Volunteering Policy

Overview: The Trusts take the wellbeing of volunteers very seriously.

Volunteers are essential to the running of the West House and the Heath Robinson Museum and their commitment and enthusiasm is appreciated by The Trusts. The Trusts are committed to providing an enjoyable and safe environment for Volunteers and on-going support from the Management Board and the Trusts whether they are volunteering as front-of-house, directly with the collection, in marketing, facilities management or any other role.

The Trusts define volunteers as those who are under no obligation to perform duties and who have no expectation of, and do not receive any, remuneration for the time that they spend volunteering for the museum.

The relationship between volunteers and the organisation does not create a legally binding contract or a relationship of employment between the Museum and the volunteer.

The Trusts accept volunteers on the understanding that their services are received at its sole discretion, and that a volunteer's relationship with the organisation may be terminated by either side at any time without notice and for whatever reason.

Volunteers are not a substitute for employees and the Trusts do not recruit volunteers to displace them.

Recruitment: Volunteers are the face of the organisation and recruiting sufficient volunteers is crucial to successful museum operations. The Trusts are committed to engaging and developing a diverse volunteer body, primarily from the local community.

Volunteer Role Descriptions: Each voluntary role is defined by a specific role description which should be made available to the volunteer. This will clearly set out what the role is and the range of tasks the volunteers will need to perform.

Specific roles for volunteers make it easier to manage volunteers and to plan what resources, training and supervision is required. Clear roles give volunteers status and a sense of responsibility.

When the organisation has opportunities for volunteers, these role descriptions will be advertised so volunteers can be aware of the opportunities available.

Application process: A formal application process is in place and all prospective volunteers will be asked to fill in a Volunteer Enquiry Form from which it will be determined whether they are suitable to be interviewed, and if so, then be interviewed by the line manager. If the volunteer is successful at interview, they will be required to complete a Volunteer Application Form. If the volunteer is under 16 they must complete a Young Volunteer Application form which requires a signature from a parent or guardian. The museum's decision on suitability of a prospective volunteer is absolute and final.

Individuals from outside the European Economic Area must ensure that they have a visa which permits them to volunteer in the UK for the Museum before applying to be a volunteer.

All individuals will be required to undergo reference checks before they are formally accepted as volunteers.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks: All volunteers who require DBS will be DBS checked before the commencement of their volunteering relationship with the organisation; when advertising new volunteer roles, this should be clearly stated. Checks for eligible volunteers (students who require them to do this role for their course are not eligible) are free of charge. The Trusts must tell the applicant why they are being DBS checked and where they can get independent advice should they wish to do so.

A DBS check has no official expiry date. Any information included will be accurate at the time the check was carried out. It is the decision of the Trusts to have all DBS checks renewed every 3 years utilising the online DBS update service where possible.

Induction and training: Volunteers are provided with an induction and initial training appropriate to their volunteer role. This will always include a summary of the role, details of any space or equipment provision and relevant health and safety information. Further training can be arranged with and by the Museum Manager, Operations Assistant and/or the Learning Officer.

A programme of ongoing training will be produced and implemented by the Museum Manager and Operations Assistant. This will cover a range of subjects such as: the museum's vision and values, knowledge of Heath Robinson, ethos of the museum and West House, health and safety (including what to do in an emergency), safeguarding and working with young people and vulnerable adults, expenses, security, and structure of the museum team. Additional specific training will be given for the different roles the volunteers will undertake.

Team training will be given in:

- Dealing with Emergency situations
- Customer care and the visitor experience
- Retail and till operation
- Basic collections security & care
- Learning programme and working with schools
- Current and upcoming temporary exhibitions
- Health & Safety

Additional specific training will be given in the following for volunteers whose roles include:

- Exhibition installation
- Marketing and publicity
- Research
- Collection digitisation
- Advanced collections care

Expenses: The Trusts are able to reimburse public transport travel expenses between the volunteer's home and the Museum to a maximum of £5 per day. The Trust will not pay mileage to any volunteers except in exceptional circumstance where transport costs are incurred beyond what is reasonably expected. For all expense claims the volunteers will need to have receipts for the full amount claimed. Decisions about expenses will be made by the Trusts.

Supervision and support: The Trusts are committed to ensuring that all volunteering experiences are enjoyable, rewarding and safe. All volunteers can (in the first instance) contact the Museum Manager with any queries or concerns.

Diversity and equality: The Trusts are committed to developing a diverse volunteer body and to making volunteering opportunities as accessible and responsive as possible to the different needs of its volunteers.

The Museum Manager, Learning Manager and the Operations Assistant will discuss any needs that prospective or existing volunteers may have in order to identify the best volunteering opportunities available and to support their full and safe involvement. When required, the Trusts will make reasonable adjustments to volunteering roles where possible.

Students: Students in the area will be encouraged to apply for student placements and work experience at the museum to gain general experience in visitor services and learning. They will be integrated into the volunteer programme but given a range of duties as agreed with their course leaders. This may include visitor services, exhibition and curatorial work and research. There will also be opportunities for students from Year 11, 12 and 13 at local schools, who are working with the museum to exhibit their work for Art and Design courses also to receive basic training in stewarding of their own exhibition; how to meet and greet visitors and talk about the purpose of the exhibition. These activities will be coordinated by the Learning Officer, working with the Museum Manager and Operations Assistant. The museum does not accept volunteers under the age of 14.

Health and safety and indemnity: The Trusts are committed to ensuring that all volunteering experiences are safe. Volunteers are asked to attend an induction and any additional training or support sessions necessary in order to meet health and safety requirements.

The Trusts will indemnify volunteers and hold them free from liability for civil liability to any person as the result of personal injury loss or damage arising from the execution or

purported execution of tasks assigned to them on any museum premises. This indemnity will not apply where a volunteer acts negligently, recklessly or in bad faith.

Data Protection: All data relating to volunteers will be held securely, will be used only for the reasons for which it was collected, and will not be shared with third parties, in line with our policy on data protection.

Confidentiality: All volunteers are expected to observe confidentiality regarding any information that they receive whilst volunteering and must not pass confidential information on to other volunteers or outsiders nor exchange information that is detrimental to the organisation. Unless in the possession of written authorisation from the appropriate Trustee or the Museum Manager, no volunteer has authority to represent the organisation or commit the organisation in any way.

Volunteer retention: Retaining volunteers is much easier than recruiting new ones. In order to retain volunteers, the museum should make each volunteer feel useful and well-managed as well as having fun and being part of a good team environment.

Volunteer handbook: A handbook containing all pertinent policies and procedures as well as helpful details and advice for volunteers should be given to each volunteer during their induction.

Volunteers' comments / concerns: Retaining volunteers is vital and by listening to volunteers, problems can be halted before they take hold. A medium by which volunteers can provide feedback will be provided. Private comments or concerns by volunteers can be raised with the Operations Assistant in the first instance or alternatively the Museum Manager, Learning Officer, or the Management Board.

Volunteer agreement/What to do if things go wrong: These two documents are available separately and should be considered in conjunction with this policy. They are also included in the Volunteers' Handbook.

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years.

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: 11/9/2024

Date at which this policy is due for review: 1/9/2027