



North East Museums Volunteer Policy

Name of governing body: North East Museums Strategic Board

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Volunteer Policy

Purpose

This policy sets out North East Museums' approach to volunteering and explains the rights, responsibilities, support, and expectations for volunteers and staff working with volunteers.

North East Museums Mission

Our mission is to welcome and connect people to the past, present and future of the North East through stories, shared spaces and experiences.

We will help people understand and act on local and global challenges:

- **Equality** – we will provide a warm welcome to everyone, break down barriers caused by inequality and discrimination and share diverse stories.
- **Wellbeing** – we will use our spaces and services to support people's physical and mental health.
- **Social mobility** – we will deliver learning experiences, volunteering opportunities and pathways for personal development for people of all ages and backgrounds.
- **Climate** – we will raise awareness about the environment and encourage people to act for a sustainable future.
- **Place** – we will celebrate North East England, inspire local pride and use our resources to support research, innovation and economic regeneration.

Volunteers are essential to North East Museums in helping us deliver our mission and strategic goals. They contribute to ensuring that our museums, galleries and services are innovative, imaginative, creative, inclusive, safe and sustainable.

Volunteering with NEM provides opportunities for personal growth and development, enabling people to gain new skills, explore interests, build social connections, increase confidence, and enhance their health and wellbeing.

We want all our volunteers to have a positive, enjoyable and rewarding experience, and to feel recognised, supported and valued as part of the team delivering an outstanding museums service to communities across the North East and beyond.

Principles

Our volunteering policy is underpinned by the following principles:

- NEM will ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into the organisation.
- Volunteers complement and enhance the work of paid staff and do not replace paid roles.
- NEM expects that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers.

We expect all staff and volunteers to:

- treat staff and volunteer colleagues fairly and equally;
- value differences in others and their contribution;
- treat all people politely and with respect;
- be aware of their own behaviour, especially if it is likely to cause offence to other people
- not engage in, condone, or ignore inappropriate behaviour

- challenge inappropriate behaviour constructively;
- be supportive of other staff and volunteers;
- carry out any training and development as needed.

Recruitment

All prospective volunteers will be asked to register their details when applying for a role via our website. Volunteers without internet access can request a paper registration form from the Volunteering Office. An online account will be created on their behalf, which they can access when they are able to do so.

When applications are submitted, these details will be shared with the relevant supervisor or staff placement lead. The Volunteering Team can provide support if you need help completing your application.

As North East Museums (NEM) is part of Newcastle City Council, all successful applicants will be asked to disclose details of any unspent criminal convictions and any other information required under current DBS and safeguarding legislation.

For volunteer roles that are eligible for a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, we will carry out the appropriate level of check in line with current legislation and DBS guidance. Eligibility for a DBS check depends on the nature of the role and the activities involved. Criminal record information will be considered fairly, proportionately and on an individual basis as part of our safer recruitment processes. Having a criminal record will not automatically prevent someone from volunteering with North East Museums. Any information disclosed will be risk assessed in relation to the requirements of the role, safeguarding responsibilities, and relevant legal obligations.

Volunteer Agreements and Volunteer Role Description

Each volunteer will accept the expectations stated by NEM in a Volunteer Agreement. Volunteers will receive and agree to a written role description outlining the tasks and responsibilities associated with their role.

Volunteer Status

Volunteers are not employees of North East Museums and the Volunteer Agreement is not intended to create an employment relationship. The agreement outlines mutual expectations and commitments.

Expenses

Travel expenses

As a volunteer, you can claim the cost of travel to and from your volunteering location on the days you volunteer, as well as any additional travel required as part of your role (for example, travel between venues).

Please note:

- Travel expenses are not reimbursed for school, college, university, or work experience placements.
- We are unable to reimburse parking charges or tolls
- We are unable to reimburse taxi expenses. Taxis are only used in exceptional circumstances and in those cases will be booked by NEM.

Guidance on how to submit a claim is provided during induction and in the Volunteer Handbook.

Induction and Training

All prospective volunteers must attend an NEM induction session. In addition, each volunteer role will include a venue-specific and role-specific induction. During the NEM induction we will cover awareness of relevant policies including Health and Safety, Safeguarding, and Equality, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging.

Additional training will be tailored to meet individual and organisational needs.

Certain volunteer roles require mandatory training which must be completed within a specified timeframe in order to continue in the role.

Support

We are committed to removing barriers to volunteering. If you require any adjustments or additional support, we will work with you to develop a Volunteer Inclusion Plan that helps ensure your volunteering experience is accessible and inclusive.

All volunteers will have a named contact as their main point of support. They will receive regular supervision, guidance, and feedback on their progress. Volunteers will also have the opportunity to discuss future development and raise any concerns with this contact.

Volunteer supervisors are supported by the Volunteering team to work effectively with volunteers. Additional training can also be provided to support wider teams working alongside volunteers.

Insurance

NEM provides Employers Liability, Public Liability and Professional Indemnity cover for all volunteers whilst working on NEM activities.

Equal Opportunities

North East Museums is committed to equality, equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging. We welcome volunteers from all backgrounds and will make reasonable adjustments, where possible, to support participation and remove barriers to volunteering.

NEM's Equality, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy applies to both paid staff and volunteers. All volunteers are expected to uphold these principles in their conduct, behaviour and interactions with colleagues, visitors, partners and fellow volunteers.

Safeguarding

North East Museums is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk. All volunteers are expected to follow safeguarding policies and procedures and to report any concerns appropriately.

Health and Safety

North East Museums is committed to providing a safe environment for volunteers. Volunteers are expected to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their actions, and to follow all relevant health and safety guidance.

Problem Solving

NEM aims to resolve issues at the earliest possible stage. A process has been drawn up for dealing with complaints either by or about volunteers and is included in the Volunteer Handbook.

Confidentiality and Intellectual Property Rights

Volunteers will be bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as paid staff. Volunteers must keep confidential any information about NEM they become aware of through their

volunteering that is not in the public domain. Volunteers are required to assign copyright to NEM of any work produced as part of their volunteering role or activity, unless otherwise agreed.

NEM will process and store volunteer information in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. In complying with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, NEM will treat volunteer information confidentially, including any monitoring data we are required to collect. The information will be held while there is a legitimate business purpose for doing so. Volunteers have the right to request to see all the information held about them by NEM. Volunteer information, such as application information, and any reports regarding conduct concerns, will be stored in a safe and secure location.

Monitoring and Evaluation

North East Museums is committed to understanding and demonstrating the impact of volunteering. We will regularly collect and review information relating to volunteer participation, volunteer experience, visitor engagement and organisational outcomes. This may include volunteer hours, surveys, feedback, case studies and other evaluation methods. The information gathered will be used to improve volunteering opportunities and demonstrate the contribution volunteers make to our mission and strategic goals.