

Bolton Library and Museum Service

Volunteering Policy



Introduction

Bolton Library & Museum Service (BLAMS) have built successful relationships with volunteers and community stakeholders for many years. Our volunteers, come from many areas of the diverse community of Bolton and contribute not only a great deal of time, but bring skill, individuality and knowledge to the service. BLAMS recognises that volunteers may be different from paid staff in terms of age, race, cultural background, socio-economic background and educational level and will help to diversify and strengthen the workforce as well as offer a wide range of skills and enthusiasm.

Volunteers are distinct from school work experience placements and student work placements.

Purpose

Volunteering has a significant impact on the local community through forming connections with isolated individuals and providing opportunities to those in need. Volunteers support a wide range of activities, such as digital support, gardening, family craft activities, Museum collection documentation, organising books and front of house duties. Through this community engagement, we aim to develop volunteers, whether this is through personal development or as part of a wider work experience.

Often volunteer's motivation is to support and be an active member of the community. Other volunteers may want to use the volunteering to learn new skills or gain experience. Some of our volunteers progress from volunteering into paid roles at BLAMS. Volunteers should understand that volunteering/work experience with BLAMS does not directly lead to paid employment and should therefore not be treated as such.

Role of Volunteers

Volunteer roles play an important role in the operation of BLAMS and volunteers will, in all roles and at all sites, be representatives of Bolton Council and should at all times conduct themselves in an appropriate manner.

BLAMS has a commitment to the involvement of volunteers and believes that volunteers play a vital role in extending the scope of our work allowing us to add value to our services and helping to meet service need or demand and achieve our goals, which would not otherwise be possible. Volunteers are not recruited to replace staff but enhance the offer and services that the Library and Museum provides.

Recruitment and Selection

Volunteer roles will be advertised by us on the website and other relevant sites such as our social media and through Bolton CVS.

We will direct all prospective volunteers to the website <https://www.bolton.gov.uk/library-services/volunteering-bolton-library-museum-services> where there will be information on the roles available. description and application form to complete and return to blamsvolunteering@bolton.gov.uk

These are the current roles;

- digital helper
- historic halls volunteer
- home library service volunteer
- library visitor volunteer
- museum visitor volunteer
- storytelling and events volunteer

We also sometimes have archives and collections volunteering opportunities available too.

<https://www.bolton.gov.uk/downloads/file/4057/blams-volunteer-opportunities>

When a completed form is received the prospective volunteer will be contacted and an informal interview will be arranged to discuss skills, role and expectations.

From July 2024 to streamline and make it easier to recruit and train volunteers at the same time will be having 3 recruitment months per year for volunteers in March, July & November.

Exceptions to recruiting volunteers outside these months can be made at the discretion of the SDOTVM and the needs of the service.

BLAMS reserves the right to determine that a prospective volunteer may not be appropriate for the role. However, every effort will be made to signpost unsuccessful applicants to other local volunteering opportunities.

Where possible, we will accommodate volunteers with additional needs and differentiate the role in order to make the tasks accessible to them.

We will ask all successful applicants to agree to the terms of the Volunteer Agreement. The Volunteer Agreement is a document setting out the guidelines on mutually agreed undertakings between the Volunteer and BLAMS. This agreement can be terminated by either party at any time and is not intended to be a contract nor is it legally binding.

Our Responsibilities

Bolton Library and Museum Service will seek to do the following:

- To provide an induction into the work of the Library and Museum and appropriate training to enable the volunteer to meet the responsibilities of this role.
- To provide a supervisor to meet with the volunteer on a regular basis to discuss any problems or questions relating to the development of the role.
- To ensure that volunteers are dealt with in accordance with Bolton Council's Equal Opportunities and Valuing Diversity policies.
- To work with volunteers to resolve any problems or grievance you may have while you volunteer at the Library or Museum.
- To reimburse travel expenses as per current guidelines
- To offer 10% off products at BLAMS shops.
- To provide adequate insurance cover for volunteers whilst undertaking voluntary work approved by Bolton Council.
- To provide at least 2 social events per year for volunteers to meet each other.

Volunteer's Responsibilities

- To help the Library and Museum to deliver quality customer service.
- To maintain confidentiality regarding information about the Library and Museum, its staff and visitors.
- To perform the role as volunteer to the best of their ability.
- To follow Council policies and procedures, including Health and Safety, Fire procedures, Equal Opportunities and Valuing Diversity, Data Protection Act, and Museum Code of Ethics when applicable.
- To meet the time commitments and standards as agreed.
- To contact their supervisor if they are unable to attend for any reason.
- To meet visitor expectations.
- To comply with all reasonable instructions given by or on behalf of their supervisor.
- To provide a completed application form and referees as required.

Equality and Diversity

BLAMS will not pay volunteers for the work they carry out. However, in all other respects volunteers are entitled to be treated on an equal basis with paid staff.

Volunteering opportunities are open to everyone regardless of gender, ethnic origin, cultural background, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, religious belief, age. BLAMS will seek to make volunteer roles accessible to as wide an audience as possible and will consider the profile of the Bolton communities in its volunteer recruitment process.

BLAMS has a commitment to equality and diversity principles and will seek to challenge all forms of prejudice and discrimination.

Key Principles of BLAMS Volunteer Policy

BLAMS gives opportunities for Local people who are passionate about Museums, Libraries and Aquarium and enables volunteers to develop skills and give back to the community. Volunteering needs to be mutually beneficial to volunteers and BLAMS. Our aim is to support volunteers as they support the community, providing work experience and personal development. We strive to ensure all volunteers are supported and accepted through our diversity and inclusive policies.

Volunteers enrich visitor's experience and support and extend our offer. We have a good reputation as an inclusive site for neurodiverse visitors. We maintain best practice through research and advisement from other authorities and key partners, local volunteer forums and consultations. A key national and regional volunteer management group is Heritage Volunteering Group. (HVG) Any new volunteer developments will be discussed with staff and appropriate union representatives, to ensure that our ethos of support is upheld.

- Paid jobs will not be replaced by volunteers; volunteers will complement not replace the work of paid staff.
- Encourage voluntary participation by people from all sectors of the community, in the pursuit of an empowering engaged and connected borough
- Encourage teamwork between volunteers and library staff, helping volunteers and staff grow in their respective roles.
- Recognise and reward the invaluable contribution of volunteers.
- Ensure a positive volunteering experience for all involved
- Ensure equal work experience opportunities for those with additional needs by providing access to tailored programmes, in support with local partners

Management of Volunteers

It is the role of the Service Development Officer– Training and Volunteer Management (SDOTVM) to recruit, coordinate and provide support to volunteers volunteering with Bolton. Volunteers will be supervised on a day to day basis by a Network Supervisor and staff at the

location where they volunteer at. Both the Supervisors and SDOTVM will be available to deal with any questions or problems that volunteers within the service may have.

It is also the role of the SDOTVM to develop the volunteer programme and promote its sustainable and successful future through the assessment of volunteer needs at the sites, devising new projects for volunteers and developing relationships with various internal and external partners, colleagues, team members, organisations and groups.

Induction and Training

The supervisor of the volunteer will undertake an induction with all volunteers into the service and the role they will carry out. We will ensure all volunteers receive the training required to carry out their role. Other additional training needs that may arise during the course of volunteer roles can be discussed with their supervisor.

Training will be made available and will be accessible at all times, should a volunteer require it. Most training will be provided via "on the-job" learning, arranged via shadowing and slowly acclimatising to the role.

Supervisors or the SDOTVM can be contacted by the volunteers via phone or email if there are any issues they wish to raise.

Supervisors will do a volunteer review with the volunteers every 6 months.

Exit of volunteering

Some volunteers will remain volunteering for many years, whilst others will only volunteer for a few months. During the 6 monthly volunteer review with their supervisor, volunteers will be given an option to extend their 6 month volunteer placement if the role is benefiting both the volunteers and the service.

If the volunteer is not performing the role in the way we expect of a BLAMS volunteer then the opportunity to volunteer will be rescinded.

Both Bolton Library and Museum Service and the volunteer may stop volunteering opportunities any time and BLAMS will try to give reasonable notice (although in certain circumstances this may not be possible). Some actions such as racism and using inappropriate language on the gallery will initiate an instant termination of volunteering.

Expenses

Volunteer expenses will cover travel to and from the place of volunteering only and will only be paid on production of a valid ticket for travel or fuel receipt. If volunteers wish to use their own vehicle, this will be reimbursed at 45p per mile as advised by Inland Revenue. BLAMS will only reimburse travel within the Borough of Bolton.

In exceptional cases, for example where the volunteer has a disability and needs to use a taxi, or would otherwise be prevented from volunteering, additional amounts may be reimbursed but volunteers will be expected to seek authorisation from the SDOTVM in advance of travel.

Hours

Volunteers would usually do 2 hour shifts repeated every week during the same time slot. Volunteers would not do more than 2 hours in the first few months but can do additional hours after a discussion with their supervisor. Volunteers may also request to reduce or change their hours.

It is understood that volunteers will have to take time off for holidays, sickness and emergencies etc. It is requested that whenever possible, advance notification of time off will be given to the supervisor or location where they volunteer.

As volunteers are not paid members of staff, they will not be required to complete a self-certification sickness form or provide GP sickness certificates for periods of sickness. It is requested that whenever possible, volunteers advise their supervisor if they are unable to attend due to sickness.

Confidentiality

BLAMS will take appropriate measures to maintain confidentiality concerning the personal details of all volunteers and will do so in accordance with Data Protection principles. In return volunteers are required to respect the confidentiality of BLAMS staff, sites, service users and data.

Health and Safety / Insurance

Volunteers must work safely and not put themselves or others at risk. All health and safety policies and procedures apply equally to staff and volunteers.

Everyone has a legal obligation to protect others from harm or risk. BLAMS does work with vulnerable adults and children. Any concerns a volunteer has about a child or vulnerable adult should be raised with their supervisor, however if they are not happy to discuss it with the supervisor, the volunteer should contact the SDOTVM.

All volunteers will be covered by BLAMS employee public liability insurance whilst they are volunteering at our venues. Volunteers, like employees, are covered under Bolton Council's Liability Cover. Volunteers are covered against costs, claims and actions while performing an authorised role which results in damage to property or injury to other persons. Volunteers are not covered for any deliberate, fraudulent or criminal acts.

The Friends of Smithills Hall (FoSH) as they are a friends group rather than official volunteers have separate Public Liability Insurance paid for by BLAMS.

Complaints and Standards

If a volunteer has a problem with their role, or a member of staff, their first point of contact should be their named supervisor. Any unresolved complaints or issues should then be referred to the SDOTVM. Alternatively, any unacceptable behaviour, including fraudulent activity and breach of agreement, on the part of the volunteer, will be referred to the Library Supervisor and SDOTVM.

Complaints should be resolved as soon as possible but there may be occasions where it is deemed appropriate to discontinue the volunteer role with immediate effect. In this

circumstance, the volunteer will be notified and given a reason as to why their role can no longer continue. If a complaint by the volunteer can't be resolved, it can then be escalated to an official complaint by the volunteer via the Bolton Council's official complaints.

[Make a complaint – Bolton Council](#)

Young Volunteers

Due to the number of young volunteers applying we are now only accepting volunteers under the age of 18 if they are doing a Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) Volunteering Award. We only accept DofE volunteer aged 14 or over.

The minimum requirements for a DofE volunteering award is 1 hour per week for:

- 3 months Bronze Award
- 6 months Silver Award
- 12 months Gold Award

We recommend a weekly 2 hour D of E volunteer shift.

We will take appropriate measures to safeguard young people in voluntary activity. All staff take part on online safeguarding training to help identify any safeguarding concerns.

Safeguarding Children - accessed via Bolton Council "ME Learning" training platform.

BLAMS Volunteer Policy written by Alex McLeman, May 2023 (updated July 2024)

Service Development Officer– Training and Volunteer Management