



Brent Libraries, Arts and Heritage

VOLUNTEER POLICY

About Brent Libraries, Arts and Heritage Service

Brent Libraries, Arts and Heritage deliver the lion's share of the borough's cultural services. We have six public libraries across the borough, a home delivery and outreach service, Brent Museum and Archives, and operate the Willesden Gallery. We also provide arts development and are committed to encouraging the development of art and cultural activities in Brent as well as supporting the infrastructure and people involved in that work.

Together we aim to provide a comprehensive range of cultural and learning activities for all people in Brent, working closely with a wide range of internal and external partners.

Our services offer:

- Access to millions of books, audiobooks, newspapers, journals and magazines both physically and digitally, and promote the joy of reading for learning and pleasure.
- Access to digital and printing services in the library as well as opportunities to upskill and improve digital skills.
- Regular events that offer the chance to improve health and wellbeing through the arts.
- Opportunities to engage with and handle thousands of artefacts and archival materials relating to Brent's heritage.
- A gateway to Council Services and community information.

1. Introduction

The Brent Libraries, Arts and Heritage Service places a great value on the involvement of volunteers in its work. Volunteers help enhance the range and quality of services provided by Brent Libraries, Arts and Heritage by putting in their time, skills, knowledge and/or experience at its disposal. They help keep the service work relevant to the community in Brent by bringing a range of personalities, backgrounds and experience into the organisation.

This policy is intended to ensure good practice in the involvement of volunteers in the work of Brent Libraries, Arts and Heritage and to promote understanding of the respective roles of staff and volunteers in the organisation.

2. Role of Volunteers and Task Specification

Before recruiting volunteers, the service will have considered the appropriateness of the role envisaged, bearing in mind the following points.

- The role of volunteers and those of staff in the service is distinct.
- The work carried out by volunteers will not be such that might jeopardise paid posts.
- Volunteers are a valued part of the workforce, extending its range of ages and cultures, bringing new skills, experience and enthusiasm that enhance the services.
- The voluntary role will allow job satisfaction on the part of the volunteer, as well as meeting a service need.
- Each volunteer role will have a role description outlining the general tasks, required skills of qualities, and conditions of service (i.e. expenses, insurance).

3. Recruitment and Selection Process

- A team of nominated members of staff with the appropriate skills will be responsible for the selection of volunteers who would be working under their supervision. For Brent Libraries, this team will comprise of Library Services Officers and Library Services Assistants looking for development opportunities. Members of the heritage team will be responsible for the recruitment of volunteers at Brent Museum and Archives.
- Volunteers will be recruited from the widest possible base and selected accordingly according to their own individual ability to perform the required tasks.
- The minimum age for volunteers applying to Brent Libraries will be 13; the minimum age for volunteers applying to Brent Museum and Archives will be 18. Under 16s will only be able to volunteer in Willesden Green and Wembley Libraries, and in the Outreach Team. Other library branches cannot take under 16 volunteers or work experience placements (and in the case of Brent Museum and Archives, under 18 volunteers or work experience placements) based on the capability of staff to appropriately supervise volunteers in line with Brent's Commitment to Safeguarding Children.
- For Brent Libraries, volunteering opportunities will be limited to a maximum of 4 hours per week and 2 hours per day. For the heritage service, volunteering opportunities will be limited to 6 hours per day and 3 days per week.
- Work experience placements must take place for at least one entire working week. Work experience placements for under 18s that work more than 4 hours a day will be limited to Willesden Green and Wembley Libraries, and in the Outreach Team. Under 18s working for more than 4 hours a day will be entitled to an hour's break in line with government child employment law. Further breaks will be designated in line with Brent Council's Rest Break policy for frontline staff.
- Volunteer posts will be advertised on the Libraries, Arts and Heritage website, library publications, and social media and relevant free volunteer recruitment sites (i.e. Team London).
- DBS checks may be a requirement depending on the nature of work. Managers should inform the Recruitment Team that checks will be required prior to someone undertaking voluntary work on trust premises. The DBS will issue a disclosure free of charge to volunteers.
- A process map for the recruitment of library volunteers will be available for all library staff.

- A process map for the recruitment of heritage volunteers will be available for all heritage staff.
- A clear description (verbally and in writing) of the volunteer's role will be given alongside an application form.
- Once a completed application form has been received and a member of the volunteering sub-team has approved this, a volunteer will be invited to an interview and trial period, prior to either side agreeing to a longer-term arrangement.
- If unable to involve a particular volunteer, the staff responsible for the selection will make the reasons clear in a sensitive manner.
- References will be sought from Home Library Service volunteers.
- Heritage volunteers will fill out a confidential Occupational Health questionnaire before they start, and reasonable adjustments will be made for volunteers as necessary. Library volunteers volunteering for over 1 month will fill out the same form.
- All volunteers will complete a volunteer agreement.

4. Supervision and Support

- For libraries, the Library Services Officer on site will be responsible for supervising individual library volunteers. Clear lines of communication will be identified.
- An individual Library Services Assistant on-site will be nominated to provide support to individual library volunteers.
- The supervisor will be responsible for monitoring the work of the volunteer as well as ensuring that the volunteer is enjoying the placement and if necessary be provided with relevant training needs.
- For the heritage team, each volunteer will have an identified member(s) of staff who is their contact on that day who will be responsible for their supervision, training, and support on that day. In addition, each volunteer has a member of staff who is responsible for checking in with them for support conversations regularly, depending on the duration of their volunteering role.
- Where appropriate, additional methods of support will be used i.e. volunteer meetings.

5. Induction and Training

- All volunteers will be given an induction to Brent Libraries, Arts and Heritage Service and its work.
- All volunteers will be inducted on basic health and safety procedures, customer care, data protection and the awareness on the Council's Code of Conduct.
- Any training required to enable volunteers to fulfil their roles will be arranged by the services.
- Local managers will continually assess the training needs of volunteers.
- Local managers will use a check-list to ensure that the volunteer has received a comprehensive induction covering all essential items.

6. Conditions

- Volunteers will not be asked to work in conditions considered unsuitable for paid staff and will have the same provisions made regarding Health and Safety. Safety of both staff and visitors is taken seriously by Libraries, Arts and Heritage. The department will take all possible steps to ensure that volunteers are working in a safe environment using proper equipment in a safe way. We expect all volunteers to read and follow Health and Safety instructions including First Aid arrangements, Fire Evacuation routes and other instructions as set out under local inductions.
- Brent Libraries, Arts and Heritage has undertaken a specific risk assessment for their volunteers and depending on the role within the service, there may be a requirement for a separate risk assessment for anyone under 18 years of age depending on the role within the service.
- Volunteers are covered by Brent Council's Public Liability Insurance when they are working under the supervision of the Libraries, Arts and Heritage service. They are also covered by the Brent Council Employer's Liability Insurance.
- Volunteers should not be left out of pocket as a result of volunteering with us. Libraries, Arts and Heritage will only pay reasonable travel expenses for volunteers commuting for up to £4.00 per day on provision of a valid receipt. This would be discussed as part of the recruitment process. Volunteers will be provided with all the equipment necessary to do the work.
- If difficulties occur, volunteers have the rights to protection and redress. Equally, Libraries, Arts and Heritage Service will address poor performance or misconduct by volunteers promptly; to maintain high standards of customer service. The volunteer problem solving procedure provides a process to respond to complaints from or about volunteers and to address problems. If the issues prove to be irreconcilable, either side has the option to terminate the arrangement.
- All volunteers will be made aware of the above rights and conditions without having to ask. Details of current rates for expenses, how to claim, and the nature and extent of insurance cover will be clearly explained.
- Conditions such as rates for expenses, allowances etc. will be reviewed periodically.

7. Equality and Diversity

Brent Libraries, Arts and Heritage service relies on volunteer involvement to keep it relevant to the community it serves and so encourages involvement from all sections of the community. Brent Council operates an Equality and Diversity Policy and has a Statement of Intent. It should ensure that it does not unfairly exclude or discourage the involvement of potential volunteers because of:

- Class, Race, Colour, Nationality, or Ethnic Background
- Disability, Sex, Gender Identity or Marital Status
- Unrelated Criminal Record

Each volunteer job specification will make clear the volunteers' requirements to adhere to Brent Council's Equality and Diversity Policy and Statement of Intent. If a volunteer has a

special need or disability that makes their involvement difficult, every effort will be made to involve them. An explanation will be given if this is not possible.

8. Data Protection

Brent Libraries, Arts and Heritage has a commitment to protecting the data of its customers, staff, and volunteers. We expect all volunteers to operate in line with Brent Council's Data Protection policies.