



# **Volunteer Policy**

**February 2017**

## **Our Mission**

The West Yorkshire Archive Service exists to preserve the past, serve the present and protect the future. We do this by collecting and looking after the unique documentary heritage of the region and by helping members of the public use and enjoy these records.

**Preserving the past, serving the present, protecting the future**

## **Our Vision**

To provide a welcoming and engaging service that will inspire people to use the archives of West Yorkshire, enabling them to celebrate their identity and understand their past, present and future.

## **WYAS Volunteer Policy**

West Yorkshire Archive Service (WYAS) actively seeks and preserves records to document the histories of West Yorkshire, its communities and its people and works to improve and extend access to this information for all.

We aim to:

### **Preserve the past**

- We aim to provide the best care possible for the historic records of West Yorkshire.

### **Serve the present**

- Everyone has access to the information in our care.
- We encourage people of all ages to find out about themselves and their communities and to develop an appreciation of their own history and identity.
- We aim to manage and maintain corporate information in accordance with legislative, regulatory, and corporate requirements.

### **Protect the future**

- We will develop expertise to ensure that records created in new ways are preserved and accessible in the future.

## **Introduction**

West Yorkshire Archive Service recognises that there can be situations in which the work of volunteers' help can make an appropriate and significant contribution to the work and service objectives of WYAS. This document defines the terms and sets out the principles, practices and procedures which WYAS will follow in the selection, supervision and direction of volunteers.

## **Definition**

Volunteers may be described as individuals who put their experience, knowledge and skills at the disposal of an organisation, free of charge, with the primary aim of helping the organisation to achieve its service objectives or with the primary aim of bringing some benefit to the local community. In this sense, volunteers are to be distinguished from students, other work placements, and secondees, where the primary aim is usually for the student or secondee to obtain certain work experience or to carry out work or research in certain areas.

## **Principles**

In appointing volunteers WYAS will adhere to the following principles:

- Volunteers will not be engaged in work which facilitates the loss of an existing employee's post, nor on any tasks or projects which (within the past two years) were done by paid employees whose posts have since been deleted;
- Volunteers will not be used to do the work of paid staff during an industrial dispute;
- Current WYAS employees will not be engaged as volunteers at WYAS;
- Volunteers will not be used to replace paid staff, or to undertake work which constitutes normal business within the core budget.

## **1 General principles**

### **1.1 Purpose of document**

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on all aspects of outreach and project volunteering at WYAS. It does not constitute a binding contract. It outlines our definition of volunteering, our mission statement and our value base and will be supplemented by other policies and procedures.

These procedures apply to all volunteers who undertake tasks on behalf of and at the direction of WYAS.

### **1.2 Responsibility**

The Audience Engagement and Learning Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that the policy and the procedures in this document are implemented efficiently and effectively. All other staff and volunteers are expected to facilitate this process.

### **1.3 Eligibility**

WYAS will consider involving anyone over the age of 18 as a volunteer. Individuals must, however, be able to demonstrate a commitment to the aims of the organisation and may only be placed if their needs as volunteers match the needs of the organisation. No person who has a conflict of interest with any aspect of the organisation will be accepted as a volunteer.

### **1.4 Relationship with paid staff**

Volunteers are appointed to enhance the capacity of paid staff, not as a substitute for them. Conversely, WYAS does not accept the services of its paid staff as volunteers. Clear roles are established to differentiate between paid staff and volunteers to foster mutually beneficial and complementary relationships.

### **1.5 Volunteering conditions**

Volunteers are treated as full members of the WYAS team. They are treated as equally and fairly as paid staff and are included in the organisation's functions and decision making processes wherever practical. Volunteers are provided with appropriate work sites and have access to the space, equipment and facilities necessary to volunteer effectively and comfortably.

### **1.6 Volunteering times**

Working times are negotiated between the appropriate supervisor and the volunteer and are as flexible as the tasks allow. Voluntary time commitment is never expected to match that of full-time paid staff, but unscheduled absences can create organisational problems. When expecting to be absent, volunteers should inform their supervisor as soon as possible, so that alternative arrangements can be made.

### **1.7 Appropriate behaviour**

Volunteers are expected to work within the policies and procedures of WYAS and adhere to its ethos. As representatives of the organisation, they are responsible for presenting a positive image of WYAS to the outside world.

### **1.8 Representation of WYAS**

Volunteers must seek prior approval from their supervisor before undertaking anything that might affect the organisation. This includes, but is not limited to, statements to the press, joint initiatives with other bodies, and agreements involving contractual or financial obligations.

### **1.9 Confidentiality**

The WYAS respects the volunteers' right to privacy and confidentiality. In turn, volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all privileged information to which they are exposed while volunteering with WYAS.

### **1.10 Records**

A system of records is maintained on all volunteers, including dates and times of service, duties performed, evaluation of work, etc. Volunteer records are accorded the same confidentiality as staff records.

### **1.11 Service at the discretion of WYAS**

Any voluntary service is at the discretion of WYAS. WYAS may, at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate volunteers' relationships with the organisation. Similarly, volunteers may at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate their relationships with the WYAS. Notice of such decisions should be communicated at the earliest opportunity, preferably in writing.

## **2 Recruitment**

### **2.1 Role descriptions and person specifications**

Like paid staff, volunteers require a clear and accurate description of the tasks and responsibilities they are expected to undertake. Prior to any volunteer assignment or recruitment effort, a role description is developed for each voluntary opportunity. This includes a title of the volunteering role, hours and place of work, name of supervisor and tasks to be undertaken. If appropriate, a brief person specification may also be drawn up. The role description may be amended in joint agreement with the volunteer and the Audience Engagement and Learning Coordinator. A copy of the final version

must be given to the volunteer before commencing voluntary work, as it will be used in supervision and evaluation sessions.

## **2.2 Recruitment**

Volunteers are recruited on a proactive basis by the organisation using publicity avenues that are suitable for the roles that need to be filled. Potential volunteers may also apply speculatively. Volunteers are recruited in accordance with WYAS's equal opportunities policy. All volunteers are required to complete an expression of interest form.

WYAS recognises that the activity of volunteering can provide a volunteer with experiences and opportunities for self and career development. In accordance with WYAS's equal opportunity policy, volunteer placements at WYAS will be therefore be open to individuals irrespective of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age or marital status. In addition, the specification must set out the equal opportunity dimension and any specific equality requirements of the role.

## **2.3 Interviews**

If necessary, potential volunteers are short listed and suitable candidates are invited to attend an informal chat with the appropriate member of staff, to ascertain their interest in, and suitability for, the role. Written records of all interviews are kept. All unsuccessful candidates are thanked for applying and encouraged to think about other volunteering opportunities, either current or in the future.

## **2.4 Checks for suitability**

References are always taken up. If necessary a health check may also be undertaken. Other checks may also be completed (for example, ascertaining professional qualifications). Volunteers are always told in advance of the intention to make these checks. If they refuse permission and cannot provide an acceptable reason, they will not be placed.

## **2.5 CRB Checks**

It may be necessary to undertake CRB checks, WYAS will only carry out these checks when the role necessitates it. Volunteers are always told in advance of these checks and if they refuse permission they may not be placed.

## **2.6 Confirmation**

Formal confirmation is made only after the role description has been agreed and all necessary checks have proved acceptable. No placements are made unless the requirements of the volunteer and the volunteer's supervisor can be met.

Volunteers will be asked to sign an agreement and to sign up to a code of conduct. Failure to do so will result in the withdrawal of the opportunity.

## **2.7 Probation**

All placements are subject to an initial trial period of 3 months. At the end of this period the supervising staff member can meet with the volunteer to assess how they are getting on in their assigned role. At this point, volunteers may continue in this role, be reassigned to a more suitable role or be asked to leave.

## **3 Training**

### **3.1 Induction**

All volunteers receive induction when they begin volunteering with WYAS. This consists of a general introduction to the organisation, as well as a specific orientation on the purposes and requirements of their volunteering role.

### **3.2 On the job training**

Volunteers receive initial and ongoing on the job training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their tasks well. The training must be appropriate for the demands of the position and the capabilities of the volunteer.

### **3.3 Additional training**

Volunteers are actively encouraged to identify training courses, seminars, conferences etc. which would help them to perform their roles better and which would aid their personal development. Approval to undertake such training free of charge must be given by Head of Service and this will only be if sufficient funds are available. Priority is given to long standing volunteers and those who have received little or no training in the past.

### **3.4 Training information**

If additional training is paid for by WYAS, any course materials provided belong to WYAS and must be filed in the WYAS office at Morley. All volunteers are required to submit a short report outlining the content and usefulness of the course or meeting attended. Training information must be disseminated to relevant people within the organisation.

### **3.5 Training for staff**

WYAS will ensure all staff are fully trained to allow them to participate in the volunteering process.

## **4 Supervision**

### **4.1 Lines of communication**

Lines of communication should operate in both directions and should exist formally and informally. Volunteers must have access to all appropriate information, memos, materials and meetings relevant to their assignments. Volunteers must be consulted on all decisions that would substantially affect their volunteering conditions.

### **4.2 Supervisors**

Each volunteer will have a clearly identified supervisor who is responsible for the day to day management of that volunteer.

### **4.3 Supervision sessions**

Volunteers receive regular appraisals of their activities, based on their role descriptions. Evaluation sessions should take place at least quarterly between the volunteer and his or her supervisor. These review the performance of the volunteer, suggest any changes, seek suggestions from the volunteer on means of enhancing the volunteer's relationship with WYAS, convey appreciation to the volunteer and ascertain the continued interest of the volunteer in his or her role. The sessions also serve as an opportunity to plan future tasks.

### **4.4 Corrective action**

If appropriate, corrective action may be taken following evaluation sessions. Examples include the organisation of training for an identified training need, the reassignment of a volunteer, or the dismissal of a volunteer.

### **4.5 Termination of a volunteering opportunity**

Volunteers who do not adhere to the organisation's rules or who fail to perform their volunteer assignments satisfactorily may be asked to leave. No volunteer's involvement will be terminated in writing until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible termination with their supervisor. Grounds for termination include, but are not limited to, the following: gross misconduct, being under the influence of drugs (including alcohol), theft, misuse of equipment and materials, abuse of clients and co-workers, breaches of confidentiality, failure to abide by WYAS policies and procedures and failure to complete duties to a satisfactory standard.

### **4.6 Concerns and grievances**

Volunteers will not be subject to WYAS's disciplinary procedures. Correspondingly, volunteers will not have access to WYAS's grievance procedures. However, volunteers will be entitled to use WYAS's complaints procedure. Where appropriate, the complaint will be investigated fully by the Head of Service or her/his representative.

### **4.7 Exit interviews**

Where possible, informal exit interviews are held with any volunteers who are leaving the organisation, either because they have reached the end of their project, or are leaving for some other reason. Interviews are usually conducted with the volunteer's former supervisor and written records are kept. The session should ascertain why the volunteer is leaving, how they found the volunteering experience and what suggestions they offer to improve the way the organisation operates. The offer of a personal reference for future employment etc. is made to each volunteer.

## **5 Support and recognition**

### **5.1 Support**

WYAS endeavours to provide the support necessary to encourage and empower volunteers to make a meaningful contribution and gain significant benefits from their voluntary work. Support forms part of the regular supervision sessions and gives volunteers a safe setting in which to express themselves, let off steam and discuss how they feel about volunteering.

## **5.2 Recognition**

Volunteers provide a unique and valuable service to the WYAS. It is essential that their efforts are recognised and rewarded. WYAS staff are responsible for thanking all volunteers informally on a regular basis for the valuable contribution that they make to the organisation.

## **5.3 Expenses**

Volunteers give their time and skills free of charge, so it is essential that the WYAS offers to reimburse any out-of-pocket expenses they may incur in the course of undertaking voluntary work for the organisation. The costs of volunteering should never be allowed to discourage those on low incomes. Current rates and procedures for claiming expenses are publicised to all volunteers.

## **5.4 Insurance**

Insurance is provided by West Yorkshire Joint Service to cover all volunteers working on behalf and at the direction of the organisation.

## **5.5 Personal and vocational development**

Volunteers are encouraged to develop their skills while involved with the organisation and are assisted into assuming additional and greater responsibilities over time, if they desire this.

## **6 Monitoring and evaluation**

### **6.1 WYAS volunteer involvement**

WYAS monitors and evaluates volunteer involvement in the organisation on a regular basis and seeks to make ongoing improvements and increase opportunities for volunteering within the service.

### **6.2 Feedback**

Constructive feedback on this document is always welcome.

### **6.3 Review of Policy**

This policy will be reviewed annually and comments from both staff and volunteers will be taken into account.