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## 1 Scope

This policy seeks to recognise the role that volunteers play in helping the Royal Berkshire Archives. It sets out what volunteers can expect from us, and what we expect from them. The Archives operates within the corporate volunteer policy for Reading Borough Council and support for volunteers is available from Reading.

A volunteer is any person who freely gives us their time, skills and/or knowledge without financial recompense. Volunteers enhance the services we offer and undertake work that would either not otherwise be done, or would be done at some time distant.

## 2 What volunteers can expect from us

2.1 We will respond to any requests by prospective volunteers, though we will normally expect volunteers to be over 16 years of age. We will discuss what we can offer and its timings. If volunteer work is possible, then we will meet prospective volunteers to assess suitability. We will also ask for references. We will make a decision whether or not to offer volunteer work within a week of the meeting. We will not charge a fee for any aspect of volunteering.

2.2 Although we will not have a contractual relationship with volunteers, we will define each volunteer role so that it is clear and time-limited. Before the volunteer begins, we will agree a work programme. Written guidance will be prepared to outline expectations and outputs. Staff time will also be allocated to train and then supervise the volunteer while they are on site. A named member of staff will be provided as main point of contact for each volunteer.

2.3 We will provide a health and safety briefing for volunteers. We will also assess the risks involved with each task, and ensure that risks are managed. We will provide public liability insurance cover.

2.4 We will treat volunteers with respect, and not place them in situations that do not match their expectations. Unsuitable situations may include inappropriate tasks or responsibilities, inadequate working environments, insensitive interpersonal relationships, or access to upsetting

or confidential material. We will also not use volunteers in situations where a paid member of staff or contractor should be used instead.

2.5 We will ensure that volunteers' contribution to the Royal Berkshire Archives is recognised.

### **3 What we ask of our volunteers**

3.1 We ask volunteers to provide referees, and to complete whatever paperwork is required by us to confirm their placement. We also ask that volunteers pay travel expenses incurred to attend the Royal Berkshire Archives.

3.2 By agreeing to volunteer, we expect volunteers to be fit and healthy for the role they have offered to undertake. If a volunteer is aware of health issues or medical conditions that may affect their tasks, we ask them to let us know, and to complete a health questionnaire as necessary.

3.3 We ask volunteers to follow instructions and to complete tasks to the agreed remit. We ask that they query what they do not understand and not devise practices or solutions that do not follow the Archives' procedures.

3.4 We ask volunteers to respect the Archives staff, other volunteers and other persons that they work with. We expect them not to discriminate and to work safely. We expect them to follow office dress code and to behave sociably. We also ask that they do nothing to bring the reputation of the Archives into disrepute.

3.5 We ask that volunteers respect the collections in our care. We expect them to handle the collections safely, not to cause damage, loss or to rearrange the state in which they found them. We also expect volunteers to respect the confidentiality of any information that they are privy to, and the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

3.6 If volunteers have a concern or problem we ask them to speak to us about it. If the concern relates to their staff point of contact, then we ask them to speak to another member of staff. We expect volunteers to abide by any decision taken that relates to the concern.

### **4 Ending a placement**

4.1 Both the volunteer and the Royal Berkshire Archives may terminate their relationship at the discretion of either party. Termination can be effected either by written or oral communication. The Archives will seek to give a period of notice.