

Our Commitment to Volunteering Parkinson's UK Volunteering policy

Chair's introduction

As a volunteer myself, chairing the Board of Trustees, I'm honoured to introduce this revised version of our Volunteering policy. It's been a privilege to volunteer for Parkinson's UK since 2009.

Volunteers make a vital contribution to all aspects of our work to bring forward the day when no one fears Parkinson's. I really enjoy meeting volunteers leading our local groups, supporting our fundraising events and helping out in our office, as well as working with my trustee colleagues to govern the charity.

People affected by Parkinson's often tell me that that they're not 'volunteers' – they just wanted to help out. I'm always inspired to hear that people living closely with Parkinson's choose to use their experiences to help others by giving their time to Parkinson's UK.

Whatever your motivation, it's crucial that we value and support everyone who chooses to give their time to do the work of our charity, and that's why this policy is important. It outlines what we've put in place to support volunteers, and what we ask of our volunteers.

Parkinson's UK can achieve most when we work together – so when you read the word 'we' in this document, it means all of us; paid staff, volunteers and trustees.

I hope you find the policy useful, and that you enjoy your time as a volunteer at Parkinson's UK.

Thank you for what you're doing, it really makes a difference.

Mark Goodridge
Chair of Parkinson's UK

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1. Purpose of the Volunteering policy

Parkinson's UK is committed to meeting national good practice in volunteer management standards. The purpose of this policy is to provide a good practice framework for the involvement of volunteers in the life and work of the organisation. It outlines the volunteer management standards we are committed to achieving and maintaining, and ensures that volunteers understand the standards that they can expect while at Parkinson's UK.

During their induction, volunteers will have access to a copy of this document – this policy and any referenced in it are available through your staff contact or the Volunteering team, and as part of the online volunteer induction.

2. Our vision for volunteering

Parkinson's UK recognises that volunteers are making vital contributions towards finding a cure and improving life for everyone affected by Parkinson's. We are committed to inspiring, developing and supporting our volunteers and recognising that the support they provide is essential to our work.

3. Our commitment to volunteering

We believe our organisation and people affected by Parkinson's benefit from involving volunteers who provide invaluable support, skills, experience and ideas.

We believe volunteering can be a positive experience for all and of mutual benefit to both the organisation and the volunteer. To achieve this we will ensure that we meet good practice in volunteer management standards, offer worthwhile volunteering opportunities and the chance to gain new skills and experiences, and involve volunteers in all areas of our work, where appropriate.

We are committed to working towards the 'Investing in Volunteers' quality standards and will continuously strive to improve the experience of our volunteers.

4. What is volunteering?

The primary role of Parkinson's UK volunteers is to support and enable the organisation to achieve its vision – to find a cure and improve life for everyone affected by Parkinson's.

People affected by Parkinson's are at the heart of everything that Parkinson's UK does. They help to shape our organisational aims and objectives and determine our priorities.

We define volunteering as a formal relationship between the organisation and an individual who gives their time and skills unpaid to undertake a clearly defined volunteer role to deliver the work of Parkinson's UK.

A volunteer is someone who:

- gives their time and skills to deliver the work of the organisation at the request of and on behalf of Parkinson's UK
- is unpaid
- is entitled to claim reasonable 'out of pocket' expenses
- freely chooses to give their time.

All volunteer roles at Parkinson's UK will have a defined role description and sometimes a volunteer might be involved in writing the role description.

5. Recruitment

Parkinson's UK is committed to ensuring our volunteering opportunities are open to all areas of the community and that our volunteer recruitment procedures are consistent, fair and transparent at all stages.

Volunteers will be asked to complete an application form relevant to their role. Depending on the role, a volunteer interview may be carried out to ensure the potential volunteer understands the role and to ensure they are suitable for it. A reference might be required in some cases.

If a volunteer will be supporting adults considered at risk they must undergo a criminal records check (known as a Disclosure and Barring Service check in England and Wales, an Enhanced PVG check in Scotland and an Access NI in Northern Ireland) in line with our Volunteer criminal records check policy.

There is no upper age limit for volunteers; however, we currently have a minimum age restriction of 18 for volunteer roles except when volunteers are part of an external group. This is to ensure we do not put younger volunteers at unnecessary risk. Please see the Children, young people & volunteering policy for more details.

All existing, new or potential volunteers will have access to details about our volunteer recruitment procedure, and anyone applying to volunteer will be provided with information relevant to the role they are applying for. This will include information on our selection process, interviews and reference procedures. These procedures are designed to ensure volunteers have the opportunity to learn about the volunteer role and make sure it's right for them before committing, as well as ensuring we select the right volunteers for the right roles.

6. Induction, learning and development

Parkinson's UK has launched a new volunteer induction which provides volunteers with a comprehensive welcome to Parkinson's UK and is followed up with an induction to their role delivered by staff. The aim of the induction is to make sure volunteers feel welcomed, comfortable and supported, and to provide them with the opportunity to ask questions related to volunteering at the organisation.

We are developing the range and quality of our learning and development offer for volunteers to provide a range of new learning opportunities based on need and supporting staff to develop high quality, bespoke learning journeys for all roles. We want to ensure that all volunteers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to perform their role effectively.

7. Support

Parkinson's UK believes all volunteers should be supported throughout their time with the organisation and is committed to ensuring appropriate support structures are in place and good practice standards of support are achieved across the charity.

We recognise volunteers give their time in different ways and have different support needs. Therefore we provide a flexible model of volunteer support which is tailored to the individual volunteer and their role.

All volunteers will have access to a staff contact to provide support and guidance. Staff contacts offer volunteers the opportunity to discuss their role, successes, progress and learning and development needs, as well as any issues or concerns they may have.

8. Volunteer expenses

Volunteers should not be disadvantaged in any way by volunteering for Parkinson's UK, including financially.

We will reimburse all reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred through carrying out volunteering activities that are in line with Parkinson's UK's Volunteer expenses policy.

9. Working together

Parkinson's UK is committed to encouraging a safe and supportive environment for all our volunteers and staff. This can only happen when everyone is committed to working together effectively and collaboratively and in the spirit of our values. We therefore ask that everyone agrees to and adopts the following:

Our values	Behaviours that come from our values. We will:
We listen Everything we do is based on the experiences of people affected by Parkinson's.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep it professional at all times. • Make sure that everyone has their say. • Not interrupt when others are talking. • Listen and hear what is being said. • Accept agreed ways forward in good faith.
We focus We deliver results and make the most of our resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work together in partnership to ensure that we serve people affected by Parkinson's in the most efficient and effective way. • Respect and appreciate the skills and responsibilities of individuals.
We inspire Our energy and determination inspire those around us.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect different /diverse views. • Find different ways to look at things. • Encourage and empower each other. • Support and motivate each other.
We innovate We are forward thinking, always seeing to improve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share experiences – come up with new or better ways of doing things from a positive position and not overly focus on our own situation.
We're inclusive We reach out to the whole Parkinson's community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in a way that does not discriminate and ensures that everyone affected by Parkinson's can benefit from our services. • Seek opportunities to involve others from outside our immediate community.
We unite We bring everyone together behind one shared vision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek the win-win compromise and accept/ embrace change. • Work together in the face of change for the good of all with Parkinson's, always work with the bigger picture in mind. • Realise that there will be occasions where our personal views may be different than the majority and accept other's views graciously. • Respect individuals as colleagues and human beings, recognising their roles and responsibilities and showing empathy for others' situations.

To further ensure that our volunteers have a positive experience Parkinson's UK will also:

- ensure volunteers have a good understanding of Parkinson's UK
- provide volunteers with detailed information about their role
- ensure volunteers have access to an induction, training, development and support throughout their volunteering
- provide safe volunteering conditions and ensure volunteers are covered by adequate insurance

- provide volunteers with the opportunity to share their views and opinions on the organisation and its work
- consult volunteers on matters related to volunteering
- ensure volunteers are recognised and valued.

10. Problem solving

Parkinson's UK is committed to ensuring that all volunteers have a positive and rewarding experience. Part of making sure that this happens is by recognising that problems can occur and ensuring that when they do, there is a fair and consistent process for resolving them.

We have developed a Volunteering problem solving policy and procedure which provides a framework for resolving problems involving volunteers in an open, fair and timely manner. It is important that all volunteers feel confident about raising concerns and have a thorough understanding of the process should an issue involving them be raised.

11. Complaints

We are committed to ensuring all complaints are handled consistently and have a feedback and complaints procedure, which covers complaints about the organisation and its staff. This procedure does not cover situations where a volunteer raises a complaint about another volunteer. In these situations, the Volunteering problem solving policy and procedure should be used.

All complaints are treated confidentially and will be dealt with openly, fairly and in a timely manner. This is to minimise any disruption to volunteers, staff and service users, and to protect the reputation of Parkinson's UK.

We will always try to resolve complaints informally before moving to a formal resolution process.

12. Health and safety and insurance

Parkinson's UK is committed to ensuring that volunteers have a safe environment in which to volunteer and are not exposed to unnecessary risks.

The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for health and safety but all staff and volunteers have a responsibility to ensure that they act safely and do not expose themselves or others to any unnecessary risks.

All volunteers are responsible for ensuring that they read and are familiar with the Parkinson's UK health and safety statement by completing the relevant modules as part of their volunteer induction, and that any concerns or incidents are reported to their staff contact. All volunteer roles will be risk assessed and any risks identified as part of this process will be shared with the volunteer as part of their induction.

Parkinson's UK volunteers using their own private vehicles for volunteering purposes are personally liable for any accident or incident and must ensure that their own private motor insurance is comprehensive and permits travel for the purpose of volunteering appropriately.

Parkinson's UK volunteers are covered under our insurance arrangements. This includes public liability, personal injury and loss or damage to personal property while involved in the activities of Parkinson's UK. This is subject to policy limits, terms, conditions and exceptions including car insurance.

However, volunteers have a responsibility not to expose themselves and others to any unnecessary risks while volunteering. If in doubt or for further information volunteers can speak to their staff contact.

13. Safeguarding

Due to the nature of our work, some of the people volunteers come into contact with could be considered at risk. We take the safeguarding of people at risk very seriously and have a comprehensive Safeguarding policy in place.

We will support our volunteers with regards to safeguarding and are committed to providing them with advice and appropriate training about best practice in this area. Volunteers should ensure that they are familiar with our Safeguarding volunteer guide which is part of the Parkinson's UK volunteer induction, and know who to contact if they have a concern about safeguarding.

14. Gifts and hospitality

Occasionally, volunteers may be offered gifts, hospitality or some other benefit by those outside the charity when volunteering for Parkinson's UK. There may also be times where volunteers believe it is appropriate to offer a gift or hospitality to someone outside the charity. We therefore have a comprehensive Gifts and hospitality policy in place which outlines how volunteers must deal with the receipt or offers of gifts or hospitality.

15. Equal opportunities and diversity

Parkinson's UK is committed to promoting equality and valuing diversity throughout all our work and organisational culture. We welcome a wide range of volunteers from diverse backgrounds and are working to ensure equal opportunities for all in line with our Equal opportunities and diversity policy.

16. Confidentiality and data protection

Everyone involved with Parkinson's UK has a right to confidentiality and we are committed to integrating the principles of confidentiality throughout the organisation.

Some volunteers may have access to information of a confidential nature as part of their roles. Confidential information is held on trust and should not be discussed outside Parkinson's UK or in general conversation and must not be used by Parkinson's UK volunteers for their own purposes.

Where applicable, volunteers will be asked to complete the confidentiality module as part of their volunteer induction.

Parkinson's UK is registered under the Data Protection Act 1998 because we hold information about our members. Personal details of staff, volunteers, supporters and service users should at all times be treated in the strictest of confidence and in line with Data Protection legislation as detailed in our data protection policy. Volunteers must be familiar with and adhere to it.

17. Rewarding, recognising and valuing volunteers

We could not deliver the work of Parkinson's UK without volunteers and are committed to ensuring that volunteers and their contributions are rewarded, recognised and valued appropriately across the organisation.

Volunteers support people affected by Parkinson's in a wide variety of ways. We also understand that for many of our volunteers, who themselves live with Parkinson's, supporting and delivering the work of the charity as volunteers is second nature and they may not necessarily think of themselves as volunteers. With this in mind, Parkinson's UK is committed to ensuring that rewarding and recognising volunteers is done in a sensitive and appropriate manner and recognises all contributions, no matter how big or small.

In 2015 we undertook an extensive scoping exercise to understand how our volunteers want to be rewarded, recognised and valued. Our volunteers said they want to be valued in ways that are simple, genuine, tailored to the individual and cost-effective.

During 2016 we will be implementing a programme of reward and recognition based on the feedback gathered.

18. Moving on from a volunteer role

Most of our volunteers greatly enjoy their volunteering experience with us and some continue in their roles for a number of years. However, we recognise volunteers may wish to leave their roles for a wide variety of reasons. Equally, there may also be times when Parkinson's UK will need to end a volunteer role because of changes in circumstance, funding or organisational structure.

We ask that volunteers, where possible, let their staff contact know when they would like to leave so that we can put any measures in place. We greatly value the opportunity to learn from people who have volunteered with us so that we can continue to improve volunteer experience at Parkinson's UK.

Before volunteers leave they will be invited to complete a moving on form or questionnaire and will be given the opportunity to discuss any feedback they may have in confidence.

We also recognise that volunteers may need to take a break from volunteering at times due to certain circumstances, and we will support them to do so. Volunteers should let their staff contact know if they would like to take a break.

If Parkinson's UK needs to end a volunteer role then the volunteer will be given as much notice as possible. They will have the opportunity to discuss how they feel about the situation with their staff contact and will be informed of any alternative volunteer roles available that they may wish to apply for.

19. Communications

Effective communication with volunteers is vital to the success of volunteer involvement. All communications with volunteers should encourage a culture of open dialogue and the sharing of information and ideas between volunteers, staff and people affected by Parkinson's.

Volunteers will be kept up-to-date with any information relevant to their role by their staff contact. Important organisational developments and issues are communicated through a range of communication tools including publications, events, email updates and our website.

Parkinson's UK is committed to ensuring that all volunteers have the opportunity to feed in any ideas and suggestions in relation to their role or the work of the organisation, and to ensuring that volunteers receive feedback on ideas and suggestions submitted.

20. Reviewing this document

This policy will be reviewed annually using the expertise of volunteers, staff and people affected by Parkinson's. The Volunteer Programme Manager will be responsible for leading the review and the Parkinson's UK team of Directors will have final sign-off. However, volunteers will be encouraged to inform the Volunteering team of any feedback on their experience of using the policy on an on-going basis, so action can be taken where appropriate. If no immediate action is needed, comments will be kept and used at the annual policy review.

21. Supporting resources

The following supporting documents are available on request from the Volunteering team with many also available on the [Parkinson's UK website](#):

- Investing in Volunteers quality standards
- Example volunteer role descriptions
- Volunteer application forms
- Children, young people & volunteering policy
- Volunteer expenses policy
- Parkinson's UK Health and safety statement and procedure
- Volunteer criminal records check policy
- Safeguarding volunteer guide
- [Parkinson's UK volunteer induction](#).