

Volunteer Role Description: Events and Activities Helper

About Events and Activities Volunteering

This role involves helping with one-off museum events and activities opportunities, throughout the year. Visitors to these events hugely benefit from and value their interactions with volunteers. Volunteers serve as the 'friendly face' of the Museums: engaging visitors and guests, pointing them in the right direction, answering practical questions, and generally being warm and helpful. They might be handing out event or activity resources, explaining what to do, helping visitors with activities, helping people find their way around, taking names, keeping track of visitor numbers, or encouraging visitors to take part or fill in questionnaires.

The types of events and activities volunteers help with include:

- **Family-focused events** (Timings vary, but Saturday afternoons throughout the year and weekday afternoons in school holidays are most common)
Volunteers assist staff to welcome visitors and to encourage them to join in a range of activities, e.g. crafts, trails, games, object handling, photography, storytelling, planting, and interactive challenges. Volunteers also help to keep resources stocked and tidy and answer basic enquiries, and help with evaluation.
- **Adult-focused late night events** (usually Friday evenings, timings vary but typically from 7-10pm)
Volunteers might assist in delivering activities, in a similar way to volunteering at family events, or they might also take on more of a stewarding role.
- **Private views** (usually weekday evenings); **conferences and lectures** (usually day time)
Volunteers take on a stewarding role to engage with visitors and guests, making sure they know where they need to be and are enjoying themselves. Volunteers might hand out programmes, assist in the cloakroom, or encourage visitors to fill in questionnaires/give donations.
- **School groups** (timings vary but are typically 10 am - 2.30 pm on weekdays in term time).
Volunteers assist museum education staff to engage students on our larger school event days, with specific activities, e.g. object handling, photography, or practical investigations. Volunteers ask students questions and give them encouragement and support.
- **'Admin' activities** (usually week days)
Volunteers sometimes take on more of an admin assistance role by helping museum departments with data input, poster delivery, online or telephone research, event prep (e.g. cutting up collage materials ready for family activities, photocopying, laminating) and envelope stuffing. Many of these opportunities involve working methodically and in bulk, with good attention to detail.

Further information

These opportunities are *ad hoc* and irregular. The Volunteer Service advertises them by email to all active volunteers who have indicated an interest in such opportunities. At certain times of year there are fewer opportunities than at others. Most events and activities have sufficient levels of supervision for 16 & 17 year olds to be able volunteer. Some events are not suitable for under 18's - if this is the case this will be stated in our plea for help.

The majority of events and activities take place within the museum venues, in gallery spaces or designated education areas. At the Botanic Garden and Arboretum these spaces are

mostly outdoors. Occasionally volunteers are invited to support our events at other venues in Oxford or Oxfordshire (e.g. children's centres), in which case transport might be provided. Volunteers usually work in small groups to facilitate activities and events, but volunteer numbers per event range from 1 to 10+. Volunteers may be positioned by themselves or in pairs, as part of a wider team, including staff from Public Engagement / Front of House teams. Event helper volunteers are always supported by a member of Public Engagement, Front of House or other member of staff, and are not responsible for visitor behaviour or belongings.

Commitment

There is no minimum commitment. We recruit as and when and usually accept offers on a first-come, first-served basis (we do turn down offers of help when an opportunity is oversubscribed). Activities typically last 2-4 hours, plus 30 - 45 minutes' briefing, and staff are always grateful for extra help tidying up afterwards. At events which last all day, volunteers might choose to help all day or a morning/afternoon session.

About Events and Activities Volunteers

- You will enjoy welcoming, meeting and talking to people of all ages and backgrounds, and be confident interacting with everyone from families to VIP guests.
- Enthusiasm for the collections is more important than expertise, but even more important is a good knowledge of what's where and how to find it.
- Things don't always go to plan, so a flexible approach is key.
- You will demonstrate a sense of responsibility in representing the Museums and appreciate the importance of excellent customer service.
- Most opportunities require standing for the duration of the session and/or being in a busy and hectic environment. Many of the activities also require a good level of manual dexterity. Please advise us if you have any concerns about this, and we will do our best to support you.
- You will demonstrate a sense of discretion if working with personal contact details as part of your task, or if privy to private conversations in an office environment.
- A polite, confident, and personable manner is important. Whilst some opportunities involve working independently, some opportunities do involve team work, e.g. helping as part of a production line to complete a large mail out.
- Flexibility and understanding are also key as many opportunities are by their nature last-minute.

Training

Staff will typically explain the activities at a briefing on the day/evening, but they may also ask to meet, or may send additional information by email, in advance.

Expenses

Volunteers may claim travel expenses of up to £4.20 per event from the Volunteer Service upon production of an original receipt.

Why you might enjoy this role

The opportunity to:

- join a friendly, enthusiastic, and supportive team of volunteers
- use your great customer service skills to enhance people's visits
- interact with and inspire young people
- meet people of all ages and backgrounds
- contribute to the Museums' public engagement and accessibility remit
- gain an insight in to museum education
- improve your awareness of the collections and buildings
- build your confidence and customer service skills