

Volunteer Policy

Introduction

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 used volunteers for many years but in the past few years the new 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 which include members of the community giving up their time on a voluntary basis to support their local library.

This has provided an opportunity to increase the value of the library service to our communities. Community groups and volunteers have helped to develop new and improved services and activities, increase library use and have helped to provide longer opening hours or to change the times a library is open to better meet the needs of local people.

There are other key volunteer roles such as our Home Library Service and the Summer Reading Challenge and there are many opportunities to get involved.

It is important to Suffolk Libraries that volunteers do not replace paid staff but work alongside them. We want to make sure our volunteers are valued and that they get something really worthwhile from the time they give us. Where possible we will aim to give volunteers roles which match their skills and interests.

Purpose

Community action has a real impact on communities, both in connecting individuals, enabling organisations to increase their impact on disadvantaged groups and those in need and in bringing groups together within communities, encouraging and enabling community cohesion.

Suffolk Libraries intends to involve volunteer organisations, community groups and individuals in supporting and running activities in Suffolk Libraries, so as to enhance current services, increase activities and services offered and encourage community involvement.

Suffolk Libraries wishes to enable individuals to contribute to the community and to use and develop their skills through volunteering.

Principles

- We will aim to attract volunteers who reflect the diversity of the Suffolk population;
- We will have a formal agreement with each volunteer, defining the respective rights and responsibilities of Suffolk Libraries and of the volunteer;
- We will 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 will not usually be paid expenses.

Recruitment

Volunteers are drawn from the local community on an equal opportunity basis and selection will be made following satisfactory completion of an application form, an interview and taking up two references.

Interviews will be informal in nature and conducted as a two way process so that the applicant is fully able to understand the role and responsibilities and able to make an informed decision on whether they would like to volunteer.

Following a successful interview, the references will be taken up. Subject to satisfactory references, the volunteer will be requested to sign a Volunteer Agreement and the appointment will be made.

Roles

Volunteer roles can be wide and varied. Part of the application form and interview process will involve matching skills that potential volunteers have with roles they could fill. Volunteers can work alongside Suffolk Libraries staff during normal opening hours or make facilities, events or groups available outside of these times.

Local Library Community Groups

Local community group members may assist with recruiting volunteers to work in the library, though the volunteer will be managed by the Library Manager. However, where the local library community group is running their own project and volunteers, then part of the Operating Cover Agreement between Suffolk Libraries and the local community groups must ensure that their volunteering policy is compliant with that of Suffolk Libraries.

Induction and Training

Initially all volunteers will be provided with induction training by the Library Manager. This will begin by outlining and defining the organisational structure, roles and responsibilities, and how the volunteer fits within them. During this induction the volunteers will be asked to sign the Volunteer Agreement (the Volunteer Agreement may be subject to a trial period or probation). This will be followed by a detailed introduction to the practical aspects of working within the library and its environment.

Focused training for the specific roles that volunteers will undertake will be in the form of on-the-job training by the library staff, who will maintain a record of all training provided and work with the volunteer to ascertain when they are sufficiently competent to undertake the role without supervision.

Training requirements will then be kept under constant scrutiny and reviewed, altered and maintained as necessary.

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.

Supervision and Support

Volunteers will be supported and supervised by a named contact person who may be a local library community group member, a member of staff or another volunteer. This person will provide the volunteer with feedback on their work, the opportunity to discuss future work and a chance to discuss any issues that may arise. 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.

Health and Safety

It is the policy of Suffolk Libraries that staff and volunteers and the recipients of their services, in the confines of any of the Suffolk Libraries that their Health and Safety at all times is paramount.

When paid library staff are on the premises Suffolk Libraries will take full responsibility to ensure that the workplace is safe for volunteers and staff who should report any hazard promptly and take immediate action as appropriate. When a library is under the sole supervision of the volunteers, the Library Manager will have responsibility in ensuring that the workplace is safe.

The Library Manager will ensure that appropriate risk assessments for volunteers are in place.

All health and safety rules and procedures must be followed and any unsafe situations, unsafe working practices or accidents are reported to library staff or the Library Manager.

Appropriate support will be provided for volunteers with any illness or disability which might affect them in their role.

Volunteers are made aware of any Health and Safety Policies and any special safety arrangements relating to individual roles.

Volunteers must take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and other who may be affected by what they do, or omit to do, at work.

Volunteers must also co-operate with Suffolk Libraries in performing any duty or complying with any requirement imposed by any relevant health and safety laws.

Complaints and Standards

If a volunteer has a problem with a member of staff, their first point of contact should be their supervisor. Differences remaining unresolved should be referred to the supervisor's line manager.

Any unacceptable behaviour, fraudulent activity or breach of confidentiality on the part of the volunteer will be referred to the Library Manager. Problems should be resolved as soon as possible; however, there may be occasions when it becomes necessary to discontinue the Volunteer Agreement with immediate effect.

Under normal circumstances, unless there is an emergency or misconduct, we will aim to give volunteers at least two weeks' notice and ask that they do the same.

Confidentiality

Volunteers will be bound by the same requirement of confidentiality as paid staff. Everybody can be affected by confidentiality issues and it is important that volunteers should realise that it is not only library users and library user information that this applies to but also to volunteer issues.

Information that volunteers have access to whilst volunteering is confidential. Volunteers must not give away any information about employees, staff, customers, volunteers, library finances or any other Suffolk Libraries business either directly or by talking to someone. It is especially important that volunteers keep sensitive information to themselves. However, if volunteers find something out that might be a risk to others then they need to report this to their line manager.

The holding, processing or disclosure of information on individuals which volunteers may handle in the course of their work is subject to the Data Protection Act 1998. The Data Protection Act covers personal information held in any medium.

Information concerning individuals learned in the course of their work must not be communicated to other persons or bodies unless required to do so by law, or for the proper purposes of library business or with the consent of the individual concerned. It is the responsibility of all volunteers and members of staff to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to prevent personal information (in whatever format) from being accidentally divulged to unauthorised persons, and that appropriate care is taken in disposing of printed information containing personal information.

Equality

All volunteers are required to make a commitment to equality. Equality is simply about making sure that people are treated fairly and given equal access to opportunities and resources.

Equality is not about treating everyone in the same way; it is about treating everyone fairly, with respect and recognises that people from different backgrounds may have needs that are met in different ways.

As an organisation committed to equality and diversity, we believe that everyone, who chooses to, has a right to volunteer and that everyone has a potential to be a valuable, respected and active member of his or her community. We do not discriminate against staff, colleagues or users on grounds of race, sex, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or disability. We believe that as an organisation we will become more welcoming if we become more representative of the community in which we work.

Volunteers will be provided with a copy of Suffolk Libraries Equality and Diversity Policy and will be supported in its practice. Our aim is to ensure that volunteers are treated in a fair and consistent way.

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

Suffolk Libraries fully recognises its responsibilities for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Its policy applies to all staff, local community groups and volunteers working in Suffolk Libraries.

The main elements to the policy are in:

- Establish a safe environment in which children and vulnerable adults can learn and develop;
- Raise awareness of child and vulnerable adults protection issues through the ethos of the Suffolk Safeguarding Children and Adults Boards, and Suffolk Libraries; and
- Ensure it practices safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children.

Volunteers and staff will endeavour to safeguard children and vulnerable adults by:

- Valuing, listening and respecting them;
- Taking part in any checks that their role requires;
- Undergoing training, supervision and support to inform their interactions with children and vulnerable adults; and
- Sharing information about concerns with appropriate staff and agencies.

Approved by _____

Suffolk's Libraries Industrial and Provident Society Ltd