Walking for Health volunteer policy

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Introduction
Walking for Health is helping people across the country to get healthier and happier – but we couldn’t do this without all the thousands of amazing volunteers that make our health walks possible. From volunteer walk leaders and assistants to admin and promotion roles, our volunteers do a fantastic job in supporting and developing Walking for Health.

This policy
This volunteer policy is designed to provide guidance about volunteer management to our schemes, volunteers and staff. It’s also intended to show our commitment to volunteers and describe the reasonable expectations that we have for volunteers and staff. It’s not intended in any way to be a legally binding contract, or employment relationship with volunteers either now or in the future.

We’ve covered a number of key topics here in brief, but scheme coordinators will be able to find more information in their guidance notes, while volunteers can refer to our volunteer section of the website. We’ve also included links to other useful information at the end.

About Walking for Health
Walking for Health is England’s largest network of health walk schemes, helping all kinds of people to lead a more active lifestyle. We’ve done this with great success for over 15 years now, improving thousands of lives. Our walks are short, free and volunteer-led. They’re usually open to all but they’re particularly aimed at inactive people, those with long term health conditions, people from black and minority ethnic communities (BME) communities and lower income groups. Walking for Health is now run by the Ramblers with support from Sport England, The Big Lottery Fund and the People’s Postcode Lottery. Our goal is that everyone will have access to a short, free and friendly health walk within easy reach of where they live, to help them become and stay active.

What is volunteering?
Volunteering is freely choosing to contribute time, energy and skills to support an organisation or activity, without being paid or receiving benefits other than those required (for example training). It’s for the benefit of others - that could be people (other than close relatives), organisations, or society more generally.

Volunteering at Walking for Health
Volunteering is at the heart of Walking for Health and is the key to our success. We currently have 10,000 volunteers leading or supporting 3,400 local walks every week across England, helping over 70,000 regular walkers
to get active and stay active. Most of these volunteers are walk leaders, but we know there are approximately 1,000 people who help support their schemes in other ways, for example with administration and finding funding.

What are the benefits for our volunteers?
By getting involved with Walking for Health, volunteers get:

- The opportunity to develop new skills, such as leadership, working with people, marketing and administration
- The chance to meet new people, including other like-minded volunteers
- The experience and satisfaction of being part of the Walking for Health team, both locally and nationally and supporting their local organisation as well as the Ramblers
- The opportunity to discover more of their local area and spend time being physically active outdoors
- The chance to take part in training (depending on the role) with a nationally-recognised and well-respected programme

In addition, volunteers have access to a range of resources to support them in carrying out their role including:

- On-going support and guidance from their scheme coordinator and Walking for Health
- Access to Walking for Health resources such as manuals and online guidance, as well as equipment to help them carry out their role
- Reimbursement of reasonable out-of-pocket expenses (according to guidelines on page 7 in this policy), if this is possible through their local scheme

Our vision and commitment to volunteering
Our vision is to make sure all our volunteers enjoy a quality experience with us and feel supported and valued in their role. We want our volunteers to be inspired by Walking for Health, becoming advocates for both their local scheme and the national programme.

We’re also committed to providing our scheme coordinators and cascade trainers with timely, tested and relevant guidance and support, to help them work with their volunteers.
What volunteers can expect from us

We want to make sure volunteers enjoy their role and gain real benefits from it, so we are committed to:

• Always treating volunteers with respect, consideration and appreciation
• Promoting volunteer health and wellbeing, making sure they can carry out their role in a safe, supportive and inclusive environment
• Ensuring volunteers understand their responsibilities, including the length of time we’d like them to be involved (if this is relevant, but there is no obligation for volunteers to be involved for any defined period)
• Giving volunteers information about the training and support available to help them carry out their role
• Being clear about any obligatory requirements for volunteers, for example walk leader training
• Providing volunteers with support through a named contact, usually their scheme coordinator, who they should see/speak to on a regular basis
• Offering fair, honest and timely feedback on a volunteer’s work
• Updating volunteers about how their work is making a difference
• Treating volunteers fairly, and ensuring we follow volunteer-specific procedures and policies, for example equal opportunities and health and safety
• Providing volunteers with civil liability insurance cover
• Offering advice about alternative roles and helping them to find another more suitable role if a decision is made that a volunteer is not suited to their current role

What we expect from our volunteers

In order for us to really live and breathe our vision, Walking for Health expects high standards from all volunteers and staff. We ask volunteers to:

• Always treat Walking for Health and local scheme staff, fellow volunteers and walkers with respect, consideration and appreciation
• Act in a friendly and welcoming way when representing us in public - volunteers are our ambassadors
• Act in a way that is inclusive and as accommodating as possible (there is more information about equality, diversity and safeguarding in this policy)
• Provide as much notice as possible to their scheme coordinator and/or fellow volunteers if they can’t fulfil their volunteering commitments, or if they no longer wish to be involved
• Ask their scheme coordinator for guidance if they don’t fully understand their role and responsibilities
• Take part in any training required for them to carry out their role, for example walk leader training for volunteer walk leaders
• Offer fair and honest feedback to Walking for Health, local scheme staff and fellow volunteers
• Follow our procedures and policies, for example equal opportunities and health and safety.
Opportunities and recruitment
There are lots of ways to get involved with Walking for Health as a volunteer. As well as being a walk leader or a walk assistant, volunteers can also help their local scheme to promote the walks, put together the walk programme, manage the paperwork and database or complete other administration tasks.

Our walks take place in communities across the country and we need volunteers from all these communities. Whatever the reason, and wherever they’re from, we need their help to keep walkers on the move.

All our schemes recruit and manage volunteers locally and each has their own system for managing this process. This usually starts with an application form, followed by an informal chat to discuss the person’s interest and suitability for the role. Some schemes may ask for a CV and references. There are also details of volunteer roles on the Walking for Health website, where people can get in touch with their local scheme to ask about volunteering. Depending on the role, the coordinator will usually suggest that anyone interested in volunteering go along to a walk, so that they can get more of an idea of what is involved before attending the required walk leader training.

Though most walks are open to all, if a walk is provided wholly or mainly for children or young people, volunteers leading the walks will need to have a Disclosure and Barring Service check. More information about safeguarding is on page 11.

Walking for Health has no upper age limit for volunteers, but local schemes may have restrictions. In order to meet our policy requirements for safeguarding, the minimum age for walk leaders is 18.

Equal opportunities and diversity
Providing more people with more opportunities to walk in their local communities is a fundamental part of Walking for Health’s vision. To fulfil that we are committed to:

- Providing equal opportunities for all and not discriminating against anyone because of race, national origin, gender, sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marital status, disability, long term conditions or age
- Celebrating differences, acting with fairness and honesty, and valuing all contributions from all people
- Being open to making reasonable adjustments to the way we do things in order to accommodate volunteers with specific needs.

Induction and training
We want to ensure all our schemes have volunteers who are happy and confident to carry out their role. All volunteers should have access to the appropriate induction and training they need depending on their role and this should include an opportunity for them to:
- Go through this policy and any other guidance provided
- Ask questions, and be clear about what is involved and expected of them
- Be introduced to their team, for example fellow walk leaders or other office staff and volunteers
- Go over health and safety requirements and be provided with information about any training
- Have a settling-in period to ensure everyone is clear about the role and expectations.

For walk leaders, we provide a national training programme, delivered by local cascade trainers (who are often also scheme coordinators). New walk leaders will need to attend at least one walk so that they know what is involved before they attend the walk leader training. At the training volunteers will receive everything they need, including a card to help them track their progress towards gaining a certificate. Walk leaders need to shadow an existing leader and lead a walk before they receive their training certificate from the scheme coordinator. Once they have this, they’re able to take responsibility for leading walks unsupervised. We recommend that walk leaders have regular refresher training to make sure they keep up to date with any changes and developments to the content of the training and our processes for leading walks.

All our volunteers in all of our different roles can:
- Sign up to receive Walking for Health volunteer newsletters
- Have access to various resources and tools on our website (their scheme coordinator may also provide them with other resources)

**Expenses**

Our schemes differ in how they approach expenses for volunteers due to their different organisational circumstances. Walking for Health recommends that schemes reimburse volunteers for any reasonable out-of-pocket expenses, where they can. This could be for any Walking for Health activity, including attending and leading their walks or attending training.

We only recommend reimbursing the amount spent as a result of volunteering, up to agreed maximum levels. Volunteers should provide tickets and receipts to be able to reclaim this money. It is the decision of the individual volunteer as to whether they want to claim expenses or not.

The Walking for Health team doesn’t supply volunteer expenses except for coordinators attending advisory panels or cascade trainers attending nationally delivered training.

**Equipment and resources**

To ensure Walking for Health walkers and volunteers get the best possible experience, volunteers receive appropriate guidance and support every step of the way along their volunteer journey. We’ve created a number of branded resources to help volunteers in their role and make sure they feel part of our Walking for Health family. Scheme coordinators can order these for their volunteers from our website. And there are also a number of
resources available (in electronic format) directly to volunteers there too.

Support and supervision
Volunteers will be directly supervised or supported remotely by their scheme coordinator, depending on their role. A walk leader will also have support from their fellow leaders and is likely to be part of regular (usually quarterly) walk leader meetings with their scheme coordinator. Admin volunteers working in an office or from home will have regular review meetings, which are a good opportunity to discuss how tasks have gone and what tasks are coming up, make sure any issues are dealt with and recognise successes.

Reliability and commitment
To ensure the walks take place as planned, it’s important for volunteers to be reliable, whether they are the volunteer leading the walk or helping to promote it.

Often, scheme coordinators will ask for some form of commitment over the period of a walk programme to ensure each walk has enough leaders and support, or to ensure they have enough help getting publicity materials distributed. They may draw up a rota, particularly to make sure they have enough walk leader cover.

We understand that circumstances change and things come up, sometimes at short notice. If volunteers can no longer make their walks or an agreed arrangement they should let their coordinator know as soon as possible. Some schemes may also ask their walk leaders to share their details with one another so they can make arrangements to swap or cover walks with other walk leaders directly.

Dealing with problems
While volunteering is largely a positive experience for everyone concerned, sometimes things do go wrong. Whatever the issue, whether it’s with a volunteer’s role or a complaint, we want our volunteers to feel comfortable to raise it informally with their scheme coordinator as soon as possible to allow them to deal with the situation
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straight away. The same applies to any issues a coordinator may have with a volunteer. If it’s not possible to resolve the issue this way, it’s important to ensure everyone knows what steps to take to get the matter resolved as quickly, fairly and honestly as possible. Look for further guidance on problem solving on the NCVO website or contact the Walking for Health team for advice.

Taking a break from volunteering
Sometimes personal circumstances change or things may arise which mean volunteers need to take a break from volunteering. Volunteers should let their scheme coordinator know if this is the case and get back in touch with them to see if the opportunity is still available when the time is better for them. Coordinators will always aim to be flexible and accommodating under these circumstances.

Leaving a volunteer role
Sometimes volunteers may wish to leave their role and that they can do so at their own discretion, at any time. We’re committed to making sure all volunteer experiences are great ones and scheme coordinators may want to talk to the volunteer to find out why they’re leaving. This may be through an informal chat or even a formal exit interview, which will remain confidential. This will help them to find out what improvements may be necessary in future.

If appropriate, volunteers should be offered the opportunity to be involved with Walking for Health’s work in future, keep in touch through the e-newsletter and be made aware of other opportunities. Coordinators should also provide them with a written reference, if or when they need one.

Equally, Walking for Health schemes may sometimes need to cancel a volunteer role, which they can do at their own discretion.

Health and Safety
Walking for Health is committed to looking after the health, safety and wellbeing of all our staff, volunteers and walkers, and recognises volunteers under the same legal requirements as for paid staff.

All volunteer activities should be risk assessed and appropriate actions taken to reduce risks. These risks are not limited to personal injury, for example, they could also include stress. Depending on the circumstances, actions to reduce risks could include giving volunteers specific information, training or equipment. However, volunteers need to recognise that they’re also responsible for their own health and safety, and that of those around them.

Volunteers with specific responsibilities for health and safety, for example walk leaders, should receive Walking for Health training and guidance to help them to fulfil their responsibilities. We also recommend providing basic first aid training, where it’s possible for local schemes to supply it.
For office based volunteers, such as those supporting schemes with administration, suitable risk assessments must be prepared for activities they will be carrying out and for their work space, to ensure we’ve undertaken our duty of care towards them.

It’s important that volunteers:
- Carry out duties without endangering either their health and safety or that of staff, volunteers, walkers or the general public
- Comply with all relevant instructions and procedures relating to safety and follow any guidance provided by Walking for Health
- Inform their scheme coordinator of any personal health and safety or wellbeing requirements that they may have, or if they have any doubts regarding their health and safety responsibilities.

Insurance

Civil liability insurance
This insurance relates to volunteer walk leaders leading accredited Walking for Health walks. Our insurance policy covers walk leaders who have successfully completed the Walking for Health volunteer walk leader training course, while they’re leading recognised Walking for Health activities for accredited schemes. It provides cover against legal liability for damages in respect of:

- Accidental injury or death to any person
- Accidental damage to property
- Nuisance, trespass to land or trespass to goods

The policy gives protection to individuals in the case of a claim being made against them by a third party, such as a landowner, a walker, or a member of the public. For such a claim to be successful, the injured party has to be able to show that they have suffered as a result of negligence. So if the claim arose, for example, as the result of an incident on a health walk, the injured party needs to show that the walk leader abdicated their responsibility in a reckless or negligent manner. Many schemes also have civil liability cover through their organisation. More information about our insurance is available on our website in the volunteer FAQs and scheme coordinator FAQs sections.

Employers or personal liability insurance
Walking for Health doesn’t provide employers or personal liability insurance for volunteers. Many Walking for Health schemes are coordinated by organisations, such as local authorities or charities, that employ staff. All such organisations are required by law to have liability insurance which covers accidents, disease and injury to their employees. They may include volunteers within this cover, so if volunteers are interested, they can ask their coordinator to see a copy of their organisation’s insurance cover or the certificate (which they are obliged to
display). Many organisations also provide personal accident cover for staff and volunteers that includes volunteers suffering injury, illness or death whilst on their organisation’s business, regardless of fault.

**Car drivers**
Volunteers using their own car for Walking for Health activities are recommended to inform their insurers that they’re using their cars as a volunteer and this should be regarded by the insurer as ‘social, domestic and pleasure use’. Most insurance companies agree to cover this at no extra charge to the premium, but some may not separate this activity from ‘business use’ and may try to charge accordingly. Volunteers’ cars are not covered by the Walking for Health civil liability insurance described above.

**Safeguarding**
Walking for Health welcomes children and vulnerable adults on walks and activities, as long as they are suitable for them. We’re committed to equal opportunities and aim to treat everyone with dignity and respect, and not to discriminate on grounds of race, national origin, gender, sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marital status, disability, long term conditions or age.

However, we don’t expect our schemes and volunteers to provide specialist care and support for people who have special needs or who are unable to care independently for themselves. We also don’t expect our schemes to take special responsibility for looking after children and young people under the age of 18.

We’re committed to ensuring the wellbeing of everyone, including children, young people and vulnerable adults, who participate in Walking for Health activities. We will take every practical step to minimise the risk of harm, paying particular attention to the needs of those who are most vulnerable, including children and vulnerable adults.

We’re also committed to supporting our scheme coordinators and volunteers in their work, including protecting them from potential liabilities, false suspicions and allegations of abuse. Full details of our policy and guidance on safeguarding are available on our website.

**Confidentiality**
Walking for Health is about welcoming and supporting lots of different people to join our walks, for whatever reason. As part of our duty of care towards those walkers, who may have joined for sensitive health reasons, we ask them to complete a health screening form or Outdoor Health Questionnaire. There may also be other information which is shared on the form or face-to-face.

It’s important that all our volunteers in any of our roles recognise and maintain confidentiality of all information whilst representing Walking for Health. By agreeing to the volunteering policy they are also agreeing to a confidentiality declaration and this means that confidential information about walkers, volunteers, Walking for
Health employees, scheme staff and our work is kept private, unless sharing this information is required by law.

Data protection
Walking for Health and all our schemes and volunteers have a legal responsibility to collect, store and use data about individuals (walkers or volunteers) in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act. This is a legal act to protect personal information. A more detailed explanation of our Privacy Policy (data protection statement) is available on our website.

Contacts
Volunteer or looking to volunteer? To find out how to get involved or query something in the policy, see the Walking for Health scheme information below for local contact details.

Scheme coordinator? For queries about volunteer management and policies contact the Walking for Health team via their details below.

Walking for Health contact information
Telephone: 020 3961 3300
Email: walkingforhealth@ramblers.org.uk
Website: www.walkingforhealth.org.uk
Address: 2nd Floor Camelford House, 89 Albert Embankment, London, SE1 7TW

Walking for Health scheme information
Coordinator/volunteer contact:
Telephone:
Email:
Website:
Address:

More Information
In producing this policy we’ve referred to guidance and resources from the Ramblers, Walking for Health and local schemes, along with national guidelines from volunteer organisations such as Volunteering England and their host organisation, NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations).
Further policy information and advice for scheme coordinators and volunteers is also available.

For more general information on volunteering policy, guidance, and good practice please see:

**NCVO**
www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/volunteering

**Volunteering England (part of NCVO)**
www.volunteering.org.uk

**Ramblers**
www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer

**Walking for Health**
www.walkingforhealth.org.uk
https://www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/volunteer-with-us

**Sport England**
https://www.sportengland.org/our-work/workforce/volunteering/
https://www.sportenglandclubmatters.com/