

INVESTING IN VOLUNTEERS FINAL REPORT



Museums Partnership Reading

13th & 14th December 2018

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ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

IIV HOST ORGANISATION:	NCVO
ASSESSOR:	Janet Lewis-Jones
NAME OF LEAD ASSESSOR:	Anne-Marie Zaritsky
1ST ASSESSMENT/RENEWAL:	1st Assessment
ASSESSMENT OUTCOME:	Met
CONDITIONS IF ANY:	
DATE CONDITIONS MET:	
FINAL ASSESSMENT DECISION:	

ORGANISATION SUMMARY

The Museums Partnership Reading comprises Reading Museum and the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL). The Partnership is being developed utilising Arts Council funding, as one of the National Portfolio Organisations. Both museums have held Investing in Volunteers (iV) accreditation as separate entities - for both this is the third assessment Reading Museum having been assessed in 2011 and 2015, and MERL in 2012 and 2016 (MERL therefore came forward early for assessment, as its accreditation runs until July 2019).

Reading Museum is part of the local authority, established in 1883, it is housed in a purpose built historic building, shared with the Town Hall. The museum sits under the council's Cultural & Economic Development Services division which is part of the Environment & Neighbourhood Directorate, one of the four council directorates.

MERL is part of the University of Reading, the University Museums and Special Collection Service (UMASCS). UMASCS comprises a number of collections and archives of national and international significance (mostly associated with publishing), three museums and an Herbarium.

Reading Museum employs in the region of 12 staff as curators, visitor services/gallery staff, and a learning team. Previously volunteers have been managed by an assistant curator (until August 2017). The Museum was also part of the time limited Reading Abbey Revealed (RAR) initiative which included a dedicated volunteer coordinator post; when the assistant curator left the museum, the RAR Coordinator took on responsibility for all volunteers - those involved in RAR and those attached to the Museum. This post is funded until the end of March 2019.

MERL employs around 40 staff, in similar roles - curatorial, library & archive; public engagement; and learning. There is a dedicated Volunteer Coordinator and an Assistant Coordinator (garden projects). From April 2019, when the RAR Coordinator post ceases, this team will oversee volunteering at both museums and will be supplemented by 10 hours of Project Officer time.

There are similar roles for volunteers at both museums: visitor/public engagement (including front of house; tour guides, object handlers, visitor surveyors); 'performers' (costumed interpreters, MERL players, and wardrobe assistants); events volunteers (including stewards); collections volunteers (including conservation, archive, cataloguing); sewing and knitting volunteers; gardening volunteers; and learning volunteers (for example the Friday Fledglings at MERL). There are also 'one off roles' such as helping to develop social media and outreach which just one or two volunteers are involved in.

Overall around 146 volunteers are involved across the two museums (72 at MERL and 74 at Reading).

Volunteer management at both museums is broadly the same with the central volunteer coordinator overseeing recruitment, selection and induction, as well as ongoing support; and staff across the different departments being responsible for volunteers on a day to day basis. At Reading the RAR Coordinator retains direct responsibility for a number of volunteer roles, but these are in the process of being handed over to departmental staff ahead of the post coming to an end.



As part of preparing for the joint liV assessment a comprehensive mapping exercise was undertaken to identify where practice was the same, where it could be unified, and where it would need to remain different to accommodate the different lead agencies (the local authority and the university) - in all but a few areas it was found that practice was the same or was in the process of becoming so. A detailed action plan was devised. At the time of the assessment the Partnership was part way through delivering this plan.



SAMPLING

SAMPLING RATIONALE:

The assessment was carried out over two days - one at Reading Museum and one at MERL. All volunteers who routinely volunteered on the days of the site visits were included in the sample, and this was supplemented by others who came in specially to ensure that all roles were covered. The sample was dictated by who could be available on the days, but included a good mix of new and longer standing volunteers, and volunteers from a broad range of different demographic backgrounds. There are including 21 stewards (one-off/micro-volunteering roles) attached to Reading Museum, some of these were also included.

14 volunteers from Reading Museum and 19 from MERL were interviewed. These were a mixture of one to one, pair and small group interviews; all were conducted face to face.

Staff were chosen to include those with overall responsibility for volunteers; a sample of those with day to day responsibility for volunteers; line management; and senior management (in place of trustees). The sample comprised:

RAR Volunteer Coordinator (Reading); Volunteer Coordinator (MERL); Assistant Volunteer Coordinator (MERL); Museum Manager (Reading); Principal Archivist (MERL); Associate Director (MERL); RAR Project Manager; RAR Learning Officer; Visitor Services Officer; Collections Manager; Collection Management Curator (Archaeology & Natural History). The Assistant Volunteer Coordinator and Associate Director were interviewed by telephone the week after the on site days; all other interviews were face to face.

NUMBER OF SITES, BRANCHES, LOCATIONS:	2
NUMBER INCLUDED IN INTERVIEW SAMPLE:	2

NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS:	146
NUMBER INTERVIEWED:	33
NUMBER AS % OF TOTAL:	23%

NUMBER OF VOLUNTEER ROLES:	7 core roles
NUMBER OF ROLES SAMPLED BY INTERVIEW:	7
NUMBER AS % OF TOTAL:	100%

NUMBER OF STAFF:	52
NUMBER INTERVIEWED:	11
WERE TRUSTEES INTERVIEWED?	NA

WRITTEN EVIDENCE:

Provided with the self-assessment were: Initially the two museums supplied separate self-assessments, and each submitted three pieces of evidence specific to their museum - Volunteer Policies, Volunteer Handbooks, Reading Museum Volunteer Management Plan, Volunteering Story of Change Overview - a review of co-working

Reviewed as part of the assessment: A combined self-assessment which clearly identified areas of joint practice, areas to be unified and areas that needed to remain separate and an associated action plan; Draft Y2 MPR Business Plan; MPR Volunteering Forward Plan; volunteer produced publication; Gloucester Volunteer Makers platform

SUMMARY OF PRACTICE

INDICATOR 1

There is an expressed commitment to the involvement of volunteers, and recognition throughout the organisation that volunteering is a two-way process which benefits volunteers and the organisation.

The importance of volunteering within the museums was clearly described by senior managers - "The very first 'staff' member at the museum in the 1880s was a volunteer - an honorary curator - so it is in our blood"; "We are very much part of the community. They fund us through their council tax, in that sense these are their collections and we are here to give them access, volunteering is a facet of that". One of the formal aims of the partnership is that 'Reading's diverse communities are reflected in our audience, workforce, volunteers and programme' and staff described how "having diversity amongst our volunteers will hopefully encourage a similar diversity amongst our visitors"; "Volunteers are very visible, they are involved throughout the museum, so you see them all the time".

At both museums there was a clear understanding of the benefits of involving volunteers and of what volunteers bring. A common comment from both staff and volunteers was "Volunteers are able to take forward work that would otherwise always be at the bottom of the list and likely never be done. Important work, that opens up collections, improves access". Staff also commented "Volunteers bring depth to the visitor experience, they can really go in to detail about objects when they give tours, and different guides will focus on different aspects"; "Many volunteers bring knowledge we don't have - a volunteer from Ghana knew much more about Ghanaian objects on display"; "They allow us to do things that would otherwise be impossible - for the opening [of Reading Abbey] we had 18,000 visitors in a day, we needed the 40 volunteers to make that possible"; "They bring the museum alive [about costumed interpreters]".

The mutuality of the relationship was also well understood, at both museums, and at MERL especially, many volunteers are students who are volunteering to complement their studies. Staff also described how volunteering gave people the opportunity to "express their love of the Town"; "pursue a passion, research an interest" and "develop confidence"; "develop friendships with like minded people". Volunteers said they benefitted through "escaping, doing something completely different for a while"; being able to make a difference - "I used to be so frustrated seeing the Abbey crumbling, I really wanted to do something about it"; and "developing my English and speaking skills"; "getting the chance to handle and learn about some amazing things".

At the time of the assessment the two museums had separate volunteer policies, but work is underway to combine these by February 2019. Both have recently been reviewed (March & October 2018) and both were on a three yearly review cycle. The new combined policy will be reviewed every year. It will encompass what is currently in the individual policies (defining volunteering, recruitment, induction, communication & support, problem solving) but will have separate addendums for the two museums for those aspects which need to remain different, for example who



holds the insurance, the expenses policy and escalation of problem solving. Generic policies that apply to staff and volunteers such as equal opportunities and health & safety will also be different, but are sufficiently similar that summaries can be included in the combined volunteer policy and reference to full copies included in the addendums.

INDICATOR 2

The organisation commits appropriate resources to working with all volunteers, such as money, management, staff time and materials.

Volunteering is a significant part of the Museums Partnership Reading (MPR) Business Plan that forms the basis of reporting to the Arts Council. As well as being the first of the six key aims, it also underpins all of the others such as 'increased participation in arts and culture by young people' and 'increased opportunities for digital engagement and collaboration'. "We have already identified some opportunities for social media volunteers" and "youth volunteering is going to be a big development over the next year or two" said staff.

At present there are two dedicated volunteer coordinators - one full time, one part time, and an assistant volunteer coordinator specifically for gardening projects at MERL. This is broadly the same level of staffing as at the time of the last assessments (when there was an assistant curator responsible at Reading and 1.5 posts at MERL). However, since the last assessment the resourcing at MERL was reduced following the departure of the previous volunteer coordinator from 1.5 to 0.6 FTE. Volunteers said, "There was a bit of a wobble for a while, when there was just [staff member] who was only part time, and then two more who were just caretaking, not here for very long". They reported that this had impacted on volunteers - "Communication was not very good for a while, but it is much better now". Concern was expressed by volunteers at both sites about whether the arrangements for after April 2019 would include sufficient capacity for maintaining existing support - "It is great now, we have lots of get togethers, communication is excellent, the staff are brilliant. But I do worry about whether just one person can maintain that" was a comment shared by several volunteers.

In recognition of this concern, plans include a number of approaches that have been designed to enable the Volunteer Coordinator to focus on providing support - recruitment will be streamlined through the introduction of an online advertising and application process, and staff from departments will take on more responsibilities for volunteer selection and induction. It is suggested that staff resourcing is kept under review to ensure that it is sufficient to adequately support volunteering from the volunteers' perspective.

Responsibility for volunteers is written in to department staff job descriptions and going forward the Volunteer Coordinator will be providing an annual workshop for volunteer supervisors to promote best practice. The current dedicated volunteer coordinators have attended various courses in volunteer management - "We've both just attended Volunteers & the Law". Staff are also members of useful networking groups such as BOBVol (the Heritage Volunteering Groups network for Bucks, Oxfordshire and Berkshire; Hampshire and Solent) and Reading Voluntary Action's volunteer coordinators network. They provide advice and guidance to volunteer



supervisors.

Volunteering features on the agenda of meetings such as departmental team meetings as well as management meetings. There are regular reports produced given how integral volunteering is to the MPR Business Plan and the RAR activity plan which still runs until 2020. "There is a Board [for the Partnership] then a steering group which both [senior managers from the two museums] sit on, and volunteering will be discussed here frequently" said one of those senior managers.

Resources for volunteering have been built in to funding bids, such as for events, trips, costumes and equipment - "We had maroon T shirts and hi-viz gear"; "We had drinks and snacks [at an event] we were very well catered for" said volunteers. However, neither museum routinely offers expenses to volunteers - Reading has a small budget (from RAR funds) to reimburse expenses for volunteers claiming benefits or in full time education; MERL reimburses expenses for volunteers asked to travel somewhere other than their usual place of volunteering and "in exceptional circumstances". Staff described how they were working to secure additional funds to 'trial promoting expenses to remove barriers to volunteering' - "We have already secured £500 and have plans to use this to target potential volunteers who might otherwise find it too expensive to get here". As it is recognised best practice to offer reimbursement of expenses to all volunteers, this is something MPR should seek to address - the same development point was identified in previous assessments for both museums.

INDICATOR 3

The organisation is open to involving volunteers who reflect the diversity of the local community and actively seeks to do this in accordance with its stated aims.

Engaging with the whole local population is a key objective in the MPR Business Plan as it was in the RAR activity plan. A senior staff member said, "A colleague captured it well when she said, 'when the people in the museum [staff, volunteers and visitors] look just the same as those on the local bus, that's when I'll be happy'...". Both museums have achieved successes since their last assessments in terms of broadening the range of volunteers involved - "Definitely got more younger volunteers now... it used to be largely women who were early retired"; "We have been able to include volunteers with special needs, people with English as a second language, people from different parts of the world. It's lovely" said staff. As part of previous funding streams demographic data in relation to volunteers has been gathered and analysed, and continuing to do so is a requirement of current funding streams. "We know we still have some gaps around people on low incomes, and men, although the number of men has increased considerably".

Part of the forward planning includes developing new roles to attract different types of volunteers and new approaches to advertising. "We are hoping to have many more micro-volunteering opportunities, things that people can get involved in remotely, things people can do just for a short time such as in their holidays"; "We've already really opened up opportunities such as for stewarding, and for costumed interpreters". "We are making much more use of social media"; and "Going forward we are developing a Volunteer Makers platform which will be the main gateway to volunteering in the Partnership" said staff - Volunteer Makers is an online advertising



and recruitment tool.

The Volunteer Coordinator at MERL has recently attended training on recruitment and selection - "particularly looking at unconscious bias". Images and descriptions on the websites and within recruitment materials have been continually developed since the last assessments - Reading Museum launched a new website in 2017 which "used more photographs to better reflect the diversity of the Town".

Volunteers interviewed described having found out about opportunities in many different ways - through word of mouth, at events, through Reading Voluntary Action, freshers' fayres and other university events, web searches, specialist heritage websites, and the local media amongst others. "I went to this thing aimed at old people, in amongst the 'write your will' and 'how to avoid a heart attack' stands were these lovely two young ladies talking about doing something useful, something fun!"; "I saw an article about the Abbey which I was really interested in as I walk past it every day, and at the bottom it said you could volunteer".

INDICATOR 4

The organisation develops appropriate roles for volunteers in line with its aims and objectives, which are of value to the volunteers.

There are role descriptions for each role at both museums and all role descriptions were reviewed and updated during the last year. The descriptions include information about any requisite skills or experience and any specific availability required, although staff interviewed said "but we do discuss this further during the recruitment process, and try to be flexible where possible".

There are many different roles available to suit a very wide range of interests from working alone on collections and archives to public facing and performance roles, to practical tasks such as sewing, knitting and gardening. The RAR initiative brought new roles such as stewards and tour guides. Roles also offer different time commitments from regular weekly roles to time limited roles to one off or occasional roles.

Roles can also be adapted to suit people with additional needs, or people with English as a second language - some of whom were included in the interview sample. Supported volunteering is also possible.

Roles can also be developed to allow people to pursue specific interests - "They were going to have the Elizabeth I costume commissioned, we said 'oh no, please let us have a go'..."; "They asked us to pick an object that really interested us, to research it, so that we become the kind of expert on that object"; "We each selected an area of research that we wanted to undertake"; "I am going to be helping them look at Duke of Edinburgh, that's my background"; "I prepared a little Tudor dance to do with the children"; 'heritage custodian volunteers ... was a role suggested by volunteers to help clean and check outside interpretation panels' (from self-assessment).

There are new roles being developed - "Museum on Wheels is one" said a staff member. The Partnership plan notes 'We will focus on opening up opportunities for young people and in targeting under-represented groups and communities in our ... volunteering programmes. The opportunities created are likely to centre around



digital skills and content, enabling young people to apply the skills they learn to create digital content that is relevant to a more diverse audience'. "There's a new micro thing coming up that sounds like it will suit me" said a volunteer.

INDICATOR 5

The organisation is committed to ensuring that, as far as possible, volunteers are protected from physical, financial and emotional harm arising from volunteering.

Risk assessments are undertaken in relation to all volunteer roles - some are general and relate to anyone working in a particular area including things such as lifting and moving objects, some are specific such as leading tours or facilitating Friday Fledglings. Staff reported that risk assessments are reviewed annually.

Volunteers working at Reading Museum are covered under the local authority's insurance, and those at MERL and in the collections and archives, by the University's. The new volunteer handbook will make reference to this and signpost volunteers to any further information they might want.

Neither museum routinely offers expenses to volunteers. Volunteers interviewed were clear about the expenses policy and spoke of being able to claim if they were travelling to somewhere other than the museum. Volunteers who utilised resources such as fabrics and wool described how they were reimbursed for expenditure - "Usually you just ask [staff member] first then claim it back, but we were in John Lewis and there was such a fantastic deal on this fabric that would be perfect for the Elizabeth I costume, that we risked buying it without asking first, but it was fine". "We travelled up to Oxford to attend a course, and to the British Museum, she [staff member] keeps saying we need to be claiming expenses, but I don't want to". As noted, it is recommended good practice to offer expenses and this is something the Partnership should strive to achieve.

Staff described how volunteer data is stored securely - 'password protected and not shared with third parties'. They confirmed that at Reading this is in accordance with the GDPR data impact assessment and at MERL with the data protection policy.

INDICATOR 6

The organisation is committed to using fair, efficient and consistent recruitment procedures for all potential volunteers.

The recruitment process is evolving to make it more efficient and therefore manageable within the resources available - going forward, the Partnership will be launching an online 'Volunteer Makers' portal (based on the Engage in Gloucester website); the majority of volunteers will apply through this - "although a non-electronic application process will also be maintained for the occasional volunteer who does not have the access or skills to use the internet based approach" said a senior manager. The forward plan also describes how this approach will be reviewed in 2020 to ensure it is meeting the needs of all stakeholders.

The other change is that the Partnership will move to advertising and recruiting for 'vacant roles' only, as opposed to general recruitment which can be time consuming and is based more on "trying to find a role for the volunteer, rather than finding a



volunteer for the role" said a member of staff. Reading has already adopted this approach and noted that "it avoids having waiting lists of volunteers and is a better way of meeting people's expectations".

Applications will be reviewed by the volunteer coordinator to check that they are complete and to issue invitations to interview. The forward plan states that 'the Volunteer Co-ordinator will be on the interview panel, and will help the supervisor to decide whether to appoint the applicant'; a staff member said "panels will be supported in preparing interview questions, which will include the volunteer's motivation and expectations".

Volunteer Makers will provide comprehensive information about roles available and the recruitment process - at present this is provided by staff over the telephone, by email and face to face prior to the application and during the interview process - "She showed me this folder with the different roles and we went through it to see what I might be interested in"; "She explained about the different things I might be able to do, and how to get involved [at an event for older people]" said volunteers.

For some roles there is a competitive interview process, including formal auditions and try outs for certain roles. This is made clear on the role description. Volunteers interviewed described a consistent application and interview process - "Just filled out a simple application form, gave the name of two referees, that was it I think"; "They asked what attracted me to the role, what I hoped to get out of it. It was very much about me" said volunteers.

If an application is unsuccessful either prior to or after interview, feedback is provided. If prior to interview this is given by the volunteer coordinators; if after interview, by the relevant supervisor. "This is generally because we don't have a role available, in which case we encourage them to keep an eye out for future roles" said a staff member; "We did have some who didn't really have the right approach to interpreting, too 'tour guidey', so we had to feed that back", said another.

For public facing roles it is possible for volunteers to "see the role in action" said one volunteer; for others they described being able to "try it out, see if it was going to be something I would enjoy".

Both coordinators have recently attended training with regard to DBS checks and both museums have safeguarding policies which reference where checks are needed. If a role requires a DBS check this would be stated on the role description. "The children always have their grown ups with them, so we are never alone with them and don't need a DBS check" said a volunteer. Having a conviction does not automatically prevent someone from volunteering and both museums have policies covering the engagement of people with criminal convictions.

INDICATOR 7

Clear procedures are put into action for introducing new volunteers to their role, the organisation, its work, policies, practices and relevant personnel.

When new volunteers start they are introduced to staff and existing volunteers - at Reading, regular volunteers will also be introduced in the staff weekly newsletter, and at MERL they will get to meet everyone at 'coffee time' (when staff and volunteers gather for refreshments). At present the volunteer coordinators oversee



the general induction of new volunteers and supervisors cover the specifics of the role; going forward the whole induction will become the responsibility of supervisors, but the coordinator will provide training on what to include and how to structure sessions.

At both museums new volunteers receive a handbook, currently there are two separate handbooks, but these will be combined. A number of volunteers interviewed could not remember receiving a handbook or being told how to access policies and procedures pertinent to volunteers - when the new handbook is published and issued to volunteers it is suggested that a system is put in place so that existing volunteers confirm they have received a copy ensuring that all volunteers have access to current versions of all documents.

Volunteers were for the most part clear about the boundaries of their roles - examples given included: "You don't let the kids handle the scythe"; "Extricate yourself from any confrontations, don't argue [with people on tours]". There were some areas raised by those interviewed where there were uncertainties - it is suggested staff issue guidance in these areas: "We have never been told what to do if someone has a heart attack or something whilst on a tour we are leading"; "Some people are so grateful at the end of a tour they want to give you money. I always hand it straight in, but we have never been told formally to do that"; "I was a little surprised to find that we were expected to check, and I suppose clean, the toilets" (portable toilets at an event).

There are problem solving procedures within the handbooks at each museum covering issues raised by and about volunteers, these differ slightly; the action plan notes that these will be brought in line in 2019 so that the first point of contact is the volunteer coordinator, however if the issue is escalated there will be different routes that will need to be followed. Volunteers interviewed said that they would feel happy to raise any issues with either their supervisor or the respective volunteer coordinator; they also said that they would expect to be challenged if they acted inappropriately - "You're representing the museum to the public, it is important that they make sure you are creating the right impression" said one. A couple of volunteers gave examples of issues that they had raised and commented on how impressed they were with how they were resolved.

INDICATOR 8

The organisation takes account of the varying support and supervision needs of volunteers.

Volunteers at both museums were clear who their supervisor was and that the volunteer coordinator was also available to them. The form that 'supervision' takes depends on the role undertaken by the volunteer. In many cases the supervisor is working alongside the volunteers and supervision is "quite organic" said one staff member. For other roles there are group planning meetings and briefings, and post event de-briefs. Volunteers interviewed felt well supported - "They always make sure we know what we are doing"; "When I come in the trolley is in place and the laptop set up, has all been laid out for me so I can just get on"; "Always on hand if you need anything"; "I feel she is a friend, an important person in my life".

There are regular 'support' meetings - coffee mornings and gatherings where



volunteers also benefit from peer support, and some roles are carried out in groups which further offers this - "We all sit together and have a good natter, it's very supportive" said one volunteer.

Volunteers were aware that there was no obligation on them to undertake any task they did not want to do - "They are very good at remembering you're a volunteer, never lose sight of that, and always ask rather than assume" said one volunteer.

Feedback is collected from volunteers during the various group meetings, as well as through an exit survey process. There have also been volunteer surveys at both museums - in 2017 in both, and also earlier this year at Reading. The Partnership action plan includes a survey to be carried out in September 2019. Volunteers also regularly make suggestions about how their roles can be developed and enhanced - "We got an email asking for feedback, which they said they would be very pleased to have" said a volunteer.

There are volunteer newsletters at both museums, and these are used as a vehicle for informing and consulting volunteers. Going forward there will be one newsletter with alternate months focussed on each museum. At MERL there is also a noticeboard for volunteers in the coffee room. Volunteers commented "She [volunteer coordinator] is brilliant at keeping us up to date. She writes a really interesting and relevant newsletter. Really enjoy it".

INDICATOR 9

The whole organisation is aware of the need to give volunteers recognition.

Both museums hold regular volunteer events to acknowledge contributions. These often take the form of coffee mornings - "She [volunteer coordinator] always bakes us a cake, it's always lovely, there are no end to her talents!" said one volunteer. Volunteers are also thanked in the newsletter. They also benefit from invitations to exclusive events, private exhibitions and previews, trips to other heritage attractions and free souvenir guides. There are volunteer Christmas parties and volunteers receive Christmas cards - "They even laid on entertainment for us" said a volunteer. "We put together a publication to celebrate the centenary of the Universal Suffrage Act. They published it. I was thrilled to see our names in print. Got a real kick out of it... You went on Berkshire radio didn't you, and I wrote a blog" said a pair of volunteers. Volunteers are nominated for local awards - last year one retiring volunteer won the University of Reading's Distinguished Volunteer Award. "Staff buy sandwiches and biscuits out of their own pockets [for volunteers' picnics]" said a senior manager. Volunteers interviewed felt very appreciated - "They really spoil us. That's not why one does it obviously, but it is lovely none-the-less". Volunteers really appreciate gatherings and some expressed concern that the level of these may diminish with only one coordinator overseeing both museums - this is something the Partnership might want to give particular attention to when reviewing the deployment and adequacy of resources.

Ongoing training is available to volunteers such as in object handling, tour guiding, and staff described offering the opportunity to shadow to develop skills and experience. "They brought down the people who trained the guides at Hampton Court to give us a day's training"; "We had a training session with people who make



theatrical costumes. A super day"; "We had a whole day workshop with professionals about how to develop your character" said volunteers. Opportunities to get involved in other activities and undertake one off roles are also provided - a number of volunteers said that they would like a calendar of opportunities and events so that they could see what was coming up and plan accordingly.

Volunteers also input ideas for developments and improvements and this is actively encouraged. "I suggested having the guides in the new galleries in costume"; "I really want to promote this idea - use the loans boxes in the galleries on a Saturday"; "Very open to the idea of planting a Medlar tree" said volunteers; "They are very much 'trusted colleagues'..." said a senior manager.

Volunteers are able to request references. A number of those interviewed for whom this would be particularly relevant (as they were specifically volunteering for experience as part of their career development) could not remember being told this (though assumed it would be the case). The issuing of the new handbook should clarify this.

Both museums use exit forms in order to capture volunteers' reasons for leaving and general feedback about their experience.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Summary of suggestions for development

2.1 & 2.5 & 9.1 It is suggested that staff resourcing is kept under review to ensure that it is sufficient to adequately support volunteering from the volunteers' perspective. Volunteers really appreciate gatherings and some expressed concern that the level of these may diminish with only one coordinator overseeing both museums - this is something the Partnership might want to give particular attention to when reviewing the deployment and adequacy of resources.

2.5 & 5.3 As it is recognised best practice to offer reimbursement of expenses to all volunteers, this is something MPR should seek to address to remove any potential barriers to volunteering.

7.2 When the new handbook is published and issued to volunteers it is suggested that a system is put in place so that existing volunteers confirm they have received a copy ensuring that all have access to the latest versions of documents.

9.3 Opportunities to get involved in other activities and undertake one off roles are provided - a number of volunteers said that they would like a calendar of opportunities and events so that they could see what was coming up and plan accordingly.

CONDITIONS (IF APPLICABLE)

Summary of how conditions were met:

OR

Summary of why organisation has not met the standard: