

Brighton & Hove Libraries Volunteers Strategy

1) Introduction

The purpose of the Volunteers Strategy is to develop a coherent volunteer programme to deliver a range of added value outcomes across libraries. In particular Libraries Services wish to develop and improve services to housebound people in their own homes and to assist people to access information and services online, as well as developing volunteering opportunities across libraries as a whole. A key principle of the strategy is that paid library jobs will not be replaced by volunteers. Volunteers will not be used for core library functions or to run libraries but to complement rather than replace the work of paid staff.

2) Strategic Aims

The key strategic aims for libraries are:

- a) to best utilise partnerships across the City to build and enhance volunteering in library services
- b) to ensure equality and diversity in volunteering opportunities and ensure access to all members of the community
- c) to ensure adequate resourcing of volunteering development in library services

The above to operate in tandem with and contribute to the achievement of the citywide strategic priorities as laid out in '*Joining the Dots: a Triple Impact Volunteering Strategy for Brighton & Hove 2010-2015*':

- Increase numbers of volunteers in the City
- Expand access to volunteering for groups at risk of social exclusion
- Increase recognition and value volunteers and volunteering
- Improve experiences for volunteers, community activists and the organisations they volunteer for
- Enable development: build and influence an environment in which volunteering can have the maximum economic and social impact
- Ensure resources: measure the cost and impact of volunteering

3) Key Principles of Libraries Volunteer Strategy

Volunteering needs to be mutually beneficial to volunteers and the Libraries Service, systematically organised, managed and supported to ensure diversity and involvement of all of our communities.

Research into models of best practice in other authorities, discussions with local volunteering organisations, and consultation and discussion with staff and unions have resulted in the key principles for the Libraries Volunteering Strategy:

- a) Paid jobs will not be replaced by volunteers; volunteers will complement not replace the work of paid staff.
- b) Encourage voluntary participation by people from all sectors of the community
- c) Foster teamwork between volunteers and library staff, and help volunteers and staff grow in their respective roles
- d) Recognise and reward the invaluable contribution of volunteers to Brighton & Hove
- e) Ensure a positive volunteering experience for all those involved

4) Current Service Delivery

The volunteer strategy will develop, increase and organise volunteering in Brighton & Hove Libraries building on current volunteer work in libraries to deliver added value for a range of communities.

Volunteering opportunities in the library service currently include:

- Silver Surfers_ - volunteers help staff deliver one to one beginner sessions for people over 50 at Hove, Jubilee and Portslade Libraries.
- Housebound Library Service - a few volunteers deliver books to housebound people and there is also a pilot project in partnership currently taking place in the Hollingbury and Patcham area in partnership with the Neighbourhood Care Scheme. Further information about the Housebound Service is attached as *Appendix 1*
- Homework Clubs - young volunteers periodically assist study support staff
- Summer Reading Challenge- in 2010 young volunteers at Jubilee Library assisted library staff to run this annual reading project
- Volunteer input into some events and activities
- Council Connect - providing help accessing council services online, and other support to strengthen citizens digital skills. Further information about digital inclusion and the Council Connect pilot project is attached as *Appendix 2*. The role description for Council Connect volunteers is attached as *Appendix 3*

5) Framework for management and support

Up to now, volunteering in libraries has been limited and ad-hoc as there was no dedicated resource to develop, recruit and consistently support and manage this. Despite this, the number of people approaching libraries seeking to volunteer is increasing. In order to utilise, develop, increase and consistently manage and support this volunteering resource, the Libraries Service has recruited a dedicated volunteer manager.

Volunteer Manager

The volunteer Manager, working to the volunteering strategy strategic aims and key principles is the single point of contact for all volunteering, giving support and consistency across the service. Key responsibilities are to:

- Provide an innovative and integrated volunteering programme to provide added value and meet the changing needs of Brighton & Hove Libraries
- Work collaboratively with volunteer organisations and other partners promote the library volunteering programmes and community involvement
- Work closely with libraries staff
- Draw up clear role descriptions for volunteers
- Recruit, interview, assess and screen volunteers
- Welcome, induct and provide or facilitate training for volunteers
- Manage , supervise, support and develop
- Monitor and evaluate programmes
- Review regularly the guidance, strategic directions and procedures of Brighton & Hove volunteering programmes to ensure continuous improvement

The two initial priorities of the volunteer manager are to develop services to housebound people across Brighton & Hove and to support digital inclusion in libraries, in particular by providing help with accessing council services online via the Council Connect pilot project.

Library Staff

Library managers and front line staff and the volunteer manager will work closely together to develop, deliver and support the volunteering strategy. This will include:

- Library managers and front-line staff inputting into volunteer strategy planning
- Library managers and staff liaising with and supporting volunteers in libraries undertaking housebound delivery services etc
- The Library training manager and Staff Development Group working closely with the volunteer manager
- Library staff undertaking training required by particular projects - for example the Council Connect project
- Libraries supporting marketing and recruitment.

6) Consultation

Early drafts of this strategy were sent to staff, managers, trade unions and a range of partners and stakeholders and it has been amended in response to the range of comments received and meetings and discussions held. Agreement was achieved in January 2011 regarding the content of the

strategy. Managers have also visited every library to discuss the Volunteer Strategy with frontline staff.

The strategy will be reviewed on a regular basis. It will build on how volunteers are already used in libraries and support this process properly with a volunteer manager.

Staff and trade unions are being consulted on an ongoing basis about the potential role of volunteers and associated role descriptions.

7) Equalities

The volunteer strategy will deliver on a number of key targets in the Libraries Service Equalities Impact Assessment Action Plan in completing implementation of Equal Access Services Review and developing community engagement work to involve and empower a range of communities. It will deliver services and improve access to a range of priority equality groups and social inclusion key groups. In particular initially housebound and disabled people and people who are information poor/digitally excluded. The development of diverse volunteering opportunities will provide wide ranging opportunities encouraging participation by all members of the community bringing a number of benefits to volunteers including improving employability skills.

8) Policy Context

a) National:

i) Localism:

This volunteering strategy will help meet the Government's 'localism' agenda to:

- Encourage people to take an active role in their communities
- Take a range of measures to encourage volunteering and involvement in social action.

ii) Public Libraries:

Public Libraries across the country use volunteers to supplement their services, and this has been established practice for many years. Brighton & Hove Libraries Volunteer Strategy is firmly based in the community engagement activity of the service, and is designed to get people involved in their local services. It is not proposed to develop this into a more 'devolved' model where local services are passed over to local people to run themselves, as has been proposed in other authorities.

b) Local:

This volunteering strategy will build on, develop and increase service and city-wide volunteering opportunities and partnerships. It will deliver increased breadth and availability of activities and services, building on community engagement and partnership links and contribute significantly to the localism

and value for money agendas contributing to the delivery of the following citywide strategies and outcomes:

i) Improving the Customer Experience – part of the VFM2 Transformation Programme

Volunteers are key to helping deliver the Council Connect project, to support residents accessing council services and information in their local neighbourhoods. (See details of the project in appendix 2)

ii) 2020 Community Strategy

This strategy potentially helps deliver all eight priority areas, in that the Council Connect project will potentially help residents to access council and other public services more effectively. In particular, the strategy underpins the following priority areas:

- Providing quality advice and information services
- Strengthening communities and involving people
- Promoting enterprise and learning

iii) Joining The Dots - A Triple Impact Volunteering Strategy For Brighton & Hove

- Increase numbers of volunteers in the City
- Expand access to volunteering for groups at risk of social exclusion
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iv) Local Area Agreement (LAA)-current indicators

- NI 6 - Participation in volunteering: Develop the volunteering scheme within libraries to enhance opportunities within the community
- NI 141 Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living: Enhance the quality of life for vulnerable people through access to reading and culture

v) Intelligent Commissioning Outcome Areas

This strategy potentially helps deliver all of the outcome areas, in that the improved access to council services reaches across all service areas. In particular, the strategy underpins the engagement outcome:

- A city where people and communities get along, can take action and have their voices heard

9) Action Plan

Development of role descriptions for existing and new volunteering opportunities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Summer reading challenge volunteers• Housebound volunteers• Rare books volunteers	July – October 2011
Review resources required to maintain volunteering activities	September 2011
Evaluation and Review of Council Connect volunteering	October 2011
Consult staff and trade unions on any new volunteer roles as they are developed	Ongoing
Regularly review the effectiveness of volunteering programmes in each of the areas developed	Report annually
Include details of use of volunteers in the Libraries Plan which will be consulted on in autumn 2011	September – December 2011

Appendix 1

Housebound Library Service

The Home Delivery Services and the Mobile Library Cabinet Member Report of 15 September 2009 included improvements to services to people in residential care and the mobile library which have been progressing

In addition it agreed that a volunteer strategy should be developed to deliver library services to individual housebound people in their own homes. This was informed by consultation with a range of partners and stakeholders prior to Cabinet Member agreement of the report.

Some progress has been made with the a pilot project in partnership currently taking place in the Hollingbury and Patcham area in partnership with the Neighbourhood Care Scheme utilising existing Neighbourhood Care Scheme volunteers and recruiting new ones to deliver books to housebound people.

Appendix 2

Supporting Digital Inclusion in Libraries

Public Libraries nationally have pledged to get 500,000 new people online by 2012, in support of the Race Online 2012 campaign to reduce the 10 million people currently not digitally active.

Computers in Brighton & Hove libraries are widely used by people to access a wide range of information and services, with 68% of current users without Internet access at home, and there are 400,000 bookings for libraries' PCs each year.

Staff, particularly in community libraries, will always try to help customers but the capacity and time available for this varies depending on how busy the library is and their need to staff the counters, issue and discharge items, answer other enquiries.

Trained volunteer 'computer buddies', building on the successful silver surfer model available in libraries at designated times to provide guaranteed help to customers with accessing information would increase the breadth and availability of the service, assist the library staff, and in particular help deliver the Community Contact point pilot project to be delivered from January 2011.

Council Connect pilot project

This project has arisen from the Improving the Customer Experience Work Stream (ICE) of the Vfm2 Transformation Programme. The ICE programme Board is now part of the overall council vision outlined by the Chief Executive:

'A Council the City Deserves', as the third 'arm' of this vision, alongside the Intelligent Commissioning and the VFM programmes.

A report by the ICE Programme Board to Cabinet in April 2010 identified the need for the establishment of community contact points away from the located away from the city centre that could be contact or access points for council services. Most recently the project has been branded 'Council Connect' to encapsulate both connecting people via the internet to council services as well as connecting people to a range of other information and referral.

Council Connect will serve the needs of resident's who prefer personal contact by signposting, helping people to access services on line; or offering an initial gateway to services.

It will create low level points as an initial gateway to some services and support residents to self help. Specifically they will:

- Help channel shift by being an education point to support customers to access services in other ways
- Divert footfall away from the central access point
- Show a human face to the council
- Meet some residents preference for face to face contact during a time when services are moving to other access channels
- Increase footfall to Libraries or other community buildings
- Allow opportunities to explore how to create a focus in the community through the use of local volunteers

Appendix 3

Council Connect Library Volunteer Role Description

Council Connect Libraries Volunteers help members of the public access vital services in Brighton & Hove within the exciting and dynamic environment of one of the city's many community libraries.

You'll be helping people learn the range of services they can access through the council's web portal, both by raising awareness and by providing one to one direction.

From ordering a new bin to checking planning applications the council's portal offers a wide range of services that help make people's lives better, but not everyone has internet access at home or experience with computers. In libraries, Council Connect bridges that gap and the volunteers that help it run are an essential part of the community, providing excellent customer service and helping people connect with the council to access the services they need.

In addition to the council's own services Council Connect Volunteers also assist the public to learn about other services they could access. From the basics of getting online such as setting up an email account, to making purchases and social networking, they help people get up and running in the digital world.

Duties

- To assist in answering customer enquiries relating to the accessing of services in Brighton & Hove.
- To assist members of the public in the use of ICT equipment in order to access the council's online services.
- To assist members of the public to access information on local services both in the council and provided by outside organisations i.e. the Citizens Advice Bureau.
- To work with members of the public, both one to one and in groups, to promote learning on the possibilities of online interaction and the use of ICT equipment.
- To maintain a courteous and helpful environment in order to increase customer use of the service.
- To maintain the standards of the council's Equalities Policy.
- To comply with health and safety legislation.

Location & Time

Volunteering opportunities are currently available at all our community libraries. Times vary and can be flexible, we hope for a 4 hour per week commitment, but we try to place as many volunteers as possible whatever

they are able to give. In our experience both the volunteers and the service benefit the most from placements that last 6 months or more.

Selection

As volunteers come in to regular contact with vulnerable adults and children all Brighton & Hove City Council's volunteers are subject to a completed application form, informal interview, referencing, and Criminal Records Bureau checks.

Skills & Experience

It is essential for volunteers to already be comfortable with ICT equipment, preferably the use of Windows XP and Microsoft Internet Explorer. Previous experience of customer service or training is desirable, and volunteers require good communication and people skills. Knowledge of community languages would be welcome.

Training

Before you start:

You will receive written guidance on being a volunteer which will include general advice on health and safety, details of training courses, what to do if you are late or sick, claiming expenses and what support will be available in the future. Initial training will be provided on the council's services and web portal, these sessions will also be attended by paid staff.

When you start:

You will receive an induction and orientation session at the library you will be volunteering at, as well as health and safety training and guidance on working with vulnerable adults and children. Further ICT training will be made available if needed.

Ongoing support:

Staff within the libraries will provide ongoing support, and you will also receive monitoring and support from the Volunteers Manager. Ongoing training and courses will be identified as you and the role develop to ensure you are supported to develop new skills and enhance your volunteering role.

Boundaries

All volunteer roles within the library service support the existing work of paid staff and do not replace the work of paid staff. Support will be given by your supervisor and the Volunteers Manager to ensure that boundaries are maintained by staff and to ensure there is no replacement or substitution of staff by volunteers.

As a volunteer you are not contractually obliged to carry out the tasks listed above. Both the volunteer and Brighton & Hove City Council Libraries have the right to end the volunteer placement at any time.

What you can gain

This role would suit somebody that wants to gain experience in customer service and providing one to one support with ICT. Community libraries are busy, vibrant, and attract people from all parts of the community, so each day

will bring a new customer service challenge for you to learn from. If you're looking to start work then the training provided will put you in a stronger position at a competitive interview, and Brighton & Hove City Council Libraries are happy to provide references for all volunteers.

Review

We carry out reviews with volunteers to assess how they are settling in to the role, get feedback on their experiences so far, and to see what further support, if any, is needed in the future. This will happen after 4-8 weeks, depending on how many hours you are volunteering for each week.

