

Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service Volunteer Policy and Agreement

Revised edition August 2018

Colchester+Ipswich
Museums



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1. Introduction

- i. Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service (CIMS) welcomes and values volunteer involvement. It recognises that volunteers perform an important role, supporting and complementing the work of the paid staff. Volunteers make a real difference, investing their time and bringing a range of skills and expertise to the organisation.
- ii. In turn, we aim to develop and support volunteer involvement in our work. We hope that volunteers will both enjoy and benefit from their experiences, developing new skills and connecting with their local heritage. By providing individuals with a closer understanding of our work and the collections, CIMS supports the principle that *'All those who work in and with museums should ensure that everyone has the opportunity for meaningful participation in the work of the museum'* ('Code of Ethics for Museums', Museums Association, 6th Edition 2015, section 1.7).
- iii. This document details CIMS's Volunteer Policy and Agreement. It replaces the 2015 Volunteer Policy and applies to all projects undertaken at our venues: Christchurch Mansion, Colchester Castle, Hollytrees Museum, Ipswich Art Gallery, Ipswich Museum, the Natural History Museum and the Museum Resource Centre, as well as associated off-site activities.
- iv. The relationship between CIMS and its volunteers is one of shared responsibility and commitment. All volunteers must agree to comply with all Colchester Borough Council and CIMS policies, as well as The Museum Association's Code of Ethics for Museums, which is explicit in its application to all *'those who work for museums, paid or unpaid'* ('Code of Ethics for Museums', Museums Association, 6th Edition 2015).

2. Definition of a Volunteer

- i. CIMS defines a volunteer as an individual who gives their time, energy and skills of their own free will, without financial reward of any kind, for the mutual benefit of the museums and themselves.
- ii. Whilst CIMS is not under any obligation to provide guaranteed volumes or types of role for volunteers, every effort will be made to ensure that a regular programme of opportunities are available.
- iii. Likewise, volunteers will be expected to commit to a minimum amount of time on a regular basis, although due account will be taken of personal circumstances.
- iv. Volunteers are expected to accept and understand that their role does not give them the status of a worker or employee in legal terms. Volunteers do not replace paid staff, but compliment their services.

3. Purpose of Policy

- i. The purpose of this Volunteer Policy is to:
 - a. Confirm the commitment of CIMS in involving volunteers
 - b. Recognise the contribution volunteers make to CIMS
 - c. Provide a basis for the expansion of volunteer involvement
 - d. Provide overall support, guidance and direction to staff and volunteers
 - e. Establish the values and standards of CIMS in its involvement with volunteers
 - f. Ensure decisions are made fairly
 - g. Clarify the status of volunteers and the boundaries between them and staff
 - h. Help to ensure the ongoing quality of both the volunteering opportunities on offer and the activities carried out by volunteers.
- ii. This policy is not, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or personal agreement.
- iii. CIMS reserves the right to change any aspect of the policy at any time after consultation with the relevant parties. This policy applies to all volunteer placements with CIMS regardless of activity. Certain items may be altered if a volunteer is being placed by a sponsoring agency.

4. Recruitment and Selection

- i. CIMS will list new projects on their volunteer website at the start of March (for April-September) and September (for October-March), although some may arise in between or are ongoing. Opportunities are shared as widely as possible.
- ii. Prospective volunteers will need to set up an account with the CIMS volunteer website. All are welcome to express an interest in the opportunities that are listed. On doing so, the volunteer's details will then be shared with the staff member responsible for that role.
- iii. Shortlisted volunteers will be asked to attend an informal interview, typically involving the role supervisor and/or another appropriate member of staff. Where past experience is not required, selections will be made on merit and attitude.

5. Induction and Training

- i. All volunteers will receive a general induction covering housekeeping issues, health and safety, the nature and purpose of the organisation, as well as the practicalities of the volunteer's role. They will be given an induction pack and asked to complete a personal details form and a paper-based safeguarding course.
- ii. Volunteers are recruited to fill specific, advertised roles and will be given a clearly defined role description as part of their induction pack.

- iii. Volunteers will also receive this Volunteer Policy and Agreement. The agreement outlines what volunteers can expect from CIMS and what CIMS can expect in return (Appendix 1). Volunteers will be asked to sign the agreement to acknowledge that they have read it and to confirm that intellectual property, including copyright, of anything brought into existence while they perform volunteer services shall belong to CIMS.
- iv. Volunteers will receive specific training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their role. The training should be appropriate to the complexity of the role and the capabilities of the volunteer.

6. Support, Supervision and Recording Time

- i. Each volunteer role will have an identified supervisor. This person will be responsible for ongoing guidance of the volunteer and shall be available for consultation and assistance. If the supervisor is unavailable, another staff member will be designated.
- ii. Volunteers can also contact the Project Coordinator with any queries.
- iii. Any risks to health and safety will be identified by workplace assessments and any preventative or protective methods will be undertaken. Volunteers will be told the identity of a competent person taking charge during an emergency and the names of the staff members responsible for first aid and health and safety.
- iv. CIMS is committed to creating an environment of positive development. We welcome feedback and encourage both volunteers and staff to exchange constructive comments at regular intervals, appropriate to the role being carried out.
- v. In-service training on effective volunteer engagement will be provided to members of staff who are involved in volunteer management.
- vi. At the end of each period of volunteering, the amount of time spent (excluding breaks e.g. lunch) should be logged by the volunteer using their online account. CIMS can provide internet access to enable volunteers to do this as required.

7. Volunteering Conditions

- i. Where necessary, written risk assessments will be produced for volunteer projects. This is a requirement under 'The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999'.
- ii. Volunteers will be supervised while they are in museum buildings and informed of all matters relating to their health and safety.

- iii. All volunteers are covered by Colchester Borough Council's insurance policies (including public liability) whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any activity on behalf of CIMS.
- iv. CIMS is committed to a policy of equal opportunities and the organisation is continually working to meet Arts Council England's Creative Case for Diversity.
- v. Volunteers will be issued with a name badge following their induction. These must be worn at all times whilst volunteers are in museum buildings for the purpose of security.

8. Expenses

- i. CIMS want to minimise the barriers to volunteering and support people to get involved. We are able to offer reimbursement for travel expenses up to the value of £4.00/day.
- ii. Expenses are subject to available funds for the relevant project and refunded monthly. They may only be claimed on presentation of a completed expense form and receipts.
- iii. The full procedure for reimbursement is outlined in the Volunteer Expenses Guidance.
- iv. It is the responsibility of volunteers claiming benefits to notify their benefits advisor of their intention to start volunteering.

9. Problem Solving

- i. Although CIMS make every effort to ensure that volunteer experience is positive and rewarding, we recognise that there are occasions when volunteers may wish to raise concerns. Volunteers have the right to raise any volunteering-related matter, for example regarding another volunteer, a member of the paid staff or their role. They should first discuss the issue at an informal meeting with their supervisor. The volunteer may be accompanied at this meeting. If the supervisor is the person who the concern involves, then the matter should be referred to their line-manager.
- ii. CIMS aims to resolve any problems quickly and amicably. If a member of staff raises a concern relating to a volunteer, the matter will once again be raised first at an informal discussion. We will look at what additional support might be required or if an alternative role might be more suitable.
- iii. Where a problem cannot be resolved, or it is deemed a serious breach of conduct or policy, CIMS may advise the individual that they are no longer a volunteer. All matters relating to complaints by or about volunteers will be treated in confidence.

10. Evaluation

- i. At the end of a volunteer's engagement with CIMS, they will be thanked for their contribution and invited to provide feedback about their experience to help improve the programme for future volunteers.
- ii. The Volunteer Policy and the procedures associated with it will be reviewed regularly, at least once every three years, and any amendments considered by the Museum Management Team.
- iii. CIMS is committed to monitoring its volunteer programme, including the number of volunteers, the amount of time the service has been supported, the range of opportunities offered and the impact volunteering has had on those involved. Data will be collected through the volunteer website and from volunteer/staff feedback.
- iv. An annual evaluation of volunteer engagement with CIMS will be conducted and used to formulate an action plan for future volunteer involvement.

Appendix A

CIMS Volunteer Agreement

Volunteers are an important and valued part of Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service. We hope that you enjoy volunteering with us and feel part of our team.

This agreement tells you what you can expect from us and what we hope for from you.

We, Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service (CIMS), will do our best to:

- introduce you to how the organisation works and your role in it.
- provide any training you need.
- provide you with a main point of contact, so that both sides can exchange feedback.
- respect your skills, dignity and individual wishes and to do our best to accommodate them.
- consult with you and keep you informed of possible changes.
- insure you against injury you may suffer or cause due to negligence.
- provide a safe environment in which to volunteer.
- apply our equal opportunities policy.
- resolve any issues that may arise.

I,, agree to do my best:

- To carry out tasks reliably and to the best of my ability.
- To give as much warning as possible whenever I cannot volunteer when expected.
- To abide by CIMS rules and procedures, including health and safety, equal opportunities, Museum Association Code of Ethics and confidentiality.
- And understand that any activity undertaken remains the property of CIMS.

This agreement is in honour only and is not intended to be a legally binding contract of employment.