

cultural volunteer ©

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WELCOME!

cultural volunteer (cv) is a free e-news and information service for arts management professionals. **cv** is published six times a year and comes to you from Lynn Blackadder, of Arts People and Projects arts management consultancy www.lynnblackadder.com. You can choose to read **cv** in email or as a Word attachment. I hope you enjoy **cv**, but if you don't wish to receive future issues, please return this email typing 'unsubscribe' in the subject line.

IN THIS ISSUE ...

This month **cv** hears about volunteering at the **National Maritime Museum, Greenwich**, and looks at security-clearing volunteers and what you can expect from the **Criminal Records Bureau**.

WHY YOU SHOULD READ **cv** ...

cv is for arts management professionals who currently involve volunteers in their organisations, and for those who don't, but would like to find out more about volunteers.

cv aims to raise awareness of the resource cultural volunteers represent, and how to utilise it effectively.

cv actively campaigns for the recognition and progression of volunteers working in arts organisations.

cv can help you to better understand the nature of volunteering and how it relates to your organisation.

cv will regularly bring to your attention useful information, resources and commentary on volunteering in the cultural sector. Experts on volunteer management will feature, and we will explore topics raised by you in future issues.

FEATURE: Mark Grover, Deputy Head of Visitor Services at the National Maritime Museum, reveals what the Museum has learned from its volunteer programme

The main volunteer programme at the National Maritime Museum sits with the Visitor Services Department. The potential contribution of volunteers is often overlooked and it has been extremely rewarding to see the significant contribution that volunteers can offer. Our volunteer programme is now well established and volunteers are seen as integral to the work of the Museum.

Students that have recently completed qualifications, people that are returning to work following a gap in employment or people looking for a career change have all found the experience invaluable. Volunteers help us to:

- Enhance the visitor experience by providing detailed information about services and displays.
- Actively assist visitors in finding the galleries that most interest them.

- Maximise the educational value school parties derive from their visits.
- Provide organisational support for the Museum's programme of interpretative events.
- Increase the Museum's capacity to provide entertaining and interesting tours to visitors.

Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of the Programme are to:

- Encourage people to use existing skills and develop new talents in a unique environment.
- Create an opportunity to serve the community, helping visitors enjoy the Museum as part of the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site.
- Provide an additional valuable resource to support NMM staff.

Major learning points so far

Quick and effective induction for volunteers is essential. Volunteers must feel confident in what is often a very different type of working environment. As a result, we have put together a 'buddy' scheme similar to the type of induction received by all our Front of House Gallery Assistants. By completing the induction checklist under the guidance of an experienced staff member, volunteers are guaranteed a quality induction.

It's essential to match the desires of the volunteer with the type of role he or she undertakes. Different people volunteer their time for different reasons, so we have to understand a volunteer's motivations early in the relationship.

Any programme needs to be structured enough to give clear guidance and roles, but this shouldn't stop you investigating new possibilities as opportunities arise.

Links with other organisations

I have discussed the ups and downs of our experiences with a number of other museums, and a fact-finding trip to Imperial War Museum North was extremely helpful.

We have established a valuable relationship with local employment agencies aiming to reintroduce long term unemployed people to the workplace. Three of the five people introduced to us via this initiative are now employed at the Museum. In the future we would like to be more fully involved with local Volunteer Networks.

A Museums Volunteer Forum Group

I'd like to hear from other Volunteer Managers at Museums in the South East who are interested in setting up a Museums Volunteer Forum Group. If you think this is a good idea or would like to share your experiences, please contact me at MDGrover@nmm.ac.uk.

Mark was interviewed by Fiona Thompson, a freelance arts writer. You can see Fiona's work at www.wordspring.co.uk.

ANALYSIS: Lynn Blackadder on the CRIMINAL RECORDS BUREAU

Do your volunteers work with children or other vulnerable members of society? Are they security-cleared? I talked to the CRB to find out how to go about it.

Why security-clear your volunteers?

If your staff and volunteers work with members of the public – either supervised or on their own – you should consider asking them to apply for security clearance. In fact, in some professions such as education and healthcare, workers must be cleared through the Criminal Record Bureau's Disclosure

Service. Adults with previous convictions of a certain nature, e.g. sex-related crimes, are not legally permitted to work with children or vulnerable adults in most situations, and legislation is in place to guide the professions on what is required (e.g. the Care Standards Act 2000).

However, having a criminal record need not always mean that volunteers can't be involved. It will depend on the nature of the record. Someone who has a record of petty theft from 20 years ago shouldn't have this held against them, and they shouldn't necessarily be excluded on this basis. And some volunteer programmes are now specifically aimed at offenders.

Anyone wishing to volunteer should be aware of the need for security-checking. It's helpful at interview stage to explain the procedure, and to be clear that having a record might not exclude people from volunteering. Volunteers often offer information on previous convictions themselves, particularly if they are in the distant past.

What is the Criminal Records Bureau?

The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) is an executive agency of the Home Office. It was set up to 'help organisations make safer recruitment decisions' by providing access to criminal record information. The CRB helps employers in the public, private and voluntary sectors to identify candidates who may be unsuitable for certain work, especially that involving contact with children or other vulnerable members of society.

The CRB's Disclosure Service is designed to provide relevant information to many more organisations than previously had access. In the past, organisations engaging volunteers in particular had limited and inadequate access to such checks.

What is Disclosure?

The Disclosure Service provides different levels of information about prospective job candidates or volunteers. Selecting the appropriate level depends on the position applied for and the type of work involved. Some positions naturally require more in-depth and more confidential information about an applicant than other positions.

All Disclosures are obtained via the one-stop shop of the CRB which consolidates data and information from a number of different sources. There are three levels of Disclosure:

- Enhanced: provides details of all information held about the applicant on the Police National Computer Information database, including convictions, nature of offence, reprimands, cautions, and other supplementary information.
- Standard: provides details of convictions only.
- Basic: not yet known.

The two higher levels of Disclosure (Standard and Enhanced) are aimed at protecting the vulnerable, so these apply to professions such as healthcare and education, and in some instances other professions where there is deemed to be a significant element of trust, e.g. the accountancy and legal professions. The other level (Basic) is not yet available but will apply to all other types of occupation.

Disclosures are only made with the consent of the individual applicant and are submitted by the employing organisation, which has to be registered with the Disclosure service. Applicants have to fill in a straightforward form themselves, giving their authority for the organisation to carry out a check, and this is countersigned by an authorised signatory from the potential employer. After processing, separate copies are sent to both the individual applicant and the registered organisation with full details of any convictions (in line with the level applied for).

What does it cost?

As a relatively new organisation, the CRB is still finding its feet, and isn't quite yet self-financing – though it aims to be. Currently, organisations wishing to use the service need to register with the CRB and pay a one-off fee of £300 which lasts for ten years and which covers all levels of Disclosure. A further one-off fee of £5 is also required per additional person in the organisation wishing to have the authority to countersign applications for higher-level Disclosures. Finally, organisations have to pay a fee for each Disclosure requested: £12 for Standard and £29 for Enhanced. As you can imagine, this could be very costly but, thankfully, volunteer-involving organisations are not required to pay fees for volunteer applicants.

How long does it take?

The CRB claims that it takes a minimum of six weeks to register an organisation. 90% of its applications for Enhanced disclosure are turned around in four weeks, and 90% of Standard disclosures in two weeks. And 90% of all calls to the CRB are answered within 20 seconds.

What about the under 16s?

People under the age of 16 don't have criminal records. If you don't think it's over the top, you can still ask people to provide a reference, which is generally good practice when involving volunteers.

You can find out more about the CRB at their web site <http://www.crb.gov.uk/>, and the site that deals specifically with Disclosure <http://www.disclosure.gov.uk>, or via the Information Line on 0870 9090811.

GOOD PRACTICE MINI GUIDES

The National Centre for Volunteering has published a new series of mini guides at £2.50 each (including p+p) which you can order online at www.volunteering.org.uk/publications, or by calling 020 7520 8936. Areas covered are:

- Deciding Whether to Involve Volunteers.
- Making Your Organisation Accessible.
- Risk Management.
- Safe Involvement of Volunteers with Vulnerable Clients.
- Selecting Volunteers.

FUNDING REMINDER – The Nationwide Foundation www.nationwidefoundation.org.uk

Are you looking for funds to support a volunteer programme aimed at reaching those most at disadvantage in your community? The Nationwide Foundation will contribute up to £10,000 (maximum grant) to UK based organisations whose aim is to improve the quality of life and the range of opportunities for those in need. Through its grants the Foundation seeks to promote social inclusion and achieve real and sustainable benefit to communities. To qualify for a grant, projects must:

- Benefit disadvantaged people by involving them in volunteering opportunities.
- Concern volunteers working for the benefit of disadvantaged groups.
- Provide opportunities for training, further education and employment for volunteers.

Typical projects supported include volunteer co-ordinator salaries, volunteers' training expenses and recruitment, and childcare, travel and support costs. The application process is straightforward and arts organisations recently supported include Islington Arts Factory in London and Radio Regen in Manchester. For further information call 01793 657183, or email the.foundation@nationwide.co.uk.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEERING CONVENTION

This year's Convention is taking place from 16-18 September in London, and is an opportunity to increase your knowledge through a range of plenary sessions, practical workshops and networking. For information, email convention@thecentre.org.uk.

EVALUATING THE SUCCESS OF VOLUNTEER PROGRAMMES

Volunteer Development England – the membership organisation for 358 Volunteer Development Agencies (mostly Volunteer Bureaux) – has just published an evaluation of the Millennium Volunteers Programme in England by participating organisations. Launched in 1999, Millennium Volunteers encourages young people to volunteer through a system of nationally recognised awards after completing 100 and 200 hours of volunteering. One of the key findings of the report was that the requirement for participating organisations only to judge as successful those individuals and organisations who complete 100 or 200 hours was not a realistic measurement. Preferable alternatives to measuring impact by the numbers of hours amassed by individuals included looking at the personal development of young people, and the diversity of volunteers attracted. Other funders too are listening to similar feedback from clients. The Community Fund, for example, is now focussing more on outcomes than on outputs. This is a welcome change particularly for organisations working with excluded groups where often getting people to walk through your door in the first place is a major achievement, regardless of whether they actually complete a course, or gain a qualification. The experience of participation – however minimal – is often a huge step forward for some people, and should be recognised as an important indicator of success. A copy of the report can be found at www.vde.org.uk.

NEXT ISSUE

In November we will be hearing from the **Cheshire Rural Touring Network**, and London's **Shape Ticket Scheme** Volunteers, and we'll be looking at **legitimate volunteer expenses**.

FEEDBACK

cv is keen to respond to your interests and needs. If you would like to forward your news and views, comment on content, or suggest a topic for discussion, please email lynn@lynnblackadder.com.

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