

Policy on involvement of Volunteer Librarians

1. Introduction

This policy covers Volunteer Librarians only ie those who actively take part in the day-to-day running of the library and whose work is supervised by the Coordinator of Volunteers. It does not cover members of the management committee, unless a member of the management committee is also a Volunteer Librarian, in which case the policy does cover them when they are acting in that capacity.

All references to volunteers in this policy refer to Volunteer Librarians.

Although volunteers offer time freely and willingly without binding obligation, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged – both what the Library expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of the Library.

The Library Management Committee is committed to involving volunteers directly within the Library to:

- Contribute to the delivery of our services
- Make sure we are responsive to the needs of our users
- Provide different skills and perspectives
- Offer opportunities for participation by people who might otherwise be excluded.

The policy sets out the principles and practice by which we involve volunteers.

The policy is endorsed by the Library Management Committee and will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains appropriate to the needs of the Library and its volunteers.

2. Principles

The Library Management Committee recognises the value of volunteering and realises that it is a commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community. The Library Management Committee seeks to involve volunteers in ways that further its work and enhances its services. In turn, it expects its volunteers to uphold its values and objectives.

Volunteering should be a fulfilling experience. Through adequate support and supervision, volunteers should be able to develop, expand and change their area of volunteering where appropriate. Volunteers can therefore expect to be given support, access to appropriate training and to have their rights as individuals upheld.

The Library Management Committee will, via the Coordinator of Volunteers, aim to:

- match the time, skills and experience of volunteers to a suitable volunteering opportunity
- ensure each volunteer receives appropriate training and support
- resolve any complaints raised by a volunteer in a timely fashion
- ensure that each volunteer is supported by the Coordinator of Volunteers to provide advice and guidance
- foster a friendly and supportive atmosphere for volunteers and make volunteering a positive experience

- reimburse reasonable expenses incurred. These expenses must be agreed up front with the contact person and are payable against a valid receipt.
- recognise that the benefits that voluntary work brings to volunteers themselves, to service users and to the Library.
- ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into the Library's structure and that mechanisms are in place for them to contribute to the Library's work
- endeavour to involve volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities and ensure its volunteering opportunities are as accessible as possible.

In return, the Library Management Committee, via the Coordinator of Volunteers, requires volunteers to:

- maintain and uphold the good name and reputation of the Library
- treat all members, service users and members of the public with respect and dignity
- adhere to the Library policies and procedures.
- Have a basic knowledge of IT including using the Internet.

3. Recruitment

Recruitment of volunteers will generally be from all sections of the community and will be in line with the Library's Equality and Diversity Policy. Positive action in recruitment may be used where appropriate.

Recruitment of volunteers is led by the Coordinator of Volunteers. The Coordinator of Volunteers will prepare volunteer task roles which outline the nature of the activity, skills required and opportunities. These will be used to advertise roles. Anyone who wishes to become a volunteer will need to complete a standard volunteer registration form. The information asked for is on a 'need to know' basis, is regarded as confidential and is used to find out more about the potential volunteer and their volunteering preferences and adapting them when appropriate to accommodate people's needs.

Volunteers will be invited to attend an informal interview to discuss opportunities, find out more and outline their aspirations for a role. The interview process will be led by the Coordinator of Volunteers.

- Depending on the nature of the volunteering opportunity, a volunteer may be required to provide the names of two referees who have agreed to provide a reference on behalf of the volunteer e.g. volunteering directly with children and vulnerable adults.
- A volunteer may be required to give more information about specific health issues in order to assess their suitability for a specific volunteering opportunity.

Decisions about a volunteer's suitability for a placement will be taken by the Coordinator of Volunteers and the only information remaining on file should relate to the outcome and not the details. Volunteers who are considered unsuitable for a particular task will, where possible, be offered alternative voluntary involvement with the Library, or will be signposted to other volunteering opportunities. If the Coordinator of Volunteers feels that a new volunteer is unsuitable for any role then they will refer the matter to the management committee in advance of taking any action.

The acceptance of volunteer assistance for a particular role is made on merit, the sole selection criterion being the individual's suitability to carry out agreed tasks.

Sometimes it is not possible to accept every offer of volunteering help. This can be for a number of reasons e.g. lack of space or accommodation, sufficient volunteers doing that

activity or no opportunity available for the type of activity s/he wishes to do. In some cases, the volunteer may not be suitable for the activity.

The Coordinator of Volunteers informs the volunteer of the decision within a reasonable period of time and in an honest, but sensitive manner and state how his/her offer of help is appreciated. Any reason(s) why s/he may not be involved should be explained clearly, but tactfully and if possible, the reasons given.

The issue of turning down a volunteer should not just be avoided. A volunteer who has been turned down may be signposted to the local volunteer centre where alternative options and opportunities can be explored.

4. Volunteer Expectations and Work Outlines

Volunteers will have a clear and concise role description, which will be reviewed as and when needed and at contact meetings with their volunteer coordinator. The role description is for volunteers that work behind the counter.

The Library Management Committee, via the Coordinator of Volunteers, expects volunteers to:

- be reliable and honest
- work within agreed guidelines
- have adequate support in their volunteering
- make the most of training and support opportunities
- be able to use the library basic IT solutions and messaging (training is provided)
- carry out tasks in a professional way that reflects the aims and values of the Library
- respect the work of the Library
- comply with the Library's policies such as equal opportunities, smoking and health and safety
- make the Coordinator of Volunteers aware of any potentially dangerous or hazardous conditions if the Coordinator of Volunteers is not on site make the other volunteers aware.
- respect confidential information
- not undertake actions that bring the Library into disrepute.

5. Induction and Training

Training of new volunteers is organised by the volunteer coordinator and delivered by volunteer trainers.

New volunteers will be properly inducted into the Library. This includes being properly briefed about the activities to be undertaken and given all the necessary information and skills to enable them to perform with confidence. See volunteer induction checklist at the end of this policy.

All volunteers will be made aware of and have access to all the Library's relevant policies, including those relating to volunteering, health and safety, safeguarding and equality and diversity.

The development of training and support for volunteers is a high priority for the Library in order to equip them with the necessary information and skills to carry out their tasks. Training of new volunteers is led by the Coordinator of Volunteers.

All volunteers must be given a health and safety induction before they start. It is good practice to keep a record of safety checks that are undertaken, and the actions taken to reduce risks and make hazards safe.

A record must be kept of training (both formal and informal) undertaken by the volunteer.

6. Support

Support of volunteers is led by the Coordinator of Volunteers. Volunteers will have the Coordinator of Volunteers as the named contact person who will provide regular support. This support will provide the opportunity for ongoing dialogue about the development of the volunteering role and any advice and guidance as needed.

The volunteer should be clear about the tasks associated with their voluntary role and be willing to undertake them. This written role will clarify the role the volunteer has agreed to do, the hours that they will be volunteering and what training, support and supervision will be provided. It should also give details about their named contact details for the Coordinator of Volunteers and location of the activity.

Volunteers will have access to regular support and supervision from the Coordinator of Volunteers. This will enable both the volunteer and the Coordinator of Volunteers to identify, monitor and evaluate the volunteer's involvement, recognise achievements and identify individual training needs, including that relevant to their particular volunteering role and to their wider personal development. The frequency, duration and format of these support sessions will vary and should be negotiated between the volunteer and the named contact person.

7. Records and Confidentiality

The Coordinator of Volunteers will advise the volunteer on the Library's confidentiality procedures. This will include those relating to personal information held by the Library relating to the volunteer.

The personal information provided by any volunteer during the recruitment process will be treated as confidential. Confidentiality of a volunteer's information also extends to that information disclosed during a training course, or during any support and supervision sessions.

Only relevant information is requested during the recruitment process and any written information is regarded as the property of the volunteer concerned and is not disclosed to a third party without his/her informed consent. A volunteer has the right of access to any personal information kept. Details of each volunteer are to be kept securely with access limited on a "need to know" basis, with access usually limited to the Coordinator of Volunteers.

If they are comfortable to do so, volunteers are invited to make known to the Coordinator of Volunteers any health or disability issues that they would like the Volunteer to be aware of.

All volunteers are asked to complete an Emergency Contact Form, so that the Coordinator of Volunteers has a record of who to contact. Volunteers will also be asked to notify staff of any changes to personal details, such as address, telephone number and email. This information is also kept confidential and is not accessed until needed.

8. Expenses

The Library Management Committee will ensure that there is a clear and accessible system to enable volunteers to claim out-of-pocket expenses which are covered by the expenses policy.

The Library Management Committee believes volunteers should not be out of pocket as a result of undertaking volunteering activity. It is acknowledged that some volunteers feel that they do not wish to claim reimbursement - but it is important for volunteers to be able to claim expenses. In addition, claiming expenses can, in some cases, mask the true costs of involving volunteers within a project.

What can be reclaimed from the Library and the calculation of expenses will be explained to the volunteer before they start any activity likely to give rise to expenses. All claims must be agreed in advance with the Coordinator of Volunteers.

It is the responsibility of the Coordinator of Volunteers to make volunteers aware of the procedure for the reimbursement of expenses.

9. Insurance

Volunteers will be covered by insurance while carrying out agreed duties.

Volunteers must behave responsibly, but beyond any acts, omissions or negligence on their part, their activities are insured. Volunteers have a responsibility to follow guidance and not act in a negligent manner.

BUSCA's liability insurance policies include the activities of Library volunteers and liability towards them. However, it is the volunteer's responsibility to make their own insurance arrangements for their travel to the site of volunteering and between volunteering sites.

10. Health and Safety

The Library Management Committee will take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the volunteers' health, safety and welfare while at work in accordance with the Library's Health and Safety policy.

11. Equal Opportunities

The Library Management Committee is committed to equal opportunities and believes that volunteering should be open to all regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, ability, religion and political beliefs etc.

Volunteers and staff will work in accordance with the Library's equality and diversity policy and will prevent discrimination on any grounds.

12. Problems

Problems arising will be handled by the complaints policy.

13. Endings

When volunteers move on from their role at the Library they will be asked to provide feedback on their volunteering experience by way of an exit questionnaire. They will also be given the opportunity to discuss their responses to the questionnaire more fully with their Coordinator of Volunteers or a member of the Library Management Committee.

On the basis of their voluntary work, volunteers will have the right to request a reference.

14. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Library Management Committee will, via the Coordinator of Volunteers, systematically monitor and evaluate its use of volunteers with reference to this Policy. Do we do this? This policy will be reviewed every year.

Approved by Library Management Committee: November 2025

Review date: November 2026