



READING MUSEUM & TOWN HALL

Volunteer Policy



Reading Museum & Town Hall
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RM READING
MUSEUM

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy seeks to meet the needs of the volunteer and the requirements of the museum. It is relevant to all current and potential volunteers and is an important document for staff concerned with recruiting, developing and supervising volunteers.
- 1.2 Reading Museum & Town Hall is committed to providing the town's diverse community with a quality service and to continue developing ambitious projects that enhance Reading's reputation regionally, nationally and internationally.
- 1.3 The assistance of volunteers enables Reading Museum & Town Hall to undertake projects and reach audiences that would otherwise not be possible. They are essential in the delivery of programmes that assist community engagement, collections development and education outreach.

2. Defining Volunteers

- 2.1 A volunteer is someone who offers their time and skills without expectation of financial reward except the reimbursement of expenses.
- 2.2 Volunteers are a valuable resource that can offer a wide range of skills, life experiences and fresh perspectives. These can be used to complement our service and staff skills.
- 2.3 The volunteer role is based on mutual trust and understanding. No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise will be enforced upon volunteers to attend. However, due to the important role that volunteers have in helping deliver programmes, it is essential that they notify their supervisors if they cannot make an arranged day. This enables the museum to make alternative plans for activities involving volunteers. Failing to notify us can potentially lead to activities being cancelled, disappointing museum users.

3. Recruitment

- 3.1 Reading Museum and Town Hall will advertise volunteering roles on its website, social media sites and through Reading Voluntary Action. A list of roles will be provided for those enquiring. These will offer a variety of opportunities and experiences that reflect our wide range of activities and projects. Due to the number of enquiries we receive, there is no guarantee that we will be able to accept every volunteer request.

- 3.2 All prospective volunteers are required to complete a short registration form (see appendix 1) including contact details so we can collect two references. The registration form allows us to match volunteer's interests, skills and abilities with a suitable role. This form must be signed by the volunteer to show they have read and understood this policy.
- 3.3 A meeting will be arranged between the potential volunteer and any staff responsible for the prospective role. This is an opportunity for both the volunteer and the museum to discuss projects, availability, emergency contacts and agree that the role is mutually beneficial.
- 3.4 On agreeing to the role both the volunteer and a member of museum staff will sign a volunteer agreement (appendix 3) and a copy provided for their records. This is not a legally binding contract but sets out what can be expected from both the volunteer and Reading Museum & Town Hall.
- 3.5 Reading Borough Council requires that volunteers working with young children and vulnerable adults are interviewed by two appropriate staff members, give two references and a declaration of previous criminal convictions (spent and unspent). Having a criminal record is not necessarily a barrier to volunteering.
- 3.6 Volunteering should not affect the right to Income Support, Incapacity Benefit, Employment and Support Allowance or Disability Living Allowance. Those on Job Seekers' Allowance are entitled to volunteer as long as they are actively seeking employment and free to attend an interview with 48 hours' notice. Individuals should, however, notify Jobcentre Plus that they have begun volunteering.
- 3.7 Volunteers from outside of the European Union's 2005 boundary must check with the UK Border Agency that their visa permits volunteering in Britain.

4. Safeguarding young children, young people & vulnerable adults

- 4.1 Reading Museum & Town Hall follows its own service level child protection policy and that of Reading Borough Council. This is a commitment to safeguarding the welfare of young volunteers and visitors under the age of 18.
- 4.2 All prospective volunteers who will have substantial access to young people and vulnerable adults, as defined in The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, will undergo an enhanced DBS check. These checks must be completed before a volunteer working with children or vulnerable adults can begin their role.

- 4.3 Reading Museum & Town Hall will explain their policy and procedures for child and vulnerable adult protection. The volunteer's supervisor will establish whether or not any training is required.
- 4.4 All volunteers will be required to sign up to Reading Museum & Town Hall's Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy.

5. Equality, diversity and accessibility

- 5.1 The acceptance of a volunteer for a particular role will be made on merit, the sole selection criterion being the individual's suitability to carry out the specified tasks subject to the needs and restrictions of the museum.
- 5.2 We are committed to making Reading Museum & Town Hall, and the volunteer opportunities offered, as accessible as possible. We will discuss any access needs that prospective or existing volunteers may have, to help identify appropriate volunteering opportunities, and ensure their safe and full involvement.
- 5.3 Reading Museum & Town Hall abides by Reading Borough Council's Equality and Diversity policy and seeks to recruit volunteers from diverse backgrounds. We respect and value diversity within our workforce. It helps us understand the needs of our customers better, allowing us to plan and provide services that meet their needs.
- 5.4 Reading Museum & Town Hall does not specify a general volunteer upper age limit. We recognise the contribution made by older volunteers through their valuable knowledge and experience. However, we would be irresponsible if we permitted volunteers to continue if this is detrimental to their own or other people's health and safety.
- 5.5 There is no minimum age requirement for volunteers provided they are undertaking suitable tasks for which there is no legal minimum, they are supervised by a suitable adult and not left alone. A parent or guardian must give permission if the volunteer is under 18.
- 5.6 Volunteers should not be deterred from offering their services because they feel they cannot afford to volunteer. Reading Museum & Town Hall will offer to cover the travelling expenses, within the Reading Borough boundary, for full-time university students and those claiming unemployment benefits. This is to encourage volunteering from a wider section of Reading's community. Anybody wishing to be reimbursed should discuss the process with their supervisor and the volunteer co-ordinator first.

- 5.7 Reading Museum & Town Hall will cover volunteer expenses for any travel required as part of their role. This will be reimbursed at the Reading Borough Council rate. Anybody wishing to be reimbursed should discuss the process with their supervisor and the volunteer co-ordinator first.

6. Induction and training

- 6.1 Reading Museum & Town Hall recognises that volunteers require satisfying work and the opportunity for personal development. To make this possible volunteers will be provided with training to ensure they can successfully undertake their role. We will seek to support our volunteers through training and communication.
- 6.2 Training offers Reading Museum & Town Hall an opportunity to explain the standards we expect for our service users and to encourage and support volunteers to achieve and maintain them.
- 6.3 On the volunteer's first day, they should be provided with an induction. An induction checklist, which will include the following items will be completed and held on record:
- - Health and Safety policies
 - Fire safety including location of fire exits
 - Emergency contact details
 - Copyright forms
 - Confidentiality statement and consent forms relating to Data protection and GDPR
 - Procedures or routines relevant to the volunteer's role
 - Procedures for claiming expenses
- 6.4 Induction training will include the sites at the Museum & Town Hall, the Museum store, Abbey Gateway, Abbey Ruins, and the Riverside Museum if their role requires it.

7. Health and Safety

- 7.1 We have a duty of care to avoid exposing our volunteers to health and safety risks. All volunteers will be made aware of our Health and Safety policy and any practical safety issues as part of their induction.
- 7.2 All volunteer roles will be risk assessed, covering both the tasks involved and environment in which they will be conducted.
- 7.3 We would encourage volunteers to make us aware of any medical condition on starting. This is to ensure that the museum is looking after them

properly. If someone has a condition that will affect them in that role then the museum will try to find them another role.

8. Communication and Support

- 8.1 All volunteers will have a named supervisor. Supervisors will provide regular meetings to provide support and guidance. This will also allow volunteers the chance to give us feedback on their involvement.
- 8.2 For larger volunteering roles, there will be a trial period of four weeks. This is to ensure both the volunteer and we are happy with the role. Volunteers are still free to end their involvement at any time before or after this period.
- 8.3 An informal exit interview or feedback form will be offered to volunteers leaving us. This is to help us monitor how well we are involving volunteers and share any learning points.

9. Problem Solving

- 9.1 Reading Museum & Town Hall aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. Supervisors are responsible for handling any problems experienced by the volunteer. They will seek to ensure that the volunteer's views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly and will aim for a positive and amicable solution.
- 9.2 In the event of a grievance against the supervisor, volunteers should approach the volunteer co-ordinator. It will be their responsibility to ensure that the volunteer's views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly and will aim for a positive and amicable solution.
- 9.3 If someone makes a complaint about a volunteer, their supervisor should look at the reasons, and any measures which may be taken to solve the problem, such as training or changing the volunteer's tasks.
- 9.4 If the supervisor feels that the situation is so serious that it cannot be rectified, the volunteer's activities should be suspended. The supervisor should meet with the volunteer as soon as possible to outline the reasons for concern and explain that their involvement must end. There should be written confirmation of this.
- 9.5 The decision to end a volunteer's involvement will always be at the discretion of the Museum Manager or equivalent.

10. Insurance

- 10.1 All volunteers are covered by Reading Borough Council's insurance policy whilst undertaking voluntary work approved and authorised by Reading Museum & Town Hall.
- 10.2 It is the responsibility of individuals to look after their personal possessions. These are only covered by the insurance policy if damage was caused by Reading Borough Council negligence.
- 10.3 It is the responsibility of the volunteers to inform their motor insurance company that they are using their car for volunteering.

11. Information Protection

- 11.1 Reading Borough Council has a data protection policy to ensure it complies with the Data Protection Act 1998 and this is being updated in accordance with the new General Data Protection Regulations. As a result, all volunteers will be asked to give consent for their personal data to be used for processing and provided with a privacy notice that will outline the reasons for which it was collected. Volunteers' personal data will not be shared with third parties.
- 11.2 Volunteers will be advised of the need for confidentiality where they have access to sensitive information. This includes any information about any individual or organisation working with Reading Museum & Town Hall.
- 11.3 Volunteers will be expected to donate to Reading Museum & Town Hall any original copyright works they may produce while volunteering and will be asked to sign a copyright agreement for important projects including giving guided tours (see appendix 2).

Why do you want to volunteer in this role and what do you hope to gain from it?	
How did you hear about us?	

3. References

Please provide the names and contact details of two people who we may contact as referees.

Name: Address: Tel No: Email: Relationship to you:	Name: Address: Tel No: Email: Relationship to you:
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4. Declaration

I have read and understood the museum volunteer policy. I declare that the information set out in this form is, to the best of my knowledge, true in all respects.

Signature:

Date:

Equal Opportunities Monitoring

Reading Museum & Town Hall operates a policy of equal opportunity and fair treatment for volunteers. To assist us in monitoring this policy, and for this reason only, applicants are asked to give details of their ethnic origin, gender and any disability. Your answers to these questions will help us maintain fair selection for all.

To select, first double click on the relevant box and then click 'default value - checked'.

Gender (Sex Discrimination Act 1975)

Male Female

Ethnic Origin (Race Relations Act 1976)

Please tick the box that best describes you:

Asian or Asian British

Indian Pakistani Bangladeshi Asian
Other (Please state)

Black or Black British

Caribbean African Black
Other (Please state)

Mixed

White & Black Caribbean White & Black African White & Asian Mixed
Other (Please state)

Other Ethnic Groups

Chinese
Other Ethnic Groups (please state)

White

British Irish
Other White Background (please state)

Do not wish to declare

Disability Discrimination Act

We welcome applications from people with disabilities. The Disability Discrimination Act defines disability as “any physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”.

Do you consider yourself to have a disability which falls within this definition? YES NO

If yes, please give details:

Is there anything about your disability which is relevant to this role? YES NO

If yes, please give details:

Would the provision of any aids or adaptations assist you in carrying out the role? YES NO

If yes, please give details:

Is there anything we need to know about your disability in order to provide you with any help you may need for the interview, e.g. a sign language interpreter, or an easily accessible interview room)? YES NO

If yes, please give details:

Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

Appendix 2. Copyright Form (general)



Volunteer agreement to transfer copyright.

- Individuals are asked to transfer to Reading Museum & Town Hall copyright for any photographic, filmed, digital or written material they create during their volunteering role.
- Transferring the copyright to Reading Museum & Town Hall is important as it allows the valuable contribution of volunteers to be accessed by museum staff, researchers and service users.
- The volunteer's attention is drawn to legislation regarding copyright (see the amended Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988).

I agree to assign copyright to Reading Museum & Town Hall of all work done whilst volunteering.

Volunteer Project:

Name:

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 3. Reading Museum & Town Hall Volunteer Agreement



Reading Museum and Town Hall Volunteer Agreement

Volunteers are an important and valued part of Reading Museum and Town Hall. We hope that you enjoy volunteering with us and feel a full part of our team.

This agreement tells you what you can expect from us and what we hope from you. We aim to be flexible, so please let us know if you would like to make any changes and we will do our best to accommodate them.

This agreement is within the framework of Reading Museum & Town Hall's volunteer policy and will apply to any voluntary role you take on with us.

We, Reading Museum & Town Hall, will do our best to:

- introduce you to how the organisation works and your role in it and to provide any training you need.
- provide a supervisor as a main point of contact so that you can tell us if you are happy with how your tasks are organised and get feedback from us.
- respect your skills, dignity and individual wishes and to do our best to meet them.
- consult with you and keep you informed of possible changes.
- provide a safe workplace.
- apply our equal opportunities policy.
- apply our complaints procedure if there is any problem.

I, (the volunteer), agree to do my best to:

- work reliably to the best of my ability and to give as much warning as possible whenever I cannot work when expected.
- follow Reading Museum & Town Hall's rules and procedures, including health and safety, equal opportunities, child protection and confidentiality.

Please note: This agreement is in honour only and is not intended to be a legally binding contract of employment.

Volunteer name: _____

Volunteer signature: _____ Date: _____

On behalf of Reading Museum & Town Hall

Staff name: _____

Staff signature: _____ Date: _____