

# **DORSET NATURAL HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

## **VOLUNTEER POLICY**

**Name of Museum:** Dorset Museum & Art Gallery

**Name of Governing Body:** Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society

**Policy approved by the Board of DNHAS:** July 2023

**Policy review date:** July 2024

### **1. Introduction to Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society and Dorset Museum & Art Gallery**

Run by the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society (DNHAS), Dorset Museum & Art Gallery is the only one that tells the story of Dorset in its entirety. Covering 250 million years, the collections are of international significance and demonstrate the breadth of the county's story and its relevance to all.

Our Vision is to collect, reveal and inspire connections with the universal themes of Dorset's story, while our Mission is to be the prime destination to discover and enjoy the richness of Dorset's natural, historical and cultural heritage, and appreciate the impact of the county and its people on our understanding of the wider world. Our strategic aims to reach larger and broader audiences and encourage deeper engagement with our collections, to care for our collections and for visitors to understand the work we do with them, and to be a sustainable museum.

### **2. Purpose of the volunteer policy**

By adopting this policy DNHAS aims to:

- highlight and acknowledge the value of the contribution made by volunteers;
- reflect the purpose, values, standards and strategies of the organisation in its approach to involving volunteers;
- recognise the respective roles, rights and responsibilities of volunteers;
- confirm this organisation's commitment to involving volunteers in its work;
- establish clear principles for the involvement of volunteers; and
- ensure the ongoing quality of both the volunteering opportunities on offer and the work carried out by our volunteers;

This policy provides an overview of the activities carried out by volunteers currently and provides a basis for the expansion, if required, for the role of volunteers alongside paid staff.

### **3. Why do we involve volunteers?**

Volunteers make a vital contribution to the aims of Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society.

We recognise the added value that volunteers bring to our organisation and those who use our services. Volunteer involvement in this organisation does not replace or devalue the role of paid staff.

Within DNHAS volunteers are involved in:

- Collections management support
- Gallery stewarding
- Supporting the delivery of formal and informal learning programmes
- Supervising the Museum's Library
- Supporting the visitor welcome and retail team
- Providing technical and facilities management support

It is recognised that members of the DNHAS Board also serve in a voluntary capacity, though subject to different regulations and procedures than our regular volunteer base.

DNHAS aims to have a reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship with our volunteers; with their involvement informing and developing our work, and our work enabling individuals to learn skills and achieve personal development through their volunteering.

The involvement of volunteers will be guided by the following principles of good practice:

- the tasks to be performed by volunteers will be clearly defined through role profiles, so that everyone is sure of their respective roles and responsibilities;
- the organisation will comply with the Data Protection Act in the use of data held on all volunteers;
- volunteers will be provided with regular opportunities to share ideas/concerns with a named contact;
- all existing and future policies will be checked as to how they affect volunteers.

As well as regular voluntary involvement throughout the year, voluntary involvement can also take the form of structured work experience placements through schools, youth organisations and higher education establishments, helping to offer practical insights to help prepare for the world of work.

While most volunteer work is carried out on site, some volunteer work supports the Museum & Art Gallery's outreach programme while other tasks can be carried out remotely with agreement of the staff team.

#### **4. Recruitment and Selection**

DNHAS offers a range of volunteer roles, as outline in Section 3. Vacancies for some roles, particularly within the collections team, will depend on staff capacity to manage new volunteer members. Role profiles for current opportunities are available to download from the website, or hard copies can be posted.

All potential volunteers are asked to complete an application form and provide two references. If these are satisfactory and there is a suitable vacancy in one of the volunteer

teams, the prospective volunteer is invited to meet their prospective staff supervisor for an informal discussion. This is an opportunity for the prospective volunteer and the supervisor to discuss the role, the applicant's availability, and agree that the role is mutually beneficial.

Each successful volunteer will receive a letter of formal accreditation.

We receive a high volume of offers to volunteer with us, and there is no guarantee that we will be able to accept every volunteer who registers their interest.

## **5. Induction and training**

A suitably trained member of staff will carry out an induction for every new volunteer. An induction checklist, which will include the following items, will be completed and held on record:

- Health and Safety
- Fire procedures including location of fire exits
- A tour of the site and museum, highlighting all facilities
- Procedures for signing in and out of the building
- The typical number of hours and timing of activity to be undertaken
- Confirmation of who is the supervisor for the role
- Confirm emergency contact details
- Procedures or routines relevant to the volunteer's role
- Procedures for claiming expenses, where relevant

The new volunteer is issued with the Volunteer Handbook, and asked to sign a volunteer agreement.

New volunteers are requested to complete a series of virtual courses including Health & Safety, Disability and Awareness and Customer Care.

Where there is specific training required for a role, this will be highlighted as part of the recruitment process.

Volunteers can access training opportunities which are relevant to their volunteering role throughout their time with DNHAS. Opportunities for training will form part of the discussions at support and supervision sessions with supervisors.

## **6. Support and Supervision**

Once placed, DNHAS will expect volunteers to comply with existing policies and procedures.

All volunteers will have an induction to their volunteering which will involve an overview of the relevant policies and procedures, and a building orientation.

Following Induction, volunteers will have regular support and supervision meetings with their named supervisor to identify areas for development, or to discuss any issues.

Where volunteers have holidays or other commitments which mean that they cannot attend their normal volunteering, they should advise their named supervisor to ensure that DNHAS can arrange alternative cover. If volunteers require a longer break from their volunteering, they should discuss this with their supervisor. DNHAS will endeavour to be as flexible as possible to accommodate the needs of volunteers. However, DNHAS cannot guarantee a volunteering role.

## **7. Expenses**

DNHAS are not able to provide travel expenses for working on site, unless for a short-term placement where the volunteer is in full-time education.

DNHAS can cover volunteer expenses for any travel required to external venues, such as travelling to training courses or to outreach events. Under exceptional circumstances to enable volunteers to participate in specific projects and activity, funding may be available to meet volunteer expenses beyond the criteria outlined above.

## **8. Use of Volunteers**

While DNHAS welcomes and relies on the work of its volunteers the responsibility for the running of the Society lies with its Director and Board and as such final decisions as to the use made of volunteers and their involvement in the work of the Society lies with the Board and the Director.

## **9. Insurance**

All accredited volunteers are covered by the DNHAS's Public Liability Insurance policy.

## **10. Equality and diversity**

We respect and value diversity within our volunteering team. While we are committed to equal opportunities for all, we recognise that to promote inclusion for those who are under-represented in the museum sector, we need to offer innovative opportunities that build skills and experience for a wider range of people.

Therefore, we encourage applicants who are under-represented in our current volunteering team to apply, including ethnically diverse applicants, applicants with a disability or who are neurodivergent, and applicants from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

The acceptance of a volunteer for a particular role will be made on the individual's suitability to carry out the specified tasks, subject to the needs and restrictions of the museums.

## **11. Health and safety**

DNHAS are committed to ensuring volunteer's safety and we expect volunteers to contribute to maintaining a safe environment for visitors, other volunteers and staff. Health and Safety

information is provided within the Volunteers Handbook. Any information needed onsite will be explained in your induction or by your Supervisor.

Lone working for volunteers is not permitted. The Society cannot take responsibility to ensure the health and safety of volunteers working alone.

## **12. Safeguarding**

To safeguard the welfare of vulnerable children and adults, DNHAS is guided by its Safeguarding Policy.

If anyone (staff, volunteer, students or member of the public) has concerns over a child/vulnerable adult or a child/vulnerable adult confides in a member of staff in relation to another member of staff/volunteer's or student's actions, they should report this immediately to a Designated Safeguarding Officer. There are six trained Designated Safeguarding Officers based on site and can be identified in posters placed at the entrance to the Museum & Art Gallery, in the Volunteer breakroom, and in the Learning Centre.

Where there is a requirement for a Disclosure Check for a particular role, this will be highlighted as part of the volunteer recruitment process.

### **Data Protection and Confidentiality**

Records are kept for all our volunteers. These records include contact details for the volunteer and their emergency contact, a record of the projects worked on, training undertaken, areas of interest, and the hours volunteered on a project.

Data collection and processing is in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation 2016, and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Online records for all DNHAS volunteers are kept on the online volunteering system Better Impact, whose privacy policy complies with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016, and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Any hard copy personal data is held securely either at Dorset Museum in a locked filing cabinet.

Any digital documents containing personal information are held on a password-protected computer database, and/ or the volunteering platform, and will not be shared with third parties.

To maintain up to date records, volunteers should amend any changes to personal details, address or contact details on the Better Impact platform My Profile section or notify their supervisor of changes required.

### **13. Copyright**

All written and photographic material, whether held on paper, electronically or magnetically, which was made or acquired by a volunteer during the course of volunteering is the property and copyright of the Dorset Museum & Art Gallery.

### **14. Problem solving for both the museum and for volunteers**

Where a concern is highlighted – either by a volunteer or about a volunteer, this will be dealt with firstly informally through their supervisor. If an informal approach cannot resolve the issue then it will be referred to the Director who will conduct an investigation and resolution. The decision of the Director as to the outcome of any problem is final. Volunteers are not employees and are not subject to the formal grievance procedure.

### **15. Review of volunteering policy**

This volunteer policy is reviewed annually, to ensure it is in keeping with current changes within the organisation and voluntary sector.