

# NORFOLK RECORDS COMMITTEE

1 May 2014

Item no 8

## Norfolk Record Office

### Volunteer Policy

#### A Report by the County Archivist

##### **Executive Summary**

This report presents the proposed Norfolk Record Office Volunteer Policy. This policy outlines the roles and responsibilities of both the Record Office and those who wish to volunteer.

##### **Action Required**

The Norfolk Records Committee are asked to consider the Volunteer Policy, make any comments and approve its adoption by the Norfolk Record Office.

## **1 Introduction and Background**

- 1.1 A prioritised area for development in the 2014/15 Norfolk Record Office service plan is the development of a volunteer programme.
- 1.2 The NRO offers placements to volunteers to help with many of the tasks it undertakes. This enables the NRO to undertake work which it would be unable to carry out without the support of these volunteers. It also provides the volunteers with an opportunity to learn new skills and engage with archives in a number of ways.
- 1.3 The Volunteer Policy presented in the appendix to this report provides a statement of the roles and responsibilities both of the NRO with regards to volunteers and of those who volunteer at the NRO.
- 1.4 The Policy includes a description of a system where roles for volunteers are assessed to show the work that is required and the skills needed. In this way any volunteers can be matched to roles and any development needs they have addressed.

## **10. Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)**

- 10.1 This would not more adversely affect one group than another based on disability, gender, race, religion and belief, and sexual orientation.

**11. Section 17 – Crime and Disorder Act**

11.1 There are no direct implications for Crime and Disorder within this report.

**13. Recommendation or Action Required**

The Norfolk Records Committee is asked to consider and comment on the Volunteer Policy contained in Appendix 1 and to approve its adoption by the Norfolk Record Office.

**Officer Contact**

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please get in touch with:

Gary Tuson  
County Archivist  
Norfolk Record Office  
The Archive Centre, Martineau Lane  
Norwich, NR1 2DQ  
Tel: 01603 222599  
Email: [gary.tuson@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:gary.tuson@norfolk.gov.uk)



If you need this Agenda in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact the County Archivist on 0344 800 8020 or 0344 800 8011 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.

## Appendix 1

# Norfolk Record Office Volunteer Policy

## 1. Scope of the Norfolk Record Office Volunteer Policy

- 1.1 This policy relates to all types of volunteer, as defined below.

## 2. Definition of a volunteer with the Norfolk Record Office

- 2.1 A volunteer is a person who freely agrees to give their time and skills to support the activities of the Norfolk Record Office. They work within clearly defined roles to complement and enhance the activities offered by the service and to add value to the service already provided by paid staff.

## 3. Reasons for working with volunteers

- 3.1 The Norfolk Record Office recognises that working with volunteers allows it to further enhance the service it offers. It is also an opportunity for people to become more engaged with our work.
- 3.2 Volunteer involvement with the Norfolk Record Office should be mutually beneficial for both parties and each role developed within the service will reflect this aim.
- 3.3 What we will offer volunteers:
- i. A well-defined interesting volunteer role.
  - ii. Opportunities to learn and progress within the volunteer role.
  - iii. Support in meeting the needs of the volunteer role, whether through training or informal learning.
  - iv. The chance to meet new people.
  - v. The chance to share skills, knowledge and a love of Norfolk's archival collections.
  - vi. Reference to those who have completed the equivalent of five days full time volunteering up to three years after their last volunteering session.
- 3.4 What we expect from our volunteers:
- i. A commitment to attend volunteering sessions at a mutually agreed time.
  - ii. To undertake training necessary to the volunteer opportunity and its role within the Norfolk Record Office.
  - iii. To adhere to relevant policies and practices as a volunteer within Norfolk County Council and the Norfolk Record Office.

## 4. Volunteer Opportunities

- 4.1 The Norfolk Record Office will adhere to Norfolk County Council's policy on volunteers, which states, 'volunteers will not be expected to undertake inappropriate responsibilities or be used in a situation where a paid member of staff or a person

who provides services under contract to Norfolk County Council should be used' (NCC Volunteer Policy, version 53, page 3).

- 4.2 All volunteer roles will be well defined and unambiguous. They should benefit the service and its users. Examples of volunteer roles include:
- i. Indexing specific collections/series of archival documents, e.g. marriage licence bonds, and associated tasks such as pagination.
  - ii. Supporting preservation tasks.
  - iii. Carrying out research using Norfolk Record Office holdings to support Norfolk Record Office projects.
  - iv. Basic listing and transcription at piece or item level.

## 5. Planning Volunteer Roles

- 5.1 For each role, specific volunteer documentation will be prepared.
- i. The **volunteer role description** will include clear description of tasks associated with the role, details of skills required and training offered to support the role including any health and safety issues, data protection and information security.
  - ii. The **volunteer role information sheet** will provide background information on the volunteer role and will explain how the volunteer role will benefit the service offered by the NRO.
  - iii. Where appropriate, **detailed written instructions** will be prepared, which explain to the volunteer how the tasks associated with a volunteer role should be completed.
- 5.2 Volunteer roles will be presented to the NRO's management team before they are implemented.
- 5.3 The NRO is aware of the additional staff time and resources required to effectively manage volunteers. For this reason, available staff time is a major factor in determining the number of volunteers supervised by the NRO at any one time.
- 5.4 Consideration must be given to the following issues before advertising any volunteer opportunity:
- i. Sources of appropriate training
  - ii. Number of volunteers required to deliver the aims of a volunteer project
  - iii. Supervision arrangements
  - iv. Work space/accommodation and equipment requirements

## 6. Volunteer Recruitment Procedures

- 6.1 Volunteer opportunities will be advertised with the aim of reaching a broad cross-section of the community and to provide equality of opportunity for potential applicants. The NRO will process every request/application promptly.

- 6.2 All prospective volunteers should undergo an engagement process, which should usually include the following.:
- i. Completion of a NRO volunteer application form. Referees may be contacted by the NRO and must not be family members.
  - ii. Attend an informal meeting with a member of Norfolk Record Office staff to discuss any available opportunities. If not already circulated, the volunteer is given the volunteer role documentation. The NRO will confirm if a volunteer placement can be offered within five working days of the meeting.
  - iii. The volunteer will be made aware that Norfolk County Council operates a policy of carrying out Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. This check is dependent on the nature of the volunteering role
- 6.3 For volunteer roles which are completed remotely, such as crowd transcription, the amount of paperwork will be reduced as appropriate
- 6.4 The aims of the recruitment procedures are as follows.
- i. To establish why the person wishes to volunteer.
  - ii. To establish the skills and experience an applicant can bring to the volunteer role.
  - iii. To identify and resolve any issues which may arise as a result of the applicant's volunteering.
  - iv. To ensure the applicant agrees to policies, standards and procedures by signing the NRO's volunteer agreement. This document makes clear what the volunteer and the Norfolk Record Office can expect of each other. The volunteer agreement is not a contract of employment.
- 6.6 The Norfolk Record Office reserves the right to refuse any volunteers for whom there is no suitable role.
- 6.7 Anyone can volunteer subject to appropriate checks - see the Norfolk County Council Volunteer Policy for more detailed information.
- 6.8 A risk assessment will be completed when recruiting volunteers below 18 years of age and made available along with a copy of the volunteer role description to the parent or guardian of the volunteer. Any queries regarding this document or the role description will be discussed fully with the parent or guardian before any volunteering activity begins. Similarly, any role in which a vulnerable adult will be volunteering will be risk assessed prior to their beginning in the role.

## **7. Review Periods**

- 7.1 A review date will be set at the induction stage. This will normally take place during the volunteer's fourth session. The review will allow both parties the opportunity to check that they are happy with the arrangement, to identify if extra training is required and if the volunteer placement is to continue. It also gives an opportunity for the volunteer placement to end.

## **8. Training and Ongoing Support**

- 8.1 Each volunteer will receive an introduction to the NRO and the required basic training to perform the agreed tasks which fall within their role. Each volunteer will be required to wear a badge to identify them as an official volunteer within the Norfolk Record Office. This should be worn at all times when volunteering.
- 8.2 All volunteers will have a named person as their main point of contact, who will provide regular supervision and feedback on progress. The volunteer is responsible for completing the NRO volunteer log which records time of arrival and departure.

## **9. Recognition and Reward for Volunteers**

- 9.1 All volunteers should receive recognition for their contribution to the Norfolk Record Office. Saying 'thank you' is a very simple and powerful gesture in recognising the valuable contribution made by a volunteer. Volunteers cannot be rewarded with anything which holds a direct cash value due to the possibility this could be misinterpreted as payment for time.

## **10. Expenses**

- 10.1 The Norfolk Record Office will not reimburse any expenses. This includes travel costs.

## **11. DBS Checks and Safeguarding Measures**

- 11.1 Volunteer role descriptions will indicate if someone requires a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. The NRO's volunteer coordinator can advise volunteer supervisors if a DBS check is required. A minimum of three weeks should be allowed for a DBS check to be returned.
- 11.2 If queries arise regarding DBS checks, the NRO volunteer coordinator or the Safeguarding Lead for the service should be contacted at the earliest opportunity.
- 11.3 A DBS check should not be considered the only safeguarding measure when recruiting volunteers. Taking references and carrying out risk assessments should be used alongside record checks to ensure that safeguarding requirements are considered during the recruitment process and beyond.

## **12. Health and Safety of Volunteers**

- 12.1 An organizational risk assessment will be completed for the overall volunteer contribution to the Norfolk Record Office. Individual risk assessments for volunteer roles will be completed as appropriate.

## **13. Dealing with Problems When Things Are Not Right**

- 13.1 A volunteer may wish to raise a concern or make a complaint, or we may wish to raise an issue with a volunteer. As volunteers are not employees it would be inappropriate to refer to the County Council's formal procedures.

- 13.2 All problems or disputes should be raised informally with the volunteer at the first appropriate time. This should be done discreetly and limited to a discussion between the volunteer and their named supervisor in the first instance. Depending on the nature of the issue it may be appropriate to involve others in the discussion. It should be made clear to the volunteer that this is going to happen and they should be offered the chance to have someone with them at any meetings which follow if they so wish.
- 13.3 If the volunteer wishes to make a formal complaint this should be put in writing and addressed to the volunteer coordinator rather than the named supervisor to ensure that it is dealt with impartially. The volunteer coordinator will take any necessary guidance or advice before dealing with the complaint. If the named supervisor is also the volunteer coordinator, the written complaint should be addressed to the County Archivist.
- 13.4 If an allegation is made about the conduct of a volunteer, this should be dealt with initially by their named supervisor but be passed up to the volunteer coordinator if this remains unresolved at this stage. Advice can be taken at any point from either the volunteer coordinator or other appropriate member of staff. The volunteer should be made aware that this is happening. The ultimate decision on the future of the volunteer with the service should involve all appropriate members of staff from within the service.
- 13.5 Please refer to the Norfolk County Council Volunteer policy, Section 10, for more information on how to approach this.

## **14. Conduct of Volunteers**

- 14.1 All Norfolk Record Office volunteers are ambassadors of both the Norfolk Record Office and Norfolk County Council. This means that for the duration of any volunteering session the volunteer is expected to adhere to policies in place regarding smoking, consumption of alcohol and anti-social behaviour.
- 14.2 Any serious breach of these policies will result in the volunteer placement being reviewed and potentially discontinued. Should the volunteer be found in breach of policies, they should firstly be warned about their behaviour. If continued bad practice is evident the volunteer should be given notice of the termination of their volunteering placement in accordance with Norfolk County Council's Volunteer Policy – Section 10.

## **15. Saying Goodbye to Volunteers**

- 15.1 Both the volunteer and the Norfolk Record Office have the right to terminate the Volunteer Agreement at the discretion of either party. Whilst there is no employment relationship and no contractual obligation exists, we ask that any volunteer who no longer wishes to actively volunteer with us, lets us know by speaking with their supervisor.
- 15.2 On occasion it may be necessary for the Norfolk Record Office to end a volunteer's involvement with the service. This may be because the role is no longer needed or

the volunteer is no longer suitable for the role. When this happens we need to give due notice. In all circumstances we will treat the volunteer fairly and with dignity and respect.

- 15.3 Further details can be found in Section 11 of Norfolk County Council's Volunteer Policy.
- 15.4 This document should be read alongside the [Norfolk County Council Volunteer Policy](#) available on Peoplenet or by requesting a copy from the Norfolk Record Office.