

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Volunteering Policy

Version 1.1

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Approved by:

Date:

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Volunteers have been undertaking duties at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives (THLHLA, or 'the Service') since about 1996 under the supervision of professional staff. The purpose of this policy is to define the principles of volunteer engagement in place at THLHLA, to ensure both the service and the volunteers themselves derive maximum benefit from the arrangement.

1.2 Volunteers, through the time, energy and skills which they provide, make a valuable contribution to the work of the Service. In return, the Service strives to ensure that the volunteer work undertaken will bring benefits to the individual volunteer, by developing their experience, skills and confidence, fostering personal leisure or academic interests, and/or providing the opportunity for enjoyment and social interaction. The Service is committed to developing, encouraging and supporting volunteer involvement in our work where appropriate. In so doing, we clearly recognise that the roles of volunteers will complement and not replace the roles of paid employees.

1.3 A volunteer is defined as a person who, willingly and by choice, carries out unpaid work on behalf of THLHLA. Volunteers may be working on a short or long term basis, or be on placement as part of an educational qualification or as work experience.

1.4 Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives welcomes volunteers from all sectors of society, including those from under-represented groups in the heritage sector workforce such as young people, people with disabilities, older people and people from black and minority ethnic communities. The minimum age for a volunteer is sixteen. There is no upper limit.

2. PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

- i. To establish clear principles for the involvement of volunteers with the work of THLHLA
- ii. To confirm the commitment of the Service to involving volunteers in its work, and an appreciation of their value
- iii. To recognise the respective roles, rights and responsibilities of volunteers
- iv. To establish a framework for the recruitment and ongoing support of volunteers in post
- v. To clarify the relationship and distinctions between the types of work to be undertaken respectively by volunteers and service staff

3. STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 Volunteers will be asked what tasks they would like to undertake and all possible effort will be made to accommodate their wishes.
- 3.2 Volunteer work will complement, not replace, the duties of employees.
- 3.3 The Service will acknowledge publicly the contribution made by volunteers regularly and by name, where appropriate.
- 3.4 The products of all work carried out by volunteers will be the copyright and intellectual property of THLHLA, in respect of publication and dissemination of written materials.
- 3.5 A formal volunteer agreement will set out the responsibilities of both parties.
- 3.6 The Service commits to recording all volunteer hours worked, the tasks undertaken and to provide on request references for the volunteer with respect to any future job/education applications they may make.

4. OVERVIEW OF VOLUNTEER TASKS

The following tasks have been identified as being suitable for volunteers. Each of them makes a significant contribution to the aims of the service to preserve and provide public access to the heritage collections held here. In each case, bespoke training and/or step-by-step instructions are provided for the task by professional staff.

- 4.1 Adding simple information to databases such as CALM and the online digital gallery
- 4.2 Preservation tasks, such as removing staples, refolding and reboxing
- 4.3 Assisting with the development and delivery of exhibitions and public events
- 4.4 Digitisation
- 4.5 Identifying and selecting from a large backlog of oversize images for retention or disposal; classification of images to be retained
- 4.6 Providing one-to-one research support to visitors attending Access Open Days at THLHLA.

For archive and library student placements only:

4.7 Cataloguing archive and library materials to professional standards

Out of scope for any volunteer tasks: responding to public enquiries or working on the reading room desk. In all cases, the finished work of volunteers will be checked for accuracy by a member of staff.

4. ENGAGING VOLUNTEERS

4.1 Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives adheres to the Equalities & Diversity policies of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets when engaging volunteers.

4.2 Most volunteers at THLHLA are engaged reactively, i.e. at the request of the volunteer. They are asked to provide an expression of interest and CV. Applications made in this way may be declined if there is insufficient capacity to take on the volunteer seeking a placement at the time of their application. CVs are not held on file, but would-be volunteers are asked instead to join the THLHLA mailing list.

4.3 The number of volunteering opportunities at THLHLA is constrained by there being few available PCs/workstations, and a lack of staff capacity to provide the requisite level of support and supervision. However, when new volunteer roles become available, they are advertised in the THLHLA e-newsletter. The advertisement will include information about the actual tasks to be undertaken, the required skills and time commitment.

4.4 When a new engagement is possible, would-be volunteers will be invited to a preliminary discussion with a member of staff prior to any specific work being offered. This provides an opportunity for informal assessment on both sides and for a consideration of possible options as regards matching available tasks to volunteer wishes. The Service reserves the right not to accept a volunteer or to terminate an arrangement.

4.5 The Service will request references for volunteers where it is considered to be appropriate to do so.

4.6 The Service and the volunteer will enter into a formal, written agreement which sets out the commitments on both sides. Signed hard copies of each agreement are kept on file at THLHLA.

4.7 Volunteers will not be asked to work with children or young people. Therefore a DBS check will not be sought.

4.8 The Service will provide an induction into workplace procedures including fire evacuation and health and safety. The volunteer must comply with these during their at all times.

5. VOLUNTEER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives recognises the rights of its volunteers to:

- Be inducted into the Service: its function, collections, regular activities, health & safety and fire procedures
- Expect safe working conditions
- Be eligible for coverage by the council's standard buildings and public liability insurance
- Have a clear understanding of the lines of supervision which apply to them and the procedures for notifying unplanned absences
- Receive the necessary training and ongoing support to perform allocated tasks
- Be free from any form of discrimination in the workplace
- Have regular breaks from their work, including use of the staff kitchen/rest area
- Receive a reference from their supervisor, if one is requested
- Be invited to an annual volunteer party, in thanks and recognition for their work
- Withdraw from voluntary working after the agreed period
- Receive compensation for their travel expenses. NB: payments to individuals are subject to stringent council procurement rules. Reimbursement of expenses will be discussed and a way forward agreed at an early stage in the engagement of the volunteer

5. ROLE OF THLHLA & ITS EMPLOYEES

5.1 The Service will endeavour to ensure that good working relationships are fostered between its staff and volunteers.

5.2 The Archives Manager has overall responsibility for managing the staff's available capacity to supervise volunteers, and also oversees the number and activities of volunteers who are currently engaged. The Archives Manager will also usually review applications, meet with potential volunteers and allocate tasks or supervision responsibilities.

5.3 Each member of THLHLA staff can expect to supervise and support at least one volunteer as part of their regular work over the course of a given year. All members of THLHLA staff are expected to support volunteers in the case of an emergency or unplanned absence, and in general provide a welcoming workplace environment.

5.3 Volunteers are asked to recognise that staff have many and varied duties and might not always be able to be immediately available to answer any questions. Staff will delegate volunteer supervision appropriately to a colleague in the event of their planned absence from work.

5.4 In the event of any industrial action, volunteers will not be requested to carry out the work of employees. They may continue with their regular duties, provided that adequate supervision can be made available, but will not be asked to undertake additional work.

6. VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

Specific details about the expectations of the engagement are formalised in an individual volunteer agreement. This ensures that the role of the volunteer is clear and that the impact and benefits of volunteering are acknowledged by all parties.

Volunteers will be asked to complete and sign the agreement (Appendix 1) which will be kept on file for the duration of their employment + 2 years. Amendments can be made to the template before it is signed, to reflect adjustments that may need to be made – for example re travel expenses or the duration of the employment.

7. DATA PROTECTION

We process your personal data securely in line with current Data Protection legislation including the Data Protection Act (2018) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). For further information about how and why we process the personal data you provided on this form please ask staff for a copy of our People Management and Procurement Data Privacy Notice or view it online here: <https://www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history-operational-policies>

8. POLICY REVIEW

The overall responsibility for the implementation, monitoring and review of this policy rests with the Heritage Manager.

This policy will be reviewed within three years. (June 2020)

Appendix 1

Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives Volunteer Agreement Form

This statement confirms the agreement between myself and Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives

I agree to commit at least 20 hours of my time to volunteering with Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives.

I will handle the items from the collections with the utmost care and follow the rules and instructions provided for their handling and preservation.

I will not damage, deface, destroy or steal any of the documents, volumes or objects in Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives' collection or any of its organisational resources. I understand that the police and/or other relevant authorities may be involved if such activity is suspected.

I will not use information or knowledge gained from my time with Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives in any way which could defame or otherwise have a negative impact on the local authority, its services or its reputation.

I will respect and maintain the confidentiality of named individuals and/or sensitive personal or business information in records that I encounter, during my work and after ceasing work at the library.

I understand that all material I produce while volunteering remains the property of Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives and that it may be published or used for promotional and commercial purposes by the organisation.

I acknowledge that Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives will provide me with training in carrying out specific tasks, some of which may take place externally.

I understand that if I have any concerns or questions about the tasks I am undertaking, I will approach a member of staff who will be happy to help. If I am not satisfied with the help or support received, I will contact the service manager (Tamsin Bookey) for follow-up as may be appropriate.

Signed: Print name:

Date:

Signed on behalf of Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives.....

Contact information (block capitals)

Name

Email

Phone number

Address

Emergency Contact

 Name

 Number