

Volunteering Policy

Version: 2	August 2022
Policy Owner:	Volunteer Engagement Manager
Approved By:	HR Committee
Date Approved:	August 2022
Next Review Date:	August 2025

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Suffolk's Libraries Industrial Provident Society (IPS) Ltd (Suffolk Libraries) is an independent and charitable organisation set up to run Suffolk's library service.

The library service has recruited volunteers for many years but in the past few years the independent and community model has increased the opportunity for volunteers to become involved in many aspects of the library service. Every library now has its own community or 'friends' group – a group of volunteers who provide help and support to their local library and raise money to help improve it.

There are a number of volunteer roles that people can do within libraries, such as:

- **Home Library Service volunteer (HLS).** The HLS is a service which provides books to people who are housebound and is fulfilled by volunteers throughout the county.
- **Summer Reading Challenge (SRC) volunteer.** The SRC is a reading initiative which encourages children to read throughout the summer holiday. SRC volunteers are pivotal in supporting this.
- **Community group volunteer.** Most libraries in Suffolk have a community group – a group of volunteers who help and support their local library and raise money to help improve it. Community groups also form the governance of the organisation with the Suffolk Libraries board elected by community groups, from community groups.
- **General library volunteer.** These are volunteers who support the day to day running of the library through assisting with reading groups, stacking and tidying shelves and running IT support sessions.
- **Event organisers.** Regular and one-off events are run throughout Suffolk Libraries and volunteers are pivotal in planning and organizing these events.

Suffolk Libraries also supports those who are working towards their Duke of Edinburgh Award by providing volunteering opportunities.

It is important to Suffolk Libraries that volunteers do not replace paid staff but work alongside them. Volunteers should feel valued and supported.

Principles

- We aim to attract volunteers who reflect the diversity of the Suffolk population.
- We have a formal agreement with each volunteer, defining the respective rights and responsibilities of Suffolk Libraries and of the volunteer.
- We provide volunteers with appropriate initial and ongoing training and support and keep them up to date with service developments and changes.
- Volunteers are valued as a support and supplement to the work of Suffolk Libraries and not a substitute for paid roles.
- Volunteers must be 12 years of age or older.
- Volunteers may have to undergo an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, depending on the nature of their role.
- Volunteers are recruited on an equal opportunities' basis.

Recruitment

Specific volunteer opportunities will be advertised on the Suffolk Libraries and Volunteer Suffolk websites, in the local library, social media and other relevant places. The stages of the recruitment process are usually as follows:

- An applicant can respond to an advert by completing a written or online application
- Volunteer Administrator receives the application and passes on the details of the applicant to the relevant library manager
- Library manager contacts volunteer and, providing the application is satisfactory, invites them for an informal interview
- If the manager is satisfied with the applicant's suitability for the role, they will notify the Administrator who will arrange for references to be obtained and a DBS check to be carried out where required.
- Subject to satisfactory references and DBS checks, the volunteer will be requested to sign a Volunteer Agreement and the appointment will be made.

Interviews will be informal in nature and will be a two-way process. As well as enabling Suffolk Libraries to establish the suitability of the applicant, the interview will also give the applicant the opportunity to fully understand what the role involves.

Not all volunteers will be recruited by responding to an advert. Sometimes, library staff may meet customers who express an interest in volunteering for the library which leads to staff matching them up with an appropriate volunteer role. In these instances, they will still need to complete an application form and references will need to be obtained.

When will a DBS check be required?

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) helps employers make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups, including children. For certain volunteer roles, it is necessary to carry out a DBS check on the applicant. This would typically apply to roles which involve working alone with children or vulnerable adults on a regular basis. For example, all HLS volunteers are required to have a DBS check. Where a volunteer remains in continual service with Suffolk Libraries, a DBS check will be repeated every 3 years. However, where there is a gap in service of 6 months or more, the volunteer will ordinarily be required to undergo a new DBS check if they resume volunteering in a role for which a DBS check is required. Exceptions may be made in certain circumstances, such as if the break from volunteering is due to a long-term illness. All volunteers requiring a DBS check will be invited to join the Government's DBS Update Service. The DBS Update Service is free for volunteers to join and allows you to keep your standard or enhanced certificates up to date and allows Suffolk Libraries to check a certificate online.

Induction and Training

Initially all volunteers will be provided with a volunteer induction pack and brief induction by a member of library staff, providing an overview of Suffolk Libraries and the library in which they will be based. This will be followed by specific training on the role they are fulfilling. This training will be carried out by staff or other volunteers.

For certain roles, training in specific areas is essential before the volunteer starts in the role. This training is provided online and with iHasco, our training provider, and covers areas such as Safeguarding, Manual Handling, Fire Safety and Equality and Diversity.

Suffolk Libraries will provide volunteers with the opportunity to attend other relevant training courses and will maintain a record of the training attended by each volunteer.

Expenses

Volunteers do not receive a salary, gratuities or payments in kind. However, expenses previously authorised by the Library Manager or Suffolk Libraries will be reimbursed at cost.

Volunteers may claim travel expenses, including car parking charges, if the nature of the volunteer role specifically requires use of their car, such as HLS volunteering. Completed claim forms should be taken to the library manager for authorisation, who will then forward them to the finance team for payment.

Supervision and Support

Volunteers will be supported and supervised by a named member of library staff who will provide them with feedback on their work and support to enable them to develop in the role. Opportunities will also be provided for volunteers to network with each other.

Insurance

All volunteers are covered by the Suffolk Libraries' combined liability insurance while carrying out volunteering roles which have been approved and authorised by the Library Manager or Suffolk Libraries.

If a volunteer uses their own vehicle for volunteering, it must be legal and fit for the purpose and must be covered by the relevant insurance. Volunteers must provide their driving licence and current certificate of insurance to Suffolk Libraries on request.

For roles where driving forms a fundamental part of the role, such as the HLS, volunteers will be required to sign a driving declaration yearly.

Health and Safety

Suffolk Libraries has a responsibility for the health and safety of volunteers. Library managers must ensure that volunteers are made aware of health and safety issues relevant to their role. Volunteers must follow relevant health and safety guidelines and have a duty to take care of themselves and others who might be affected by their actions. Volunteers must be given access to the Suffolk Libraries health and safety management system and fire and other risk assessments relevant to their base.

Confidentiality

Volunteers are likely to become aware of confidential information about the organisation, its staff, customers and suppliers. Volunteers should not disclose this information or use it for their own or another's benefit without the consent of the party concerned. This does not prevent disclosure once the information is in the public domain (unless it has been made public as a result of the volunteer's breach of confidentiality) or where the law permits or requires disclosure.

Data protection

The organisation processes personal data collected during the recruitment process in accordance with its [data protection policy](#). In particular, data collected as part of the application process is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of managing the relationship. This data will be retained for 2 years after a volunteer leaves their role in accordance with our retention policy unless a person specifically requests that their information is removed immediately. This is so that Suffolk Libraries could provide references if needed and contact Summer Reading Challenge volunteers to invite them to return the following year.

Inappropriate access or disclosure of personal data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the organisation's data protection policy immediately.

Complaints and Standards

If a volunteer needs to complain about something that is having an impact on their role, they should raise the issue with the library manager who will investigate and try and resolve the matter. If the library manager is unable to resolve the problem, they should escalate it to the Volunteer Engagement Manager and Head of Community and Performance to investigate and resolve.

If a complaint is made about the conduct of a volunteer, the library manager should investigate this in the first instance. Serious complaints may need to be escalated to the Volunteer Engagement Manager and Head of Community and Performance.

Complaints must be investigated and addressed as soon as possible.

If a volunteer has a complaint about the conduct of a Suffolk Libraries staff member or another volunteer, it may be necessary to raise it as a grievance in line with the Suffolk Libraries grievance procedure.

There may be occasions when it becomes necessary to discontinue a volunteer's position.

Policies

It is important that volunteers adhere to the following Suffolk Libraries policies:

- Confidentiality
- Equalities and diversity
- Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults
- Health and safety management system
- Data protection policy
- Equal opportunities policy

During their induction, volunteers will be signposted towards these policies and any key aspects of them which are particularly relevant to their role will be highlighted.