

Volunteers in Proposed Community Plus and Community Libraries

Oxfordshire County Council is consulting on a proposal that each of Oxfordshire's 43 libraries continue to receive support in the form of free access to a suitable building, to book stock, to the library stock management system, to the expertise of county council employed library staff and to operate to the library service's standards and policies.

Under the proposal, the Library Service will retain responsibility for the operational and professional management of all libraries. Communities are being asked to step forward and support their library by becoming volunteers. It is quite likely that volunteers will come forward with very different skills and areas of interest and so there may be more than one volunteer in the library at any one time. There are four main areas of work where the volunteer will have a role:

Volunteer Task Description: Daily Transactions

Purpose

- To work with library staff and other volunteers to ensure that the local community has access to their local library, the county book stock and the network of public access computers

Activities

- Open library and switch off the alarm
- Switch on equipment such as public access computers and photocopier and report any faults to the nominated OCC support
- Count out the float, cash up and record the previous day's takings
- Deal with counter routines, including receipt of newspapers and magazines
- Assist in the issue, return and renewal of books and other materials through self-service machines in all libraries
- Assist new customers to join the library
- Receive money for overdue items and other charges where applicable
- Take bookings for public access computers and assist with any problems, with assistance from the nominated OCC support
- Assist in keeping public and workroom areas tidy and safe
- Switch off public access computers
- Lock away monies
- Set the alarm and lock up the library

Skills and aptitudes needed

- Ability and commitment to provide a helpful and effective service to all users of the library including children, young people, the elderly, the disabled and ethnic minority readers
- Ability to communicate with all sections of the community
- Ability to follow procedures
- Ability to work as part of a team with other volunteers and library staff
- Ability to work alone, if required

Volunteer Task Description: Stock work

Purpose

- To work with library staff, following our stock policies and procedures, to maintain the county wide stock collection to its current high standard and to ensure continued use of library resources by the local community

Activities

- Shelve returned books and other materials
- Unpack books and other materials as received and shelve or display as appropriate
- Carry out minor book repairs and re-jacketing of books and other materials
- Discard old books
- Assist in keeping public and workroom areas tidy and safe

Skills and aptitudes needed

- Ability and commitment to provide a helpful and effective service to all users of the library including children, young people, the elderly, the disabled and ethnic minority readers
- Ability to communicate with all sections of the community
- Methodical and organised and able to follow procedures
- Ability to work as part of a team with other volunteers and library staff
- Ability to work alone, if required

Volunteer Task Description: Customer Assistance and Handling Enquiries

Purpose

- To work with library staff and other volunteers to deliver a high quality customer focused library service

Activities

- Assist customers to find and reserve books and other materials using the library catalogue, referring more complex enquiries to the nominated OCC support
- Assist with public access internet computers enquiries such as setting up email accounts
- Answer general information enquiries using books in the library, Reference Online or internet, referring more complex enquiries to the nominated OCC support
- Answer low level policy and procedure queries, referring more complex enquiries to the nominated OCC support
- Assist with homework enquiries, referring more complex enquiries to the nominated OCC support
- Signpost customer comments and complaints to appropriate OCC staff and resolve, where possible, any simple public queries
- Assist in keeping public and workroom areas tidy and safe

Skills and aptitudes needed

- Ability and commitment to provide a helpful and effective service to all users of the library including children, young people, the elderly, the disabled and ethnic minority readers
- Ability to communicate with all sections of the community
- Ability to remain calm under pressure

Draft statement - subject to approval

- Basic computer skills will be helpful
- Ability to work as part of a team with other volunteers and library staff
- Ability to work alone, if required

Volunteer Task Description: Activities and Events to promote library use

Purpose

- To work with library staff and other volunteers to deliver activities to promote the value of reading and to support digital citizenship.

Activities include

- Act as a **Computer Buddy** to help customers gain confidence in using IT
- Support the annual **Summer Reading Challenge** that is run to encourage children to read during the school holiday from July to September
- Lead or work with others to deliver **Rhymetimes**
- Work alongside library staff and other volunteers to deliver a **Home Library Service** for customers who are unable to leave their homes unaided or who are unable to carry books and other materials home from the library themselves

Please see the detailed descriptions available for these activities

Skills and aptitudes needed are specific to the different activity but include

- An ability to relate to people of different ages, genders and ethnic origins, and to be enthusiastic about the value of library services
- Ability and commitment to provide a helpful and effective service to different users of the library including children, young people, the elderly, the disabled and ethnic minority readers
- Ability to communicate with all sections of the community
- Ability to work as part of a team with other volunteers and library staff
- Ability to work alone, if required

Activity: Computer Buddy

Purpose

- To add to the computer support that library staff can give to beginners
- To promote the take-up of digital services
- To assist people in managing their own learning
- To help job seekers to use computers to search for jobs

Activities

- Deliver regular, advertised, one-to-one computer help sessions, hours to be agreed with the volunteer. This is a long term activity
- Give advice, encouragement and coaching to beginners, of any age
- Help customers navigate the internet and access useful websites
- Help customers to set up email accounts
- Assist in using e-learning courses, including UK Online

Draft statement - subject to approval

- Helping customers to learn the skills to use the internet to search for jobs and to make online applications (but not to write any CVs or to fill in applications)

Skills and aptitudes needed

- Competence in using computers, the internet and Microsoft based software. However, high level computer skills are not necessary
- Ability to communicate with learners of all ages, and to share knowledge and skills
- Patience, and an ability to motivate and encourage
- Ability to work in a team with library staff and other volunteers

Activity: Summer Reading Challenge Volunteer

The Summer Reading Challenge is a national scheme organised by the Reading Agency to encourage children to read during the school holidays, July to September.

Purpose

- To support library staff during SRC activities and promotional events
- To encourage children, their families and carers to read for enjoyment
- To promote literacy and reading skills in children
- To foster a habit of using the library

Activities

- Promote the scheme by talking to children, their parents and carers and explaining how it works
- Talk to children about the books they have read and help them to choose others (if requested)
- Help with activities and craft sessions
- Liaise with the Library Manager to agree a mutually convenient rota of attendance
- Attend training, as required

Time

- Hours by agreement with the Library Manager between July and September
- Volunteers may want to come for 2 or 3 hours per week on average, to get the most out of the experience

Skills and aptitudes needed

- Be outgoing and enjoy working with people, especially with children, their parents and carers
- Be enthusiastic about reading and be able to enthuse others
- Have good communication skills and be a good listener
- Have some knowledge of children's literature (desirable not essential)
- Be committed and punctual
- Ability to work in a team with library staff and other volunteers

Activity: Rhyme Time Host

Purpose

- To provide support to library staff for rhyme time sessions for children under 5 and their parents/carers
- To provide an enjoyable experience for families to share, and an informal opportunity for children to develop and learn vital skills

Activities

- Plan, prepare and deliver fun and interactive rhyme times, lasting approximately 20 -30 minutes, which includes rhymes and can include simple stories
- Liaise with the Library Manager to agree a mutually convenient rota of attendance
- Promote rhyme times and encourage parents/carers to attend with their children, including greeting, engaging and chatting with them
- Organise the library space before a session, including putting out chairs, toys and books, and clear the area after the session
- Model and encourage the singing of rhymes and the sharing of stories with young children
- Actively encourage parents to participate in the sessions
- Promote the library usage and Bookstart
- Attend training, as required

Time required

- Will depend upon when and how often the library holds its rhyme times; they may be held weekly, fortnightly or monthly, at fixed times
- Sessions usually last about 45 minutes including preparation time
- Time will be needed to plan sessions and organise the library space

Skills and aptitudes needed

- Enjoy working with young children (under 5s), their parents and carers
- Be enthusiastic about rhyme times and their benefits
- Have some knowledge of children's nursery rhymes
- Be happy to sing in public (but no voice skills needed!)
- Be able to use props such as puppets and musical instruments
- Be outgoing and have good interpersonal skills

Activity: Home Library Service

Purpose

- To work alongside library staff and other volunteers to deliver a regular personal service for people who, because of their disability or frailty, are unable to leave their homes unaided or who cannot carry books home from the library themselves, and have no-one to do it for them.
- To engage with the client, develop an understanding of their reading tastes, and share an enthusiasm for books and reading.
- To contribute to key Oxfordshire County Council policies in supporting independent living and reducing isolation and ill health in an ageing population.

Activities

- Choose books and audio books in the library, and deliver them to clients in their homes, and collect the materials they have read and return them to the library.
- Discuss the reader's preferences and try to match materials to those preferences.
- The frequency of visits may vary but are usually at 3 or 4 weekly intervals.
- Make visits to care homes if required.
- Bring requests for books and information to the library.
- Maintain a dialogue with the clients on their wider welfare needs, and link with local support networks and other County Council services such as Adult Social Care and the Fire and Rescue Service, where this can contribute to their health, safety and wellbeing.

Skills and aptitudes needed

- An ability to relate to people of different ages, genders and ethnic origins, and to offer a warm and friendly manner.
- An understanding of the value of reading and to share an enthusiasm for books.
- An awareness of the wider needs of elderly and/or vulnerable adults.
- A reasonable level of fitness – books can be heavy!
- Access to transport.
- If a car driver, a valid driving licence and appropriate insurance.

How to apply

- Oxfordshire County Council welcomes applications for volunteering opportunities from all sections of the community
- Contact your local library or the Friends Group. Please note that special procedures apply to volunteers aged under 18
- A risk assessment specific to these tasks will be completed and any health and safety issues discussed. Volunteers over the age of 70 will have annual risk assessments
- This role is subject to a satisfactory Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) disclosure

What we will expect of you

- To safeguard the reputation of the Library Service and Oxfordshire County Council, and to adhere to Council policies including Data Protection, Health and Safety and Comprehensive Equality Policy
- To work the hours and times you have agreed and, when this is not possible, for example through illness, to give the maximum notice possible to your Friends Group Coordinator
- To give as much notice as possible for holidays and other breaks from volunteering to your Friends Group Coordinator
- To deliver the tasks described above, as directed by the Library Manager to the standards agreed

Training and support we will give you

- Volunteers will receive induction training and ongoing training as required to deliver the volunteering role
- Training outside the library may also be required, sometimes with other volunteers, and any travel expenses incurred will be refunded
- Every volunteer will be a member of the library team and will have access to staff refreshment and toilet facilities. Volunteers will wear identifying badges

Draft statement - subject to approval

- Regular reviews through the Friends Group will ensure that the activities and volunteers continue to be well matched

Repayment of expenses

- The Library Service seeks to provide the best possible service to the public at a time when its budgets are being reduced. It is not therefore normally able to refund expenses to volunteers working in their local library. However, certain expenses may be payable, for example to attend training activities

More information

- Oxfordshire County Council's volunteering policy, *Valuing our Volunteers*, is available on request.
- If you have any questions, please contact libraryserviceconsultation@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Please note that whilst Oxfordshire County Council strives to make volunteering accessible to all, some of our buildings do not have full access.

Oxfordshire Libraries
26 July 2011