

# Volunteer Policy



Westmorland  
& Furness  
Council

Working for Cumberland Council and  
Westmorland & Furness Council

## **Volunteer Policy**

### **Introduction**

Cumbria Archive is committed to involving volunteers with the work of the service and welcomes the contribution volunteers make to the work of preserving and supporting access to our written heritage. We recognise the benefits that volunteering has for both the organisation and to individual volunteers. Volunteer programmes strengthen links with local communities and provide effective and rewarding learning opportunities for individuals. Volunteers bring valuable skills and experience, gained in a wide range of occupational and educational fields, and they provide the archive community with a substantial extra local resource.

The aims of this policy are:

1. to outline the broad principles by which Cumbria Archives will manage and recognise volunteers and their contribution
2. to define good volunteering practice throughout the organisation

### **Principles**

Cumbria Archives understands the following premises relating to voluntary work:

- A volunteer is a person who undertakes voluntary work on behalf of Cumbria Archives and recognises that the work is unpaid and undertaken by choice.
- Voluntary work can be undertaken on a regular basis, weekly, fortnightly or monthly; or can be arranged as a one off block of time, such as a school work placement or independently organised placement.
- Voluntary work will be offered on a six week block trial basis, with breaks built in where necessary, given the operational requirements of Cumbria Archives.
- Extension of the six week voluntary work period will be at the discretion of Cumbria Archives.
- We acknowledge the value of the contribution made by volunteers to the organisation, through giving their time and sharing both their skills and experience.
- We will endeavour to offer voluntary work opportunities to people from all sections of the community. Cumbria Archives is committed to developing and maintaining a culture where differing ideas, abilities and backgrounds are fostered and valued.
- We will do our best to ensure the ongoing availability of voluntary work opportunities.
- We recognise that volunteering should be enjoyable and bring benefits to individuals, for example those seeking a career in archives or a related sector, and we will endeavour to fulfil the needs of volunteers through our volunteer programme.

- We recognise that voluntary work complements the work of paid professional and para-professional staff and is not a substitute for this.
- We understand that volunteers are not engaged on a contractual basis and in view of this; volunteers are not obliged to undertake any particular task; neither is Cumbria Archives under any obligation to offer particular tasks to individual volunteers.

### **Our Responsibilities to Professional Staff in relation to Volunteers**

- The involvement of volunteers will complement and supplement the work of professional staff and will not be used to displace staff or undercut their pay and conditions of service.
- Volunteers will not be used to undertake the work of professional staff during industrial disputes.
- Volunteers will not be used to cover the work of professional staff during sickness absence.
- Professional staff will not be expected to engage in volunteer activities within the service area as a form of unpaid overtime.
- Any proposed new volunteer roles will be introduced in consultation with trade union representatives.

### **Nature of tasks**

There are several strands to voluntary work with Cumbria Archives:

- Indexing
- Sorting and Cataloguing
- Project Research (time-bound, specific projects)
- Conservation and digitisation
- Special Events Volunteer/Guide (occasionally available, Carlisle only)

Further information about these and other occasional roles can be found in the separate volunteer profiles.

### **Recruitment**

- Recruitment of volunteers will be open to all sections of the community in line with Cumberland Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.
- Opportunities will be advertised in appropriate media and always on the Cumbria Archives website.
- When potential volunteers make contact, they will be sent information about voluntary work with Cumbria Archives or be referred to the appropriate page on our website. Applicants will be invited to have an informal discussion with a member of staff about the voluntary work opportunities available. This will cover a general

overview of what is expected of volunteers and what they can expect from the work (including any health and safety implications). This meeting would provide an opportunity to establish whether a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) would be required for individual volunteers.

- Volunteers will usually be offered (subject to vacancies) either a preservation packing or indexing placement in the first instance. Depending on the availability of other opportunities coupled with the suitability and interests of individual volunteers, other roles may be offered as they arise.
- Once placed, volunteers will be expected to comply with our policies and procedures and to undertake work as directed from members of Cumbria Archives staff.
- A trial period of 6 weeks will follow recruitment, to allow both parties to assess suitability for the work, and any extension of this period is entirely at the discretion of Cumbria Archives staff.

Volunteers will be given: a copy of the relevant role profile, our volunteer charter, the 'Health and Safety for Volunteers' guidance sheet, and any relevant risk assessments. These documents provide a clear overview of the role and responsibilities of volunteers. They will be asked to complete an application form and sign the volunteer declaration. The declaration will cover agreement to comply with our policies and procedures, including health and safety, and to undertake tasks as directed by members of Cumbria Archives staff. It will also require volunteers' agreement to assign to Cumbria Archives the copyright in all work produced, to allow use of work as that of Cumbria Archives employees.

Volunteers will also be asked to complete a registration form giving their contact details, emergency contact and details of any medical conditions. These personal details will be held by us for purposes of contact. Any other information provided (residence, previous experience, volunteer duties undertaken) may be used by us for analytical purposes and will be anonymised. This information will be held as confidential, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and retained for a period of six years after the cessation of volunteering in line with the Council's records retention policy.

### **Induction**

Volunteers will be given an induction and receive appropriate training for their job role, and this will include:

- A tour of the building, including work area, refreshment area, toilets, first aid box, and fire exits (PEEP arrangements, where necessary).
- An overview of the times of work, access to the building and their work area, arrangements for refreshment breaks, procedures for sickness and absence, availability of protective equipment.
- Specific training for the role of indexing or preservation packing.

## **Ongoing Support**

- Volunteers will be consulted on decisions which affect them.
- Cumbria Archives will provide a positive environment for volunteers and relevant staff will be available to offer advice and guidance where appropriate.
- Volunteers who are seeking a career in the archive (or related) sectors, will be given appropriate support (such as references).
- We consider it important for a two-way relationship to exist between volunteers and Cumbria Archives; volunteers will be expected to participate in surveys and conversations with staff in order to review and develop the volunteer programme and are encouraged to make suggestions about their roles and work. Any complaints or concerns will be given a fair hearing.
- Whilst undertaking agreed tasks on Council premises, volunteers will be covered under Council insurance but they must sign the visitors' book on arrival and departure on every occasion.
- Cumbria Archives has a duty of care for volunteers and will provide protective clothing and equipment, where necessary, in accordance with the Council's Health and Safety policies. Volunteers will be required to comply with these policies and procedures.
- Cumbria Archives will prepare a set of staff guidelines to be issued to those members of staff working with volunteers, either individuals or groups.

## **Termination of Volunteer Duties**

When volunteers move on from their role with Cumbria Archives, they may be asked to provide feedback on their volunteer experience. This will inform the development of our volunteering opportunities.

Cumbria Archives will provide references up to two years after leaving the organisation.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation of the Volunteer Programme**

The volunteer programme will be reviewed annually to ensure that it remains appropriate to the needs of Cumbria Archives and its volunteers.