RNIB See differently Logo

# Volunteer Involving Policy

## About this policy

### Purpose

This policy sets out the principles of volunteering at RNIB, the minimum standards for recruitment, induction, management and support of volunteers and what volunteers can expect. RNIB is committed to supporting best practice in relation to volunteering.

### Risks and Implications

We want all volunteers to have a positive experience and for volunteering to be mutually beneficial. The risk of not complying with this policy could result in unsuitable recruitment and selection decisions or reputational consequences where volunteers do not have a positive experience during their time with RNIB.

### Scope

#### Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to all volunteers, volunteer managers and anyone who works with and supports volunteers in their roles.

#### What does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to all stages of the volunteering journey.

### Exceptions to this policy

The recruitment of members to the Board of Trustees follows an amended process, supported by RNIB’s Resourcing team.

### Roles and responsibilities

#### Volunteers

* Read and understand our policies and procedures to help keep you and those around you safe.
* Complete any training required for your role, including mandatory training in safeguarding, data protection, health and safety and diversity and inclusion.
* Understand and follow our Volunteer Commitment.
* Be a positive ambassador for RNIB.
* Read regular updates from your volunteer manager and the Volunteer News.
* Submit your expenses in line with the volunteer expenses guidance.
* Share feedback about your volunteer experience in a constructive way to help us continually learn and improve.

#### Volunteer managers

* Ensure volunteers are recruited in line with this policy and the volunteering recruitment commitment.
* Carry out risk assessments as required.
* Provide volunteers with an induction to RNIB and their role, including supporting volunteers to complete mandatory training in safeguarding, data protection, health and safety and diversity and inclusion.
* Provide volunteers with ongoing support, regular communication and opportunities to develop.
* Ensure volunteer expense claims are approved and submitted to Finance in a timely fashion.
* Recognise and thank volunteers for their contribution and enable two-way feedback opportunities for volunteers.
* Follow RNIB policies and guidance to ensure volunteers are safe while carrying out their roles.

#### Volunteering team

* Provide support and guidance to volunteers and volunteer managers to ensure best practice in volunteering.
* Update policies and procedures covering volunteers on a regular basis and communicate updates with volunteers and volunteer managers.
* Provide opportunities for volunteers to share feedback on their volunteering experience and implement solutions based on their feedback.

#### Heads of Service and Managers of volunteer managers

* Understand requirements for volunteer managers in their team and support them to follow and adhere to the policy.
* Ensure volunteering activity is included within the team’s budget
* Support volunteers and volunteer managers with completing mandatory training as needed.
* Recognise and thank volunteers for their contribution and enable two-way feedback opportunities for volunteers.

### Our volunteers

RNIB volunteers are individuals who freely give your time, knowledge, skills and experience to carry out tasks and activities to help RNIB achieve its strategy. Volunteers receive no payment other than out of pocket expenses and enter into this arrangement on a voluntary basis.

## Statements of the Policy

RNIB volunteers make a valuable contribution to the lives of blind and partially sighted people and the work of RNIB. Through the launch of our [Contribution and Participation Strategy](https://www.rnib.org.uk/volunteering/volunteering-hub-our-current-volunteers/rnib-launches-new-contribution-and-participation-strategy), we’ve committed to deliver an inclusive, mutually beneficial quality experience throughout your time with RNIB. We will embed this strategy, value your contribution, map journeys and offer development opportunities to help us to ensure all volunteers should feel valued, recognised and supported through.

### Our Volunteering Commitment

Our [Volunteering Commitment](https://rnib.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/r/sites/external_shares/policies/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B737A5D90-F6A3-410E-86C9-990AA877CF9D%7D&file=RNIB%20Volunteer%20Commitment%20August%202019.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true) outlines what you can expect from us while on your volunteer journey; and what we expect from anyone who volunteers for RNIB. A copy of the commitment is included in our volunteer welcome pack and can be found on our policy site.

### Registration and Recruitment

#### Registering your interest in volunteering

You can register an interest in volunteering by:

* Taking a look through the volunteer opportunities available in your region or across the UK. When you have found a [volunteering opportunity](https://www.rnib.org.uk/volunteering/find-volunteering-opportunities-near-you/search) [that](https://www.rnib.org.uk/volunteering/find-volunteering-opportunities-near-you/search) interests you, simply click apply and then login. If this is your first visit choose 'not a member' to set up your password and get started. You will then be able to apply via our volunteer management system, Topaz.
* Contacting our Volunteering team by emailing volunteering@rnib.org.uk or calling 0303 123 9999 and selecting option four to arrange a chat with one of our Volunteering Recruitment Officers. They will arrange a convenient time and discuss volunteering at RNIB, the roles available and what you’d like to gain from volunteering with us. They will then share the volunteering opportunities that are the best match and discuss next steps.

#### Recruitment process

* Once the volunteer manager for the role you’ve applied for has received your application, they will get in touch to arrange a time to have an informal chat about the role and next steps.
* If you would like to proceed with the application, they will arrange for a criminal record check and/or vehicle check to be completed if required and update our volunteering management system so that we can arrange for your referee(s) to be contacted.
* Once the recruitment process has been completed, the Volunteering team will send you a welcome pack and your volunteer manager will arrange your induction.

#### Topaz

Topaz is our volunteering management system. Volunteer managers have access to this so that we can keep your contact details and information about your volunteering with us secure.

It’s really important that the contact information we have for you is up to date. Please email volunteering@rnib.org.uk with your new details and we’ll update this for you.

### Welcome and induction

#### Welcome pack and induction to RNIB

Once you’ve been successfully recruited to a volunteering role, we’ll send you a welcome pack to introduce you to our organisation and our customers. This contains an Understanding Sight Loss Workbook and videos from our customers sharing their sight loss experiences as well as videos from some of our volunteers. This will give you the opportunity to understand what to expect when volunteering with us.

Your volunteer manager will introduce and explain your new role to you when you start. During this induction you’ll learn the practical parts of your role such as what you’ll be doing, where and when as well as who your main contacts will be.

#### Mandatory training

We want to make sure that you’re prepared for your role and have a good understanding of important policies and procedures. All volunteers must complete mandatory training at induction and refresher training every two years. These currently cover safeguarding, data protection and health and safety. Additionally, we offer training on diversity and inclusion. This training will help you to carry out your role with confidence.

We recognise that you are sharing your time and skills with RNIB, therefore we are committed to making this training easy to access and available in a variety of methods and formats so that is an accessible and inclusive experience. You’ll receive the mandatory training as part of your induction and then we will be in touch to arrange refresher training. Your volunteer manager will support you along the way with completing the mandatory training.

### Skills development

We want you to feel confident and well informed in your role. We offer some additional development opportunities for some of our roles and are looking to expand this offer over time.

We have training that can be attended as part of a group of staff and volunteers; training that can be delivered by your volunteer manager and even online learning. Some of the modules developed for volunteer managers to deliver to volunteers include customer service, eye health and sighted guiding, public speaking and facilitation skills. Your volunteer manager can let you know more about what’s available.

### Expenses

We don’t want you to be out of pocket when you support us. Your time is all that we ask for. We encourage you to claim your volunteering expenses. You can find out more about what you can claim for and how to make a claim in our [guidelines for claiming volunteer expenses](https://rnib.sharepoint.com/sites/external_shares/policies/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B980F7DBC-4CBE-40D7-8F25-94B91BC85458%7D&file=Guidelines%20For%20Volunteer%20Claiming%20Expenses.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true&CT=1589215665272&OR=ItemsView). All expenses must be approved by your volunteer manager who will send the claim, along with a copy of your receipts to our Finance team to arrange payment.

### Keeping in touch and connected

You should have regular communication with your volunteer manager. This will include providing updates from RNIB, sharing information relevant to your role and opportunities to review the volunteering relationship.

#### Volunteer News

All volunteers will receive the regular volunteer news update, which is available in four formats (email, braille, audio and large print). This includes volunteering stories, information relevant to your volunteering and key updates from RNIB.

#### Volunteering Hub

The Volunteer Hub on our website is where you’ll find guidance and information on everything you’ll need to know as an RNIB volunteer. We can support with providing other formats if you’re unable to access our Volunteering Hub.

#### Workplace

Workplace is an internal online network at RNIB. Volunteer groups are dedicated Workplace groups for volunteers to connect with one another and staff, ask questions, share stories and top tips, and to keep in touch with what’s going on at RNIB.

### Support available

Every volunteer has a volunteer manager who will be your main point of contact and support throughout your volunteering relationship with RNIB. Your volunteer manager will support from the point of recruitment and will provide you with an induction, ongoing support and development as required in your role.

The Volunteering team is another key source of support for volunteers. We will help you with applying for roles, addressing any concerns or issues, and provide guidance as and when you need it.

RNIB will ensure that you have access tech, in line with our Workplace Adjustments Policy, if your volunteering activities take place on an RNIB device.

### Feedback on experience

Your volunteering experience matters to us. We conduct annual volunteering surveys to understand and improve your volunteering experience. Additionally, we run exit interviews to learn about your time at RNIB, your reasons for leaving and what we can do differently.

We will develop opportunities for you to feedback and be more involved in shaping the volunteering experience at RNIB. We will include volunteers in focus groups or project groups as they come up. We have ongoing opportunities in the Volunteer Council and the Volunteering Communications Advisory Panel.

* The Volunteer Council is a group of 10 volunteers who provide valuable insight on volunteering at RNIB and share feedback to help improve the volunteering experience.
* The Volunteering Communications Advisory Panel help to shape and improve volunteers’ communication experience.

### Valuing and recognising volunteers

You make a valuable contribution to RNIB all year-round through your volunteering. This is captured in our Contribution and Participation Strategy. We want to recognise your contribution; make you feel valued and demonstrate how you make a difference through your volunteering. We will do this by saying thank you for your involvement, sharing opportunities to be more involved in RNIB and providing refresher training and other skills development opportunities.

### Keeping volunteers safe

Keeping you safe while volunteering is very important to us. We want to ensure that as a volunteer, you are able to carry out your role safely. As volunteers, you are covered by RNIB’s Employers Liability Insurance.

Key policies and procedures:

* Safeguarding
* Health and Safety
* Data Protection
* Lone Working
* Confidentiality

By following these policies, you will be able to keep yourself and others safe while carrying out your role.

### Saying farewell

As a volunteer, you can stop volunteering with RNIB at any time. We’d be grateful if you can give as much notice as possible. If you are unable to continue volunteering with us, please let us know through your volunteer manager. On occasions, we may need to end your volunteer involvement. If this is the case, we will treat you fairly, and with dignity and respect and where appropriate will find you an alternative role. Rarely, we may need to end a volunteering role if there has been a complaint, concern or serious breach of our policies or procedures. If this is the case we will follow our [Problem Solving Procedure.](https://rnib.sharepoint.com/sites/external_shares/policies/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B939D397A-BCA0-439E-92AF-70BA42A76FC4%7D&file=Volunteer_Problem_Solving_Procedure%20August%202019.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true&CT=1589216108284&OR=ItemsView)

We welcome feedback on all volunteering experiences and will be in touch to carry out an exit interview so that we can find out if there are any changes we could make or to hear about what worked well during your time with us. If you do not wish to complete an exit interview, please let your volunteer manager know.

## Review

This policy is due for review every three years or following any significant organisational changes.

Next review date: July 2023

Policy review / update process:

## Document Owner and Approval

Document owner: Cassandra Kamara, Volunteering Engagement and Support Manager

Final policy sign off by: Ros Parker, Director of People and Organisational Transformation

## Associated Policies, Procedures, Standards and Guidelines

* Contribution and Participation Strategy
* Problem Solving Procedure
* Guidelines for claiming volunteer expenses
* Volunteer Commitment
* Volunteering Recruitment Commitment
* Safeguarding
* Health and Safety
* Data Protection
* Lone Working
* Confidentiality

## Version control

(Table; 5 rows, 5 columns, first row headings)

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Version | Date | Author & Job Title | Status & Level of Approval | Changes |
| 1.0 | Dec 2012 | Lynn Green, Group Volunteering Manager | Approved by Head of HR | Policy first written |
| 1.1 | May 2015 | Michael Paxman, Volunteering Development Manager | Approved by Group Head of Volunteering | Updated to meet tone of voice requirements |
| 1.2 | Feb 2017 | Jo Keller, Volunteering Support Manager | Approved by Head of HR | Reviewed and updated to fit new template guidelines. |
| 2.0 | July 2020 | Jo Keller, Volunteering and Resourcing Manager and Cass Kamara, Volunteering Engagement and Support Manager | Approved by Director of People and Organisational Transformation | Reviewed and updated to reflect Contribution and Participation Strategy, communications approach and volunteering recruitment commitment |

(Table; 9 rows, 1 column)

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