

## Case Study: Gloucestershire Archives

---

### Summary

Gloucestershire Archives has built a powerful network of volunteers who play a leading role in developing the service.

### Details

Gloucestershire Archives, which delivers an archive service for Gloucestershire County Council and South Gloucestershire Council, has created an extensive network of over 100 volunteers who collectively donate nearly 18,000 hours of their time each year.

‘We wanted a different approach to working with volunteers’, reports Head of Information Management & Archives, Heather Forbes. Rather than give volunteers ‘the menial stuff’, says Forbes, they are supported to take on a leadership role. Volunteers take on a range of projects, including project managing and cataloguing (under the supervision of an archivist).

One example is the Gloucester Rugby Club heritage project where a friends organisation secured funds from HLF to deliver a project which was entirely led by volunteers. ‘What they produced was stunning’, says Forbes.

Gloucestershire Archives staff work closely with volunteers with one staff member taking the lead on recruiting volunteers. This can include using a volunteer agency; canvassing in more deprived areas; and targeting the recruitment of volunteer fund-raisers. In future, as resources become more constrained, it is expected that volunteers will become increasingly self-reliant.

### Lessons

Heather Forbes stresses the need for careful joint planning with your volunteers:

- ‘It’s a virtuous circle. There needs to be a shared vision with your volunteers and it needs to be two-way.’
- ‘Sustainability is key to our approach: how can the benefit continue after the project is over?’