

## Policy statement on involving people with criminal records as volunteers

Parkinson's UK is committed to equality and diversity. We recognise the positive impact a diverse team of volunteers can have on helping us achieve our vision of finding a cure and improving life for everyone affected by Parkinson's. We therefore welcome interest in our volunteer roles from everyone.

When asked by the organisation, volunteers have a responsibility to declare any criminal convictions they have, including those considered 'spent'. Where volunteers have convictions to disclose, they will be asked to complete a *Disclosing a criminal record form* and return it to the Head of Volunteering.

Parkinson's UK will only ask volunteers to disclose criminal records if they are applying for a role that requires a criminal records check. The criminal records check is carried out by the Disclosure and Barring Service in England and Wales, Disclosure Scotland in Scotland and Access NI in Northern Ireland. Volunteers will be provided with clear information on the level of criminal records checks that will be required and the process to undertake that check.

All the information disclosed will be treated in confidence and shared with staff members only when there is a clear need for them to know. For the purposes of this policy statement, 'need to know' means the Head of Volunteering will only discuss the details of a prospective volunteer's conviction(s) with relevant staff members to inform the decision-making process. Details of convictions will not be shared with other volunteers or service users.

Where disclosed, we will not take into account convictions considered spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act – unless the voluntary position is exempt from the Act. If a volunteer does not declare a previous conviction when asked they could be asked to leave their volunteer role.

We recognise that at times people with criminal records may be reluctant to apply for volunteer roles where they would need to disclose their records for a variety of reasons. These may include fear that assumptions will be made and/or that they will be treated unfairly. We are committed to dealing with every disclosure in a fair manner. If prospective volunteers have any concerns, or would like to talk through the process, we invite them to contact

the Parkinson's UK Volunteering team for a confidential discussion before applying for a role.

Every applicant will be considered on an individual basis, taking into account the following factors:

- whether the conviction is relevant to the role applied for
- the seriousness of the offence(s)
- the age of the applicant at the time of the offence(s)
- the length of time since the offence(s) occurred
- whether the applicant has a pattern of offending behaviour
- the circumstances surrounding the offence(s), and the explanation(s) provided by the person concerned
- whether the applicant's circumstances have changed since the offending behaviour

The final decision on whether an applicant is accepted to a volunteer role lies with the Head of Volunteering. The decision-making process aims to identify the potential risks of a volunteer with a criminal record undertaking their role. It also strives to agree strategies to protect the applicant and the people they would work with. In rare circumstances – relating to particularly serious offences – it will also take into account the potential impact that accepting a volunteer to a particular role may have on the organisation's reputation.

All decisions made will be recorded by the Head of Volunteering and securely stored by the Volunteering team. Access to the records will only be given on a need-to-know basis and following a written request to the Head of Volunteering explaining why the information is required.

### **Duty to refer**

Parkinson's UK understands its duty to refer to the relevant body any person who:

- has been barred from working with adults at risk (or 'protected people' in Scotland) and attempts to volunteer with the organisation in regulated activity
- has been accepted as a volunteer and goes on to satisfy the relevant body's criteria for having committed harmful conduct

The Volunteering team and the designated protection officer will be responsible for making a joint decision on whether a referral must be made. This will be a considered decision that takes into account the whole context of the organisation. When making a referral the relevant body's guidelines will be followed.