



Volunteering at the National Library of Wales:

Helping us to achieve

**Revised Version
2021**

1. The Library

The National Library of Wales, established in 1907, is one of the great libraries of the world and it has an incomparable collection of books, pamphlets, newspapers, music, manuscripts, archives, maps, photographs, sound and screen images. It is also a world centre for research material on Wales, the people of Wales and other Celtic nations. As a copyright library since 1911 it can claim copies of any printed material published in the UK and Ireland. Its collection includes old and rare books, foreign publications, primarily for Europe and North America, and modern electronic materials. The Library is funded through a support grant from the Welsh Government and is described as a Welsh Government Funded Body (WGFB).

2. Volunteering at the Library

This Volunteering Policy sets out the broad principles for volunteering for the Library. It is relevant to all current and potential volunteers, as well as any individuals concerned with recruiting, supporting, developing and managing volunteers at the Library.

Volunteering, community participation and social inclusion are matters that are high on the agenda of both the Library and the Welsh Government. The Library views itself as a key part of the community. We wish to provide opportunities for members of the community to play their part in helping the Library achieve its objectives by encouraging them to offer themselves as volunteers on projects and tasks that:

- a) complement and support the work of employed staff; or
- b) are not carried out by the Library's employed staff.

Volunteers will assist the Library's staff to achieve basic tasks associated with the annual work plan, supervised by specific staff members, and offer 'additional value' to our current services. The Library would not under any circumstances use the services of volunteers as a replacement for qualified staff.

3. General principles of defining volunteers and the Library's relationship with them

- Volunteers are individuals who, unpaid and of their own free will, contribute their time, energy and skills to benefit the Library.
- Volunteering is a legitimate and valued activity that is supported and encouraged by the Library and is not intended to be a substitute for paid employment. The role of volunteers complements but does not replace or undermine the role of paid staff.
- Although no enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, can be imposed on volunteers to attend, give or be set a minimum amount of time to carry out the tasks involved in their voluntary activity, a mutual understanding of the needs and arrangements of both the volunteer and the Library must exist. Likewise the Library cannot be compelled to provide regular tasks, payment or other benefit for any activity undertaken by the volunteer. Both the Library and volunteer are free to terminate the arrangement at any time.
- Although volunteers offer time freely and willingly without binding obligation, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged - both of what the Library expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of the Library.

In return, volunteers may expect from the Library:

- the opportunity to undertake meaningful and constructive assignments of real value to the Library;
- the opportunity to develop their skills/competencies;
- the opportunity to volunteer within an institution of national and international importance;
- appropriate and safe volunteering conditions with the right supervision, when tasks are carried out within the building;
- training and provision of the necessary tools for the tasks assigned when completed within the building;
- tasks that match the needs of the Library and, where possible, with the competencies and interests of the volunteers;

- reimbursement of reasonable, pre-agreed and receipted expenses incurred;
- direct communication with their task managers to discuss/review their assignments at the end of an agreed probationary period (and periodically thereafter).

4. Volunteers' Charter

4.1 The Library expects volunteers to:

- Work with us to achieve our aims and objectives to the best of their ability;
- Volunteer independently and without supervision when necessary;
- Be reliable;
- Carry out their role to the best of their ability as set out in the role description;
- Treat volunteering as a mutually beneficial activity to both parties;
- Give reasonable notice, wherever possible, if unable to undertake agreed activities;
- Respect confidentiality, equality, diversity and health & safety requirements;
- Act under the direction of the volunteer co-ordinator;
- Attend relevant induction, training, feedback and support sessions;
- Uphold the name of the Library at all times;
- Tell the Library in advance if they want to stop volunteering;
- Share any concerns that involves their volunteering experience as soon as possible with the appropriate person;
- Enjoy themselves!

4.2 The Library recognises the rights of volunteers to:

- Know what is (and is not) expected of them;
- Be given tasks that they are capable of and that are of benefit to the Library;
- Be treated fairly and equally;
- Receive useful and appropriate induction and training;
- Receive support and supervision with a point of contact at all times when volunteering on site;
- Receive relevant, agreed out of pocket expenses;
- Be given the opportunity to give and receive feedback;
- Feel a sense of belonging to the Library, free from discrimination and to feel valued;
- Volunteer within a safe environment.

5. Recruitment and Selection

Individuals:

The National Library of Wales has a fair and consistent process for recruiting and selecting volunteers that is relevant and appropriate to each role. The Library recruits volunteers on a needs-led but mutually beneficial basis to match desirable projects and activities with volunteers' competencies, skills, knowledge, experience and motivation. Volunteer supervisors will also discuss individual volunteer requirements to ensure volunteers feel happy and properly supported in their role throughout their time as a volunteer.

All potential volunteers will have a clear understanding of the requirements of the volunteer roles to support them in selecting a position appropriate to their individual wishes. This is in the form of a concise and current role description, prepared by the volunteer co-ordinator.

Demand for volunteering vacancies is often high and not all applications will necessarily be successful. However, we do ensure that all applications are treated equally and will be submitted for consideration. Applicants who do not get placed may wish to be put on a waiting list for that role or other opportunities. Volunteers may be involved in more than one volunteer project.

Groups:

When group-based tasks and projects are identified, the Library can come to an agreement with an organisation/society which has suitable members to achieve the task. In this case, a volunteering role that's mutually beneficial and includes the essential training will be agreed with an officer from the organisation. It will be the officer's responsibility to gather and supervise a group of suitable, enthusiastic volunteers, while Library staff will offer appropriate guidance and support.

6. Defining remote volunteers and the Library's relationship with them

- Remote volunteers are people who give of their time beyond the Library building, unpaid and of their own free will, contributing their energy and skills to benefit the Library.
- While recognising the challenges of managing remote volunteering and crowdsourcing tasks/projects, the Library will make every effort to support individuals and groups of volunteers beyond the Library building by offering clear leadership, transparent guidelines, meetings on electronic platforms, and a point of contact to review assignments.
- While planning remote projects, we will consider strong themes within the NLW collection that are relevant to the area in which volunteers will be volunteering.

7. Equal opportunities

The Library is committed to equal opportunities and believes that volunteering should be open to all, 16 years and over, regardless of gender, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, religion or belief. The acceptance of a volunteer for a particular role is made on merit, the sole selection criterion being the individual's suitability to carry out agreed tasks. Information about the volunteer not relevant to their ability to carry out their role will be disregarded by the Library in terms of recruitment and selection.

8. Diversity

The Library values diversity within our paid staff and volunteers and the unique perspectives they bring. Volunteers, 16 years and over, are actively encouraged from a wide cross section of backgrounds and experiences and volunteering opportunities are widely promoted in ways that makes them accessible to a diverse range of people.

9. Welsh Language Scheme

In accordance with the Library's Welsh Language Scheme, some of our volunteering roles will require volunteers to communicate through the medium of Welsh and English.

10. Benefit claimants and overseas volunteers

The Library follows best practice guidelines produced by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action on involving volunteers receiving welfare benefits, job seekers allowance, asylum seekers and volunteers from overseas. Please note, it is the responsibility of the individual concerned to seek and follow advice from benefits advisors and the Library will not accept responsibility for this. The volunteer co-ordinator can provide more details.

11. Screening

A combined approach of application forms, references, informal interviews, and a disclosure check form the basis of our volunteer screening.

Application forms are required to apply for all volunteer roles and two references are taken as standard.

Informal interviews and a defined trial period offers the chance for both the Library and volunteer to find out more and clarify arrangements and suitability. Informal interviews can form part of the selection process

A basic disclosure via the Disclosure and Barring Service will be required. Please note that convictions or a criminal record will not necessarily prevent you from volunteering – each case is dealt with on its own merits.

12. Training and Development

The Library will ensure that all new volunteers are made to feel welcome and an informal induction and core training are required for all roles. This may be before or on the first day of volunteering and will cover all essential information, policies and procedures in order to equip them with the necessary information and skills to carry out their role competently and safely. Depending on the project, training can be one to one on-the-role training, or via an intensive group training day/programme.

The Library recognises that volunteers require satisfying work and the opportunity for progression and personal development. We will support lifelong learning by encouraging our volunteers to take advantage of training opportunities, including accreditation when applicable. We will encourage our volunteers to offer regular, anonymous feedback on the service we offer them, and on the personal benefits they derive from their volunteering, in order to continually improve our service.

13. Supervision and Support

The volunteer co-ordinator and volunteer assistant will provide a central point of contact for any general enquiries about volunteering as well as organising and supporting volunteer events, training and communication.

The volunteer assistant will be the day-to-day point of contact within the Library building, while the co-ordinator will be the point of contact for remote volunteers. They will make every effort to ensure that a member of staff is available for volunteers to contact for specialist advice.

Regular supervision meetings are a good opportunity for two-way feedback, to identify, monitor and evaluate the volunteer's involvement, recognise achievements and identify individual training needs. A formal review will take place after the volunteer's first six months and, following this, on an annual basis.

14. Commitment

The Library aims to be as flexible as possible, understanding the nature of volunteering, while needing to maintain its high quality service and reputation. Commitment expectations are role dependant, aiming to achieve a mutually beneficial arrangement for all. The level of commitment will be made clear from the start and stated on the role description.

Volunteer hours are logged to record the value of volunteers' efforts.

15. Expenses

Library volunteers are able to claim reasonable, pre-agreed and receipted out of pocket expenses. Concern for expenses should not limit the contribution that a volunteer can offer. The volunteer supervisor can provide more details of claiming travel and other role related expenses.

16. Health and Safety

The Library is committed to providing and maintaining a safe environment for its volunteers while on Library premises. Volunteers within the building will receive appropriate health and safety training as part of their induction, and suitable equipment and protective clothing will be provided where necessary. Volunteer supervisors will carry out risk assessments on all activities undertaken by volunteers. Volunteers also have a duty of care for themselves and others around them.

The Library cannot be responsible for the health and safety of volunteers beyond the Library site.

17. Information protection and communication

Personal information recorded about volunteers will be stored and maintained with appropriate safeguards for confidentiality and in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation.

Volunteers will be expected to donate to the Library any original copyright works they may produce while volunteering and will be asked to sign a copyright agreement. We will also ask them to sign the Library's 'Acceptable Use of Information and Communications Technology Policy'.

If volunteers are asked for an opinion or comment by the press or other media source, volunteers should refer them to their volunteer supervisor. All press and media communication should go through the Library Press Office.

18. Settling differences and finishing as a volunteer

The Library aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently.

Volunteers can expect their views to be heard, noted and acted upon promptly, with the aim of a positive and amicable solution based on the Library's guidelines for settling differences.

The Library cannot be responsible for any conflict between remote volunteers and a local organisation/society while volunteering beyond the Library site.

The Library recognises that volunteers are free to end their involvement at any time. Volunteers are invited to complete an informal exit interview for future benefit to the volunteering programme. Any Library equipment, property, ID passes etc must be returned

The Library can also end the volunteer arrangement at any time should the project come to an end, or if the arrangement is no longer deemed to be mutually beneficial.

19. Delivering the Policy

A steering group has been formed to lead and review the development of the Volunteering Scheme. In order to ensure that all concerned with the scheme have a voice, the steering group includes a representative of each department within the Library, the Unions and the volunteers.

20. Other related Library Policies:

- Strategic Equality Plan;
- Acceptable Use Policy;
- Complaints Policy.

Please note that acceptance of this policy will be deemed to be acknowledgement and agreement with the principles outlined. This agreement is in honour only and is not intended to be legally binding.

This policy will be revised in November 2024