

Volunteering policy

1. The importance of volunteers to The National Archives

- 1.1. Volunteers are invaluable to The National Archives as they enable us to do work that would not otherwise be possible, and often contribute specialist skills and knowledge. Working with volunteers provides an opportunity for The National Archives to engage on a deeper level with some of our users, and increase mutual understanding of their requirements and our activities.
- 1.2. The National Archives welcomes the contribution made by volunteers, and is committed to encouraging more volunteering where possible.

2. The relationship between The National Archives and volunteers

- 2.1. The relationship of a volunteer to The National Archives is one bound by trust, mutual understanding and benefit; it is a 'gift' relationship, with time given freely and willingly, without expectation of financial reward by the volunteer. Neither we nor the volunteer regard the relationship as a contract of employment.
- 2.2. No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, can be imposed on the volunteer to attend, give or be set a minimum amount of time or carry out the tasks provided. Likewise we cannot be compelled to provide regular work or benefit for any activity undertaken.
- 2.3. The relationship is based on the principle that volunteers add value to our work by performing a wide range of roles, and by contributing specialist skills and a flexible approach.
- 2.4. Although volunteers offer time freely and willing and without binding obligation, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability.

3. Principles for volunteer management

- 3.1. This policy sets out the broad principles of volunteering at The National Archives and forms the foundation for good-practice volunteer management across the organisation.

Fundamentally:

- We will always aim for fair and equal treatment for all volunteers.
- We aim to match volunteers with suitable projects so that we gain from the activities of the volunteers and the volunteers gain from working with us.
- Each volunteer (or volunteer group) will be appointed a volunteer supervisor to guide and advise them in their tasks.
- The volunteer supervisor will be responsible for providing the necessary induction, training and ongoing development, so that volunteers can be effective in their role.
- In return we expect that volunteers will provide their time and help us to keep our projects on track.

- 3.2. This policy is relevant for all current and potential volunteers, as well as every member of staff concerned with selecting, supporting, developing volunteers, managing volunteer projects or promoting voluntary activity within The National Archives.
- 3.3. This policy is available to download from The National Archives' website – printed copies are available on request.

4. Selection of volunteers

- 4.1. We have a fair and consistent process for selecting volunteers that is relevant and appropriate to each role.
- 4.2. Our volunteering communications will use language that is accessible and easily understood, using various formats and messages to attract a diverse range of applicants.
- 4.3. We will select volunteers according to project needs and aim to match volunteers' skills, knowledge, experience, motivation and availability to suitable projects. We will seek opportunities for tasks to be undertaken in ways which will provide identifiable benefits and motivation for potential volunteers. Staff will also discuss individual volunteer requirements to ensure that volunteers feel adequately supported in their role throughout their time as a volunteer.
- 4.4. Usually anyone being considered for a volunteer role will be invited for an informal interview with the project supervisor, who will explore their skills, experience, interests and suitability, as well as their motivation, with the aim of setting up teams that are best suited for the project.
- 4.5. We will ensure that all potential volunteers have a clear understanding of their role so as to support them in selecting an appropriate placement. For individual volunteers, this will be in the form of a concise role description prepared by their volunteer supervisor within a recommended format and usually placed on our website together with a call for volunteers.
- 4.6. Reasonable adjustments may be made to the selection methods to suit the particular access requirements of applicants with disabilities.

5. Equal opportunities and diversity

- 5.1. The National Archives recognises the importance of encouraging diversity and achieving equality among volunteers, as well as employees and users. Volunteers are actively encouraged from a wide cross-section of backgrounds and experiences to help ensure that The National Archives' various volunteering projects are accessible to an increasingly diverse range of people.
- 5.2. The National Archives values and respects the individual by providing equality of opportunity to all for active involvement within the scope of the organisation's needs and resources.
- 5.3. All staff, volunteers, contractors and partner organisations are expected to actively support The National Archives' commitment to diversity and equality.
- 5.4. Acceptance of volunteer assistance for a particular role will be made on merit, the sole selection criterion being an individual's suitability to carry out the specified task(s) subject to the needs and restrictions of the location, along with their availability in line with the

needs of the project. Reasonable adjustments will be considered for a volunteer with a disability.

- 5.5. There is no minimum age requirement for volunteers, provided they are undertaking suitable tasks for which there is no legal minimum age, they are supervised and not left alone and a parent or guardian has given permission if they are under 16.
- 5.6. The National Archives has no upper age limit for volunteers, recognising the contribution made by older volunteers in terms of valuable knowledge and experience. However, The National Archives would be irresponsible if it permitted volunteers to continue beyond a point where volunteering is detrimental to their own or other people's health and safety.

6. Security and screening

- 6.1. Much of our volunteer work is behind the scenes, in staff areas that cannot normally be accessed by members of the public. Some projects may require volunteers to be security cleared, which we will arrange as appropriate.

7. Induction, training and development

- 7.1. New volunteers will be made to feel welcome and will be provided with an informal induction. As part of their induction to The National Archives, volunteers will receive a copy of the volunteer handbook, containing essential information for all volunteers, together with material relevant to the specific role, location or group.
- 7.2. New volunteers will be given time to settle in. This will allow them to learn about the organisation, their project and their role, as well as giving their volunteer supervisor the opportunity to assess how their involvement is contributing to our goals. At the end of a mutually suitable settling-in period, an informal discussion will be held between the volunteer and volunteer supervisor to record positive experiences, as well as discuss any areas of concern.
- 7.3. Volunteers will be asked to attend training to meet relevant needs and any other training activities relevant to their specific project.
- 7.4. A volunteer may act as a team leader under the supervision of the project supervisor providing this is properly specified and it has been established that the volunteer has the necessary skills or potential.

8. Support and supervision

- 8.1. The National Archives respects volunteers by both listening to and learning from what they have to say, supporting a two-way dialogue between staff and volunteers.
- 8.2. Volunteer supervisors are encouraged to discuss progress with their volunteers on a regular basis. This provides an opportunity to monitor their contribution, establish whether the volunteer would like to change their current contribution, and ensure that they feel valued and satisfied with their volunteering. We also ask volunteers to complete anonymous surveys from time to time.
- 8.3. Volunteers are free to end their involvement at any time. Wherever possible, an end date should be agreed between volunteer and volunteer supervisor. Supervisors are encouraged to hold an exit interview to find out why a volunteer is leaving, share any learning points and establish whether the volunteer may want to be involved again in the future.

9. Expenses

- 9.1. All reasonable travel expenses will be reimbursed by The National Archives. However, if costs are deemed to be prohibitive to the project, your supervisor might discuss alternative volunteering arrangements with you, for example opportunities to volunteer online.

10. Health and safety

- 10.1. We are committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of our volunteers. We want to make sure that volunteers are aware of and understand the health and safety risks associated with their role. We aim to provide volunteers with the appropriate information, instruction, supervision and training required provide a safe environment while volunteering at The National Archives.

11. Insurance

- 11.1. All volunteers engaged in The National Archives' activities are indemnified under The National Archives' public liability insurance.
- 11.2. We will ensure that volunteers are covered for insurance purposes in respect of personal injury. The insurance will not cover unauthorised actions or actions outside the volunteering agreement.

12. Confidentiality, copyright and data protection

- 12.1. Volunteers will be advised of the need for confidentiality where they have access to sensitive information which is not public knowledge. A signed agreement may be required for particularly sensitive projects.
- 12.2. Volunteers are expected to assign any original copyright works they may produce while volunteering to The National Archives and will be asked to sign a copyright agreement where necessary.
- 12.3. Personal information recorded about volunteers will be stored and maintained with appropriate safeguards for confidentiality.

13. Complaints, issues and concerns

- 13.1. The National Archives aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. Volunteer supervisors are responsible for handling any problems regarding volunteer conduct or complaints and The National Archives actively supports volunteer supervisors by providing relevant training. They will seek to ensure that volunteers' views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly and will aim for positive and amicable solutions.
- 13.2. Supervisors are expected to discuss progress with volunteers on a regular basis. This will give you both the opportunity to monitor the contribution from the role established, discuss whether the volunteer would like to change their current contribution and to ensure that they feel valued and satisfied with their volunteering. This might also be the right time to establish whether the project is the right one for the volunteer and whether the project benefits from their contribution.
- 13.3. If a problem cannot be resolved by the volunteer supervisor, the head of department for the project is there to make any decisions as appropriate; the user participation programme board can also provide assistance.