



Volunteer Policy



Introduction

This document states the Royal Institution of Cornwall's (RIC's) policy on involving volunteers in its work across all departments.

The purpose of developing a policy is to enable the RIC to think about the value of its volunteers and to achieve clear, workable principles to which volunteers and their supervisors can work. It sets out guidelines for the quality of opportunity, recruitment, training, support and development of volunteers within the service. The policy also recognises the commitment given and the value achieved from a dedicated team of volunteers and works towards building on the relationship between volunteers and those who engage with them.

Background Information

The Royal Institution of Cornwall – the charity that owns and manages the Royal Cornwall Museum and Courtney Library – was founded in 1818. It was one of the earliest of seven similar societies established in England and Wales during the 19th century. These voluntary bodies typically founded a library and museum, offered a lecture programme and scientific demonstrations, and gave instruction to the local working class population, well before state education was available. Today the RIC (so called after receiving Royal patronage in 1821) remains true to its original aims.

Mission Statement

The objects of the institution shall be to advance the education of the public by encouraging and promoting the study and knowledge of literature, natural sciences, archaeology, history, ethnology, geology and the fine and applied arts, with special reference to Cornwall.

The Royal Cornwall Museum Over the years generous benefactors have donated an amazing array of objects, broadening the collection so that it covers for example Egyptology (hence the famous unwrapped mummy), fine art and world cultures, as well as classical Greek and Roman objects. The Rashleigh Gallery contains a world-famous collection of minerals, the core of which was amassed by Philip Rashleigh of Menabilly at the end of the 18th century. It includes the largest specimen of linoconite ever found, and a large gold nugget found at Perranarworthal. The Museum's decorative arts collection and old master drawings are also very strong, the latter chiefly due to Alfred de Pass, another generous benefactor.

The Courtney Library and Archive has been used and valued by researchers and academics for many generations. Since the founding of the Royal Institution of Cornwall (RIC) in 1818 the holdings of printed books and manuscripts have been steadily accumulating. Today they can rightly claim to be amongst the finest and most comprehensive materials that are available anywhere for the study of Cornwall's unique history and culture.

The RIC Photographic Collection contains over 50,000 images from 1845 to the present as well as copies of engravings, which are useful as they provide a reference point for the photographs. The collection holds material in a variety of forms, including albumen prints, tintypes and daguerreotype. There is a large collection of negatives of various sizes from A3 sized glass negatives to modern negatives and transparencies. There are also glass positives, lantern slides and a series of albums.

The Role of the Volunteer

Volunteers are a very important part of the RIC's service. Without the enthusiasm and commitment of the volunteers, much less would be achieved in order to meet our objectives. At the RIC, volunteers undertake activity in a variety of areas including learning, administration, collections management, development and visitor services. The overall responsibility for volunteers rests with the Museum's Director; however, day to day management rests with a specific member of staff in liaison with the Volunteer Co-ordinator.

Application Process

Vacancies for volunteering positions will be posted on the Royal Cornwall Museum's website. A list will also be held at Reception and on the company server. The vacancies will include details of what the role involves, the time commitment it requires, the skills applicants may need and any Health and Safety issues they need to be aware of. The vacancy will also include details of the main contact at the museum for this role and the deadline for applications.

Applicants for a role will be asked to submit their CV, along with the names of two referees. This information should be submitted to the named main contact for that role. Applicant's personal details will be kept on central record by the Volunteer Co-ordinator.

Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers

Equal opportunities will be adhered to when recruiting and selecting volunteers. Applicants will receive a response to their application within 14 working days of the deadline. If invited to interview the applicant will be interviewed at the museum by the main contact and a second member of staff, usually the Volunteer Co-ordinator. Every effort will be made to match the volunteer's skills, talents and interests to the task. Some tasks can be undertaken without any previous experience as training and supervision are provided. There are, however, certain tasks which require certain levels of physical ability, previous experience and knowledge. If an applicant is offered a volunteering role this will be subject to a one month trial period during which time the volunteer and museum can assess progress and make appropriate adjustments or end the placement. Volunteer recruitment procedures will be subject to regular review.

Reference Checks

Before appointment, two references should be obtained for each applicant. This may be reduced to one if an applicant has just left college or university. References may not be taken from relatives. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks may be required for volunteers, as per the RIC's Child Protection Policy, if their work will bring them into contact with children or vulnerable adults. Applicants will be advised if a CRB check is required during the application procedure.

Expectations

Volunteers are expected to give as much or as little time as they consider appropriate to them. Each vacancy will list the time commitment the role needs to fulfil it. The RIC expects volunteers to be realistic in their commitment; however, once a commitment is made the service expects its volunteers to fulfil this unless negotiated otherwise.

Rights of Volunteers

- To know what is expected and to be given clear information
- To have clearly specified lines of supervision
- To receive a level of support appropriate to the role
- To receive appropriate induction and training
- Experience personal development through participation
- To be shown appreciation
- To be able to say 'no'

- To know what their rights are if things go wrong
- To take part in the organisation
- To have safe working conditions
- To be insured
- To be free of discrimination on grounds of race, gender, sexuality, disability, age
- To withdraw from voluntary work.

Responsibilities of Volunteers

- To supply a CV and provide the name of two referees
- To give a reasonable and sustainable level of commitment
- To do the job reliably and safely
- To carry out tasks in a way which corresponds to the aims and values of the RIC
- To be honest if there are problems
- To attend training and support sessions
- To comply with existing policies and procedures
- To take responsibility for their own personal health and safety
- To supply current contact details and notify the RIC of any changes
- To maintain confidentiality at all times.

Expenses

Volunteers will be reimbursed at 25p per mile if driving up to a maximum of £5 per journey, or a standard bus or rail fare for travelling to and from the place of volunteering. Travel and petrol receipts/tickets must be provided. Volunteers are expected to use the facilities of the RIC. If they have occasion to use their own or a public telephone or purchase materials on behalf of the RIC these costs will be reimbursed.

Volunteers claim all such expenses on the standard RIC expenses claim form, available from their main contact. Receipts must be provided. The RIC reserves the right to review and alter expenses entitlement at any time.

Use of keys and security codes

Volunteers are not permitted to claim keys unless a particular need has been proven and they have been authorised to do so by the Head of Department. It should not be necessary for volunteers to need keys as they will be supervised by a member of staff. Volunteers will only be given necessary security codes to gain access to areas of unsupervised activity.

Insurance

Volunteers, whilst undertaking work on behalf of the RIC, are covered by its insurance policies. This includes employer's liability and public liability. If a volunteer uses their own car for official RIC business (outside the normal travelling to and from the workplace on duty days) they should inform their insurance company that they are doing so. Private cars are not covered by the RIC's insurance.

Supervision

The RIC ensures that all volunteers are adequately supervised. When they begin at the RIC, new volunteers meet the main contact to get to know each other and both are encouraged to develop a good relationship. There are occasions and tasks where minimal supervision is required, depending upon the skill and experience of the volunteer. If a volunteer feels they are not being adequately supervised, they are encouraged to discuss this with the Volunteer Co-ordinator.

Support

The Museum believes that it has a duty to provide ongoing support for its volunteers. This is done through regular meetings between the volunteer and the supervising member of staff to discuss their progress,

training needs (if appropriate) and any other issues. If any volunteer has a particular problem or concern a member of staff or the Volunteer Co-ordinator will usually be available to talk to them.

Relationships with Paid Staff

Steps will be taken to ensure that paid staff at all levels are clear about the role of volunteers, and that good working relationships are fostered between paid staff and volunteers. Appropriate training, support and resources will be provided for all those who work alongside volunteers and for those who have a managerial role in relation to volunteers. The roles of volunteers and paid staff will be complementary and mutually supportive. Volunteers will not be engaged in times of industrial action to do the work of paid staff. They may continue with their regular activity, provided appropriate supervision by paid staff continues to be available, but will not be asked to undertake additional duties.

Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it is still appropriate to the needs of the RIC and its volunteers. Volunteers are asked to contribute to this review. Between the annual reviews everyone who is involved, staff and volunteers, is expected to monitor its use – comments should be passed in the first instance to Taryn Harris.

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