

## **CULTURAL SERVICES VOLUNTEER POLICY**

### Introduction

The Cultural Services strongly support volunteering. We recognise that volunteering can benefit the organisation by increasing the range of skills, interests, life experiences and cultural backgrounds within it. Volunteers can look at the work our Service does from a fresh viewpoint and be the source of valuable input. We work with all parts of the community, and aim to be an inclusive organisation and actively seek to involve a diverse range of individuals who can contribute and add value and depth to our work.

As well as providing a valuable resource for the organisation, the Cultural Services recognise the potential benefit of volunteering to the volunteer. We aim to acknowledge individual needs of volunteers, and where possible, provide the experience and opportunity to gain skills required. Volunteers give their time freely to the Cultural Services, and in return they have the right to recognition for the assistance they provide, and involvement and participation throughout the organisation as appropriate.

The Cultural Services comprises six divisions:

- Adult and Community Learning
- The County Coroner
- Heritage
- Libraries
- Registration
- Surrey Arts

Our Services recognise that volunteers can make a significant and valuable contribution to its work and our objectives. This document sets out the principles, practices and procedures that The Cultural Services will follow in the appointment, support and mentoring of volunteers.

### Definitions and Scope

“Volunteering” can be defined as the act of a person choosing to give time without an expectation of financial reward for the good of others, society or the environment.

The aim of this policy is to set out good volunteering practice for use throughout The Cultural Services, and to provide guidelines for all staff in relation to working with volunteers.

The policy should be reviewed in the light of any trends or new legal changes that affect volunteering and at least once every two years.

This policy does not extend to formal student positions as part of an academic course or student work experience positions for which separate procedures apply.

In appointing volunteers The Cultural Services will adhere to the following principles:

- Volunteers will be engaged in work which adds value to the existing Services;
- Volunteers will not be used to do the work of paid staff during an industrial dispute.
- Every effort will be made to make another volunteer placement available when one is completed, however, this cannot be guaranteed.

## Recruitment

Volunteers will be recruited from the widest of sources in the community. All volunteer applicants will be given clear and complete descriptions of the tasks and responsibilities they would be expected to fulfil.

The application procedure is designed to help both sides find out whether the position is right for the volunteer, by enabling an exchange of information: We provide information about the organisation and volunteering opportunities, to enable the volunteer to make a decision as to whether they want to come to us, the volunteer providing information about their needs, aims and motivations, as well as existing skills and experiences, to enable us to make a decision as to whether a useful position can be provided.

Volunteers must go through a simple selection process. This will include completion of a 'Volunteering Expression of Interest' form and an informal interview.

Any volunteer who will be working regularly with children, young people or people who are vulnerable or who has access to funds or involved in fund-raising may have to undergo checks with the Criminal Records Bureau. Written references may be taken up if appropriate. We may also seek references from objective referees for all volunteers working with the public.

Volunteers who are given placements will be required to complete a 'Volunteer Registration Form'.

After a 3-month probationary period, there will be a review of the volunteer placement.

At the end of the volunteer placement, the Cultural Services will provide a reference for any prospective employee, academic institution or similar requirement.

## Supervision

Each successful volunteer shall be mentored by an employee or fellow volunteer who will support and supervise the volunteer throughout the duration of their position. The mentor's responsibilities will include ensuring that the volunteer receives the following:

- a planned induction;
- provide regular mentoring and support;
- constructive feedback on their contribution;
- adequate office accommodation (or welfare facilities in the case of fieldwork);
- equipment and services to perform their tasks effectively.

## Equal opportunities

The Cultural Services recognise that the activity of volunteering can provide a volunteer with experiences and opportunities for self and career development. In accordance with Surrey County Council's equal opportunities policy, volunteer positions will be therefore be open to individuals irrespective of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age or marital status and the policy will be adhered to in all interactions with volunteers. All staff are expected to work alongside volunteers and treat them with respect. All volunteers will receive a copy of Surrey County Council's 'Fairness and Dignity at Work' statement on commencing their position.

The Cultural Services are committed to making all possible accommodations for disabled persons, in line with Surrey County Council's stance on the Disability Discrimination Act (1995).

### Safeguarding Vulnerable People

“Safeguarding” is the protection of members of society who may be more vulnerable due to age, illness, capacity or position in society. Cultural Services has a policy to ensure the safeguarding of vulnerable people. All volunteers shall be required to be familiar with the Safeguarding Policy and to follow its principles.

### Volunteering Charter

Volunteers at the Cultural Services can expect:

- to be respected for their knowledge and skills;
- to be valued as an individual;
- to have support, feedback, appreciation, and encouragement;
- to have opportunities to contribute to improvements;
- to have opportunities to discuss concerns or problems relating to their duties;
- not to have their duties changed without prior discussion;
- to be insured;
- that we have an agreed volunteering policy;
- up to date information about where they volunteer;
- to have clear guidelines within which to carry out duties;
- to have a clearly defined task description for their role;
- opportunities for training relating to their task;
- to have an organised working schedule;
- a safe working environment.

The Cultural Services expect its volunteers to:

- show commitment to the organisation;
- treat customers, staff and volunteer colleagues with respect;
- have a flexible approach to their duties;
- be polite in their dealings with clients;
- follow procedures and guidelines;
- inform the organisation in all cases of absence;
- report any accidents promptly to staff;
- respect confidentiality;
- be prepared to undertake appropriate training;
- carry out their tasks to the best of their ability;
- discuss concerns with the appropriate person/mentor;
- consult the appropriate mentor, if in need of help and guidance;
- report sickness to the appropriate person/mentor.

These principles are set out in the 'Volunteer Agreement', which both parties to the agreement are required to endorse and sign at the outset of the position.

### Expenses

Out of pocket travel expenses will be paid if:

- the volunteer travels away from their normal volunteering base,
- if written agreement is obtained in advance from your mentor and on production of receipts.

### Absence

Volunteers are asked to inform their mentors if they will not be available for work due to illness, holidays or for any other reason. It is helpful if volunteers can give their mentor as much notice as possible so that cover may be arranged if necessary. There may be occasions when volunteers may wish to take a break for a period of time and we will respect this.

### Dress Code

Cultural Services do not have a formal dress code, relying on staff discretion to be appropriate for the occasion. Volunteers should be clean and tidy for normal office duties, and make an effort to be smart on days when they are in the public eye. Where volunteering takes place out of an office environment, the volunteer will be advised on appropriate dress on a case-by-case basis.

### Insurance

Individuals who are volunteering or on work position will, like paid staff, be covered by Surrey County Council's Employers' Liability Insurance while on the premises. They will also usually be covered while undertaking work off-site, if they have been specifically requested in writing by the appropriate Mentor to undertake such work.

### Health & Safety

Surrey County Council has a statutory responsibility under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, not to harm or damage the health of volunteers through their involvement in the activities of the organisation.

All volunteers will receive a copy of Surrey County Council's 'Health and Safety Policy' statement at the outset of the position.

All volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a safe manner and not to act in a way that may cause injury to others.

### Confidentiality

Volunteers should regard all information they have access to or are given as a result of their volunteering as being confidential unless advised otherwise. No information should be released to a third party without first seeking the agreement of your mentor and/or the individual concerned, as appropriate.

Volunteers should not disclose personal details (home address, telephone number etc) to clients but should use their business address when an address has to be given.

Cultural Services will fulfil our duty to safeguard the information contained within application forms, etc. and will treat such personal data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018. Volunteers' personal data will not be shared with other organisations and will be destroyed two years after the period of volunteering has ended.

### Training

Volunteers will be provided with sufficient training to carry out the task that they are allocated.

We will endeavour to provide regular opportunities for volunteers to meet together to discuss matters of mutual interest and concern and to learn more about where they work and the ways in which individual volunteers are contributing to the aims of the Service.

### Review

The tasks of the volunteer will be regularly reviewed. The purpose will be to ensure that the quality of work is maintained to an acceptable standard, and to ensure that the needs of both parties are being met.

### Problem Solving Procedure

In the event of a volunteer having a complaint, or if Cultural Services need to resolve an issue with a volunteer, both parties can use the 'Problem Solving Procedure' (**see appendix**), a copy of which will be provided to the volunteer at the outset of the position.

### Leaving

The volunteer is free to leave at any time. Any notice that is received would be appreciated, since it would help us to plan. It would help improve our volunteering programme, if you could attend a leaving interview, and provide valuable feedback on why you chose to leave.

Where appropriate, the role and position of the volunteer may be terminated by a Senior Manager at one week's notice, or immediately, where behaviour equivalent to gross misconduct has occurred. In all cases the volunteer will be entitled to an explanation of the decision and action taken.

## **CULTURAL SERVICES PROBLEM SOLVING PROCEDURE**

### Review

The tasks of the volunteer will be regularly reviewed. A date for review should be given on the volunteer's registration form. The purpose will be to ensure that the quality of work is maintained to an acceptable standard, and to ensure that the needs of both parties are being met.

### Resolution of Problems

In the first instance volunteers with a problem should speak to their mentor. Matters unresolved by an informal approach may need to follow the formal procedure outlined below.

#### If a volunteer makes a complaint

##### *Stage 1: Oral complaint*

Initial complaints, whether against a member of staff, the organisation or another volunteer, should be discussed by the volunteer with their mentor. During this meeting the volunteer can be accompanied by a nominated person of their choice. If the issue cannot be resolved at this stage then the volunteer should make a formal complaint in writing to an appropriate Manager.

##### *Stage 2: In writing*

Volunteers making a complaint in writing should do so within a calendar month of the issue arising. A Manager should respond within 10 working days of receipt of the letter.

##### *Stage 3: Right to appeal*

If the volunteer is not satisfied with the outcome, they can appeal in writing to a Senior Manager. The volunteer can have a nominated person present at this meeting. The Senior Manager will need to respond within 10 working days of receipt of the letter, and their decision is final.

#### If someone complains about a volunteer

##### *Stage 1: Oral discussion*

The mentor should discuss the complaint with the volunteer and identify goals that will help the volunteer to fulfil their role, and offer extra support, supervision and training where necessary. A deadline should be set for reviewing the situation. If the complaint was raised

by someone else, that person should be kept informed of the measures being taking to resolve the situation.

*Stage 2: Written warning*

If the issue has not been resolved by the oral discussion or the review, the mentor can issue the volunteer with a written warning outlining the reason for the complaint. The volunteer has the right to state their case, which could be to the mentor or the appropriate Manager, and be accompanied by a person of their choice. Depending on the nature of the complaint, further objectives might be set, and help offered to the volunteer. The decision to dismiss a volunteer should be a last resort. If necessary, the appropriate Team Leader, after consultation with the mentor, will meet the volunteer to tell them, and will also direct them to the local volunteer bureau.

*Stage 3: Right to appeal*

If a volunteer has been dismissed they can appeal against the decision in writing to a Senior Manager. The Senior Manager must respond within 10 working days from receipt of the letter, and their decision is final.

Immediate Suspension

There are some occasions on which volunteers can be suspended immediately while an investigation is carried out. These include, but are not limited to, acts that constitute gross misconduct, eg. theft, assault, act of violence, malicious damage, deliberate falsification of documents, harassment or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The decision to suspend a volunteer must be confirmed to the volunteer in writing.