriptions

What do you want the volunteer to do?

In most cases, the museum will have a clear role description in place before volunteers are recruited, and most museums will have an exact idea of where their gaps are in the workforce as well as the skills and experience they need.

However - particularly in independent museums where all or most of the workforce are volunteers – prospective volunteers will approach the museum offering their time and skills without a formal role description. In these circumstances it can pay to be flexible.

Trustees and / or volunteer managers should set time aside to meet with prospective volunteers to explore what they have to offer and how much commitment they can make. This information can be developed into a role description and form the basis of a formal agreement (essential for those museums seeking accreditation).

Clear agreement on what each volunteer’s roles and responsibilities are key to good communication within the museum, as well as a key part of the Accreditation Standard.

Role descriptions should be concise and to the point, avoiding jargon, while including all the information the volunteer needs. On the next two pages you’ll find examples of volunteer role descriptions, as developed by Rutland County Council and Leicestershire County Council’s VIP project.

The VIP resource is available for all volunteer-involving museums to use as a basis for their own procedures. It was developed in partnership with 100 volunteer managers and is available from the Leicestershire County Council website, by application: www.leics.gov.uk/index/community/community_information/volunteers/comm_wellbeing/viptoolkit.htm
Role Assessment

POST TITLE: Volunteer Local Studies Researcher

COMMITMENT: At least once a fortnight for 2 hours. However, this role could be as often as you like

BASE: Rutland County Council

RESPONSIBLE TO: Library & Heritage Manager (day-to-day line manager), and Collections Manager.

LIAISON WITH: Primarily – Library & Museum Assistants
Also: All library and museum staff, Members of the public, Other Volunteers.

OVERALL PURPOSE OF POST:
To assist in providing an efficient, welcoming museum service to the people of Rutland. To participate in the development of the service to meet the changing needs of the people of Rutland. To research the history of Rutland held in the collections and on display for visitors.

RESTRICTIONS: CRB check required for this post

MAJOR OBJECTIVES/TASKS:
1. To produce written research on set local studies & family history topics for staff to an agreed timetable.
2. To provide a helpful, safe, educational, and welcoming reception to persons using the museum buildings, and be able to deal with local history and very basic enquiries.
3. Tidying shelves ensuring books are in the right order.
4. To be able to work both as part of a team and on your own.
5. To be aware of the health and safety of everyone in the museum
6. To maintain confidentiality of customers and RCC at all times.

SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE NEEDED:
- Interested in working with a wide variety of people
- Good communication skills, literacy & numeracy skills.
- Able to maintain confidentiality & diplomacy
- Attention to detail
- Pleasant friendly manner, polite under pressure. Ability to present to an audience.
- Experience of working with public an advantage
- Safeguarding training an advantage (Children) – but can be provided
- Able to prioritise appropriately
- Reasonably fit as some lifting of books and objects involved.

TRAINING & SUPPORT PROVIDED
- Induction to the museum service
  - Recognising discrimination (and be willing to put the Council's policy into practice)
  - Training on museum procedures as appropriate
  - Museum & Library Customer care
  - Basic Safeguarding and Health & Safety

- Agreed out of pocket expenses
- Opportunity for volunteer discount in Museum & Castle shop
- Support and guidance for your role
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal development opportunities</td>
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<td>When?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Where?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Supported by</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Is this you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Selection

For many volunteering opportunities the selection process will be an informal one, hosting a two-way chat about the role as well as the volunteer’s interests and experience.

An informal approach can be effective with young people or people who are lacking confidence, who may be put off by overly ‘official’ interviews

For some responsible roles - for example cash handling, working with children, operating machinery, or conserving delicate objects – the procedure might need to be more formal.

Local authority museums should have well established procedures for volunteer selection and appointment. A best practice approach for all museums will include:

- Interviews
- Scoring based on application forms
- References (from paid employment and / or previous volunteering)
- DBS checks
- Equalities

Volunteers bring great enthusiasm and commitment to museums, as well as experience and skills.

Clear role descriptions, induction packs and safe recruitment can help you to get the right person for your organisation.

Photo: RISD Museum
7. **Induction**

Fundamentally, induction is about introducing new volunteers to the organisation and to their role within it; it relates directly to the best-practice outlined in the Accreditation Standard (Page 3). Initial information can be sent to prospective volunteers as part of the recruitment process and should include:

- Information about the organisation and your aims / activities
- Volunteer role description (see below)
- Application form and contact details / directions for the museum

Many museums - independent and local government - have developed induction packs which they use with new volunteers, as part of their policies and procedures relating to volunteers. As a general guide, a good induction guide will include:

- The background to your museum or heritage group, the collection and your aims or ‘mission’
- Key health and safety information relating to the museum and the volunteer role (e.g. use of chemicals, lone working, manual handling, first aid, security etc.)
- A guide to volunteer expenses
- A volunteer role description and / or volunteer agreement, outlining clearly what is expected from the new volunteer and what they can expect from you (to include supervision, as appropriate)
- Relevant procedures and policies (e.g. safeguarding, grievance, equality, data protection)
- Training and development opportunities

For examples of other museums’ approaches, the Renaissance East Midlands Flagship Volunteers eBook is available to download from [www.collectionstrust.org.uk/blog/renaissance-east-midlands-flagship-volunteers-e-book](http://www.collectionstrust.org.uk/blog/renaissance-east-midlands-flagship-volunteers-e-book)
8. Supervision & supporting volunteers

While not appropriate for every volunteer role, done well, supervision is a positive process that supports volunteers to develop their role, builds the strength of your organisation and provides volunteers with a chance to feed back.

The supervision of museum volunteers does not need to be heavy handed or designed in a ‘top-down’ or overly formal way. The aim should be for an informal, relaxed atmosphere - in a quiet, private space - with time set aside for discussion and reflection. Supervision should also give the opportunity for trustees and volunteer managers to say “well done”.

Supervision questions will vary from role to role and from situation to situation. As a general guide questions might include:

- Does your role description need to change? (Are there things you are doing that are not mentioned, or anything that you are not asked to do)
- What’s gone well since the last meeting? What have you found the most rewarding and why?
- Have you had any problems? What can we do to stop them happening again?
- Is there any training that would help you to deliver your role?
- Are you getting the support and feedback you need from the rest of the team?
- Are you getting what you want from volunteering with us?

This basic sample supervision form was developed by Voluntary Action LeicesterShire:

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9 Further examples of supervision questions can be found online. Try www.voluntaryarts.org/resources-and-funding/publications/; www.volunteering.org.uk/goodpractice; www.volunteercentremerton.org.uk/organisations/information-bank/supporting-volunteers;
## Sample Supervision Form

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Volunteer</th>
<th>Name of Supervisor</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**What has gone well since the last supervision?**

**What have been the challenges/difficulties?**

**What might you do differently to overcome these?**

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10 [http://www.valonline.org.uk/](http://www.valonline.org.uk/)
What do we need to do differently to support you?

Are there any ideas or questions that you would like to raise about your role or the organisation as a whole?

Summarise any action points identified

Scheduled one-to-one supervision sessions should happen as an addition to the everyday co-ordination of tasks between volunteers and their managers. Where appropriate and possible, trustees or volunteer managers should take responsibility for taking
notes of the meeting, agreeing them with the volunteer involved and making sure that all action points are addressed before the next meeting.

Any serious issues that arise from a supervision, e.g. safeguarding and security concerns or health and safety matters should be managed as soon as possible, making reference to your organisation’s relevant policies and procedures. Volunteers (and paid staff) should be encouraged to raise any serious concerns they have with their managers without waiting for a scheduled supervision session.

Some volunteers, particularly those that have volunteered primarily to socialise, get fitter or to build their confidence may be wary of anything that feels like an appraisal or is too onerous in terms of time commitments. In these circumstances a common sense approach is best and informal chats, briefing sheets and published training plans etc. can take the place of scheduled supervision.

**Expenses**

It’s good practice, where possible, to reimburse volunteers for their out-of-pocket expenses incurred while volunteering for your museum or heritage group.

As well as being fair - and making volunteers feel valued - expenses can be a way of removing barriers to volunteering, helping you to attract a more diverse group of volunteers including young people and people on benefits or state pensions.

You induction process for volunteers will have made clear your policy and limits on expenses and the procedure for claiming. There are some potential pitfalls to reimbursing expenses to volunteers, and it’s important to get it right:

- Only out-of-pocket expenses for things like travel, food, stationery and child care should be reimbursed. Remember, volunteers should be reimbursed for expense they would not have otherwise incurred – always require receipts.
- The ‘additional expense’ approach also covers things like telephone calls and internet charges – use itemised bills to show that out-of-pocket expense has been incurred.

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11 Supervision sessions should not be confused with disciplinary investigations or formal discussions of competence etc.
• Using a flat rate could be considered to constitute a contract of employment; this is to be avoided at all costs as it may result in your organisation receiving unwanted attention from HMRC, and your volunteers being asked to pay tax on ‘earned’ income.

• Small one-off gifts and rewards for volunteers are permissible and appropriate in certain circumstances. Take care that discounts for shopping do not create a cost to the organisation or allow the volunteer to make a profit.

Peer-to-peer support

There are a number of ways that you might use peer support. Many voluntary groups use a ‘buddy’ system, where more experienced volunteers support newer ones, providing a first point of contact for questions about the organisation, how to do things, systems, expenses etc.

Buddying not only provides good support for new volunteers but is an excellent way of recognising the role of experienced volunteers. Buddying can be particularly effective with first-time volunteers, young people and those who are experiencing a lack of confidence. For those who wish to buddy volunteers that have mild learning disabilities, training is sometimes available from local volunteer centres.13

Volunteer meetings are a good way to get the wider group involved in discussion about the way the organisation is working, priorities, training and support needs and sharing experiences. Meetings between volunteer and paid staff are also useful as opportunities to learn from each other and breaking down barriers where they exist.

As well as face-to-face opportunities for feedback on the volunteering experience, some services have developed questionnaires for volunteers – both of these examples use visual prompts:

13 www.volunteeringdorset.org.uk/projects/community-credits/buddies
Are you happy with your volunteering role? (Please tick appropriate box)

[ ] [ ] [ ]

What has made you stay in your role? (Please tick appropriate box)
[ ] Uniqueness of role  [ ] High quality support from staff
[ ] Professional skills that staff offer

Seeing the difference I make to:  [ ] Myself  [ ] My family
[ ] The people I support  [ ] Wider local community  [ ] Leicestershire

Do you feel supported in your volunteering activities? (Please tick appropriate box)

[ ] [ ] [ ]

Please feel free to comment

Do you feel valued and recognised for the contribution you make? (Please tick appropriate box)

[ ] [ ] [ ]

Please feel free to comment
How is your volunteering?

We want to make sure that all of our volunteers are comfortable and happy in their roles.

We would appreciate it if you could take the time to talk to your co-ordinator and fill in this questionnaire. This will help us to make sure that your role/placement continues to meet your needs, and that any learning outcomes are still appropriate & achievable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Volunteer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location (please state)</th>
<th>Libraries</th>
<th>Museums</th>
<th>Sports</th>
<th>Castle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Placement setup & Culture

If you answer NO to any of the following questions, please tell us why or give examples in the comments box so that we can improve what we are doing. Positive comments are also welcome!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workplace setup &amp; culture</th>
<th>Please rate your answer from 1 (poor or not at all) to 10 (excellent or very much so)</th>
<th>Comments (optional)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When you started your volunteering, were you happy with the recruitment process?</td>
<td>![Rating Scale]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel treated fairly, and respected during your volunteering?</td>
<td>![Rating Scale]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel supported in your activities by staff?</td>
<td>![Rating Scale]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel comfortable asking for help?</td>
<td>![Rating Scale]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you had a problem would you know who to contact?</td>
<td>![Rating Scale]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were you happy with your induction/getting to know the role?</td>
<td>![Rating Scale]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you got all the necessary equipment and materials to carry out your role?</td>
<td>![Rating Scale]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel that you are meeting your goals for volunteering?</td>
<td>![Rating Scale]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Training, development & exit

When deciding your approach to volunteer training – as part of an accreditation process or developing a museum training policy – it’s best to start with a discussion about:

- What training provision is essential for the running of the museum on a day-to-day basis?
- What training will help the museum face the future and become more resilient?
- What training will help volunteers to develop their skills and motivation?
- What capacity and resource do we have to offer training?

Once the answers to these questions are in place, it’s important to make sure that training is allocated on the basis of the role that members of the workforce carry out. While paid members of staff may have formal agreements about their access to training, it’s important that volunteers get equal opportunity to develop themselves (and the organisation).

There are a number of ways to approach training, depending on what you need and what you can afford as an organisation:

- **On the job:** training and supervision delivered by a suitably experienced member of paid staff or a volunteer. Suitable for training individuals or small groups.
- **In-house:** there is no reason in principle that volunteers should not join in with training aimed at paid staff, in organisations in which this is available. This may well avoid duplication and create an inclusive ethos in your organisation.

Developing an in-house training programme is also an option for volunteer-involving groups. You can use the experience and expertise of your existing volunteer workforce as well as paid employees with a training remit. There are also ‘train the trainer’ courses available – often free of charge or affordable – which is good way of building your organisation’s skill base and resilience.
• **External trainers:** sending individuals or groups of volunteers to external training is a good option, as resources and capacity allow. Local volunteer centres will have their own training provision and be able to signpost you to other providers (and sometimes funding for training).14

Arts Council England funds regional museum development networks – the new networks for 2015-2018 were announced in September 2014 – that can offer volunteer- involving museums training, support, development and funding for things like:

• Business Development
• Collections Care
• Children and Young People
• Audience Development
• Training & Network Events

**Exit**

Volunteers leave and move on to other opportunities for a range of reasons. For trustees and volunteer managers it can be important and useful to know why a volunteer is leaving.

Exit interviews are an effective way of getting some final feedback from your volunteers, making sure that they had a positive experience and learning about any issues they might have had. With volunteers’ permission, this information can be used for publicity materials, case studies and funding applications.

Exit questions you might want to ask include:

• Why did you volunteer with us?
• What is your main reason for leaving? (This might be personal and confidential)
• Have you received any training or qualifications in your time as a volunteer? Was this helpful to you?

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14 See the VAL Training Brochure at [http://www.valonline.org.uk/event-items](http://www.valonline.org.uk/event-items)
• Do you feel you have been adequately supported during your time as a volunteer?
• Are there any improvements we could make to support volunteers?
• Would you recommend volunteering with us to a friend?

References

For those volunteers who wish to volunteer elsewhere, or whose motivation for volunteering included learning new skills, helping to teach others, moving on to paid work or gaining experience before university, a reference can be essential.

Providing a positive (and truthful) reference is part of our responsibility to support volunteers and alongside training, should be seen as part of the appropriate development opportunities required by the Arts Council Accreditation Standard.

Consider the following guidelines when writing a reference letter for a volunteer:

• Make sure that the person writing the reference knows the volunteer, the role they’ve carried out and the details of the new opportunity.
• Letters should be factual and positive.
• Give your opinion, based on your experience.
• Make sure that the reference is relevant to the position applied for.
• As well as specific skills, remember to mention other relevant attributes like team working, interpersonal skills, creativity etc.
• Mention any training and development undertaken.
• Summarise your views of the volunteer at the end of the letter, including if you think they are suitable for the new role.
Appendix 1 - Museum Studies

Universities and colleges in the East Midlands provide undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Museum Studies and related subjects, including distance learning. These example student bodies can be a good source of volunteers for museums:

School of Museum Studies – University of Leicester:
Described as “a world-leading hub for research, teaching, thinking, debate and practice” Leicester focuses on partnership with museum practitioners and also provides the museum Jobs Desk with listing of paid and volunteer museum vacancies.
http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies

Design for Exhibitions and Museums & Conservation and Restoration – University of Lincoln:
These courses attract BA (Hons) students interested in developing skills in researching, interpreting, writing and editing exhibition material, designing exhibition and gallery space, as well as collections care and conservation.
http://www.lincoln.ac.uk/home/course/xmdxmdub/
http://www.lincoln.ac.uk/home/course/conconub/

Bishop Grosseteste University – Lincoln:
Offers an MA in Heritage Education as well as an undergraduate course on Archaeology and History, which includes modules on education and community archaeology.
http://www.bishopg.ac.uk/study/courses/

Museum & Heritage Management – Nottingham Trent University:
Provides hands-on experience for students; course designed in partnership with EMMS.
Appendix 2 - Further information

Museum Development East Midlands
www.mdem.org.uk

Arts Council England – Accreditation Standard
www.arts council.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-museums/accreditation-scheme/

Safe Network
www.safenetwork.org.uk

Voluntary Arts - Volunteering in the Arts Toolkit

Do It - Volunteering Made Easy
www.do-it.org.uk

REM – Flagship Volunteers eBook

Volunteering England – Good Practice Bank
www.volunteering.org.uk/goodpractice

vInspired
https://beta.vinspired.com/

Kids in Museums
www.kidsinmuseums.org.uk

National Council for Voluntary Organisations
http://www.ncvo.org.uk/
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Gary Brown – Secretary and General Manager, Rocks by Rail, Cottesmore. www.rocks-by-rail.org

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