



Volunteer Expenses Policy and Guidance

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Document Owner: Tracey Berridge, Head of Volunteering

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Purpose of document

This document contains both the Volunteer Expenses Policy and the associated [Guidance](#). Please refer to both the Policy and the Guidance sections below.

Definitions

Volunteer manager: a named staff member or lead volunteer who has responsibility for managing a named volunteer in a specified volunteer role.

Volunteer: a current regular or occasional volunteer who has successfully completed all required recruitment and selection checks for a specified role or specified roles within Guide Dogs.

Claimable expenses: any reasonable, pre-agreed expenses solely incurred as part of a volunteering activity, as detailed in this guidance document.

Volunteer Expenses Policy

This policy outlines Guide Dogs' commitment to ensuring that volunteers are not out of pocket as a result of their voluntary activity with the organisation. Guide Dogs commits to reimburse any reasonable pre-agreed expenses incurred by our volunteers as part of a voluntary activity.

Although there isn't a legal or contractual obligation to reimburse volunteers for their expenses, we firmly believe the cost of volunteering should never be a barrier for anybody wishing to support our charity. We encourage all volunteers to submit their expenses

claims on a regular basis and we will make it as easy as possible to do so.

The key principles in this document are supported by related guidance documents and procedures.

Policy Statements

- Guide Dogs encourages all volunteers to claim the expenses which have been genuinely and exclusively incurred for the purpose of their voluntary activity with the organisation and where the expense has been pre-agreed with Guide Dogs.
- Volunteers are not financially compensated for their voluntary activities other than through the reimbursement of their expenses - and will not financially benefit from volunteering with Guide Dogs.
- Guide Dogs will strive to ensure that volunteers feel comfortable and entitled to claim reimbursement of their expenses.
- It should be clear to volunteers as to what reasonable expenses they are able to claim and the maximum claimable amounts. These amounts should be regularly reviewed to ensure they are suitable and realistic.
- Volunteers can expect the Volunteering Expenses Policy and associated guidance and procedures to be applied fairly and consistently across the organisation.
- Volunteer expense claims will be reimbursed where they have been submitted within the required timeframe and are accompanied by relevant receipts, or have been approved by exception. This is normally within 3 months of the expense being incurred, or with a member of the Executive Leadership Team's (Director/Chief of) authorisation for situations outside of the control of the volunteer.
- Guide Dogs will ensure that volunteers can access the appropriate support to complete their expense claims, should they require it.
- Claiming expenses should be as easy as possible for our volunteers. Where a volunteer is undertaking multiple roles, they will not be

expected to complete additional administration (i.e. an individual claim for each of those roles).

- Volunteer expense claims will be processed on a weekly basis to ensure that volunteers receive timely reimbursement.
- Guide Dogs will provide a flat-rate reimbursement for volunteers in certain roles where this will provide cost beneficial efficiencies and volunteers are appropriately reimbursed for the costs they incurred.
- Volunteers can access the Volunteer Expense Claim Form and supporting guidance on the [Volunteer Information Point \(VIP\)](#).
- We commit to accessible volunteering and will work with volunteers to provide suitable options to accommodate their needs when expenses could be a financial barrier.
- Volunteer Managers and other key staff across the organisation will be informed and equipped to deliver this policy and support volunteers to claim expenses.
- Volunteer Managers and other key staff across the organisation will have the appropriate authority to approve volunteer expenses.
- Volunteering activities and programmes have associated costs such as volunteer travel and equipment; this will be built into budgets, plans and funding bids as appropriate during the 'planning to involve volunteers' stage of any work.

Volunteer Expenses Guidance (All volunteers)

Purpose of Best Practice Guidance

Guide Dogs believes that volunteers should not be out of pocket as a result of their voluntary activity and commits to reimburse any reasonable, pre-agreed expenses incurred.

This guidance note is written for volunteers and outlines how to submit an expense claim and what expenses can be claimed for. Puppy Raisers and Breeding Dog Holders should refer to separate expense amount guidance in addition to this document.

Best Practice Guidance Information

Making a claim

The expenses being claimed for must have been genuinely and exclusively incurred for the purpose of volunteering with Guide Dogs.

Pre-agreeing an expense

Before you incur an expense relating to your voluntary activity with Guide Dogs, you must ensure that your volunteer manager (or another appropriate member of Guide Dogs staff) is aware of and has pre-agreed the expense. You may not be able to claim for an expense if it has not been pre-agreed.

Completing a volunteer expense claim form

Always use the latest version of the Volunteer Expense Claim Form when completing a new claim. You can download it from the [Volunteer Information Point \(VIP\)](#) website. A version which is accessible for those using screen reading software is available, but if you would prefer a paper copy, or require the form in an alternative format, please ask your volunteer manager who will be able to provide it to you.

Follow the instructions on the form to complete it. All expenses being claimed (other than mileage) must be accompanied by a valid VAT receipt.

If you have any queries or require support to complete the form, please contact your volunteer manager or key contact and they will be able to assist

Submitting your expense claim form

Send your completed expense claim form with all receipts attached (preferably scan or photo), to your volunteer manager or other appropriate staff member. Once they have reviewed your claim and approved it, they will send it to the Finance team for processing and payment. Please do not send your claim directly to the Finance team, doing so may cause significant delays.

Important - If submitting your claim by email, to protect your personal information you should always password protect the form and send the password by separate cover.

If you perform more than one volunteer role, please submit one claim covering all expenses incurred across all volunteer roles, rather than separate claims for each of your roles and send it together with the relevant receipts to one of your volunteer managers or other appropriate staff member.

You should submit your claims preferably monthly, and in all cases within 3 months of the expense being incurred. Unfortunately, claims incurred over 3 months may be rejected.

Wherever possible, we'd kindly ask that you submit an expense claim once the cumulative value of the claim is over £10 and wherever possible submit multiple claims in one, e.g. monthly. Every claim incurs a cost to process, so this will help us make efficient use of our resources. However, if your expenses will not amount to over £10 within the three-month window, please do submit the claim anyway.

To help us consolidate our accounts at the end of December, please also submit all claims for the previous calendar year by the end of the third working day in January at the latest.

Payment of your expenses

Expense claims are processed by the Finance team weekly by bank transfer.

Authorised claim forms received by the Finance team by end of Thursday will be reimbursed the next week, with funds usually showing in your bank account by the end of the following Thursday.

Claimable expenses

The following sections provide details of the volunteer expenses that you will be able to claim reimbursement for. Please note the list is not exhaustive. Please remember that even if the expense you expect to incur is listed in this document, it will still need to be pre-agreed by your volunteer manager.

Travel

Any pre-agreed travel to and from the place of your volunteering activity will be reimbursed. This includes travelling for volunteer training, volunteer interviews, and your volunteering activities.

When travelling, in all cases you should select the most cost-effective form of transport and always attach relevant VAT receipts for public transport or car parking to your claim.

For Oyster cards or equivalent travel cards expenses, you must attach a copy of the statement and highlight the relevant journey(s). We are unable to reimburse generic travel cards' top-ups where journeys are non-itemised.

Volunteers using their own vehicle will be reimbursed at 45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles within the business year (6th April to 5th April), and 25p per mile thereafter. These are the [HMRC approved mileage rates](#) which are periodically reviewed. Volunteers are responsible for keeping a running total of mileage. Electric vehicles will also be reimbursed at 45p per mile.

You can claim an additional 5p per mile for volunteering-related trips where you share your car journey with another volunteer (or employee) who would have been entitled to claim mileage for the same trip. The maximum claimable is 5p per mile, regardless of the number of additional people transported. Claims should include the name of the additional person(s) carried, the number of shared miles claimed, and the start and finish destinations.

If you use your own vehicle for the volunteering activity you carry out for Guide Dogs, you must notify your insurer. Volunteering is usually covered under “social, domestic, and pleasure” policies and the majority of companies do not charge an additional premium if the vehicle is used for volunteering purposes. However, requirements may differ depending on each insurer. Guide Dogs will not reimburse any premium charges incurred. For more information please see the “Informing your insurance company that you are using your vehicle while volunteering” document on the [Driving page on VIP](#).

All rail/coach travel should be booked in standard class. When air travel is required, economy class should be booked and ‘no frills’ airlines considered.

Taxi/Ubbers (with a valid reason, and if no other transport form is practical/available) are also accepted if pre-agreed by your volunteer manager.

Payment of ULEZ/Clear Air Zone charges will also be reimbursed upon proof of expense, when travelling across one of those zones is required.

In cases where private car hire is required, this must be booked via your volunteer manager or another appropriate member of staff.

Car parking costs incurred as part of your volunteering activities will also be reimbursed, when supported by the relevant receipt.

If you are entitled to travel concessionary fares, senior or student cards, we kindly appreciate their use in order to minimise costs.

We ask you to also consider the environmental impact of your choice of transport when planning your journeys.

Lunches and refreshments

Volunteers are expected to use the free facilities available in the offices/event site or fund the cost of their own drinks and meals with the exceptions detailed below:

- If your volunteer manager arranges to meet you in mutually convenient place such as a café, to minimise travel time and expense, they can claim refreshments for themselves and any

third parties/volunteers as a travel and subsistence cost (up to the maximum amount detailed in this guidance note).

- If you are volunteering for more than 4 continuous hours (not including travel time - unless you are a Driver in which case you are eligible to claim this amount) at events or off site where there is no access to kitchen facilities, and as agreed with your volunteer manager, you will be entitled to claim back costs of a meal for a maximum of £6 (including drink). Please note that this provision does not apply to puppy raisers, fosterers and breeding dog volunteers in their daily role - except when volunteering at events or outside of your normal geographic area.

Telephone, postage and other expenses

Reasonable, pre-agreed telephone and postage expenses necessary to your volunteering activity will be reimbursed if supported by appropriate VAT receipts.

If you use your personal phone to make any calls for the purpose of your volunteering - including for your volunteer interviews - you can claim back expenses incurred by submitting the itemised phone bill and highlighting the calls you made. If your personal phone tariff includes free minutes/calls, expenses cannot be claimed for, unless your volunteering related calls exceed your phone tariff allowance.

Guide Dogs will not reimburse any expenses related to the usage of the internet when a flat rate contract is in place. Any additional internet broadband expenses that arise solely and exclusively for the purpose of volunteering with Guide Dogs can be claimed providing an itemised bill. For mobile data, if the usage of data for volunteering activities exceeds your plan/tariff or there is no option to use a secure wi-fi connection, then relevant expenses can also be claimed providing an itemised bill.

Stationery

When needed to perform your volunteer role, and if practical, minor stationery supplies including stamps and cartridges will be provided by Guide Dogs - or related expenses for their purchase be reimbursed to you, if pre-agreed by your volunteer manager.

Greetings cards purchased in order to thank other volunteers will only be reimbursed to volunteers who formally manage other volunteers.

Equipment

Fundraising Groups will be provided with the required equipment for their activities, such as gazebos and tablecloths. However, the following non-essential items could be purchased through expenses with pre-agreement from your volunteer manager:

- Tables and chairs - £50 per fundraising group
- Cash float tin - £10 per fundraising group
- Storage boxes for merchandise - £20 per fundraising group
- Wheeled trolley for moving equipment - £30 per fundraising group
- Coin counting machine - £150 per fundraising group

Event costs

Volunteers who organise events or stands at shows, please speak with your volunteer manager or other staff contact before making any payments, as these costs should be paid directly by Guide Dogs.

Overnight accommodation

If overnight accommodation is required for you to perform your volunteer role, this must be pre-agreed by your volunteer manager. You will also be able to claim relevant expenses for meals when supported by VAT receipts. This includes dinner for the overnight, breakfast and lunch the following day if you are still away from home as part of your volunteering activity. The maximum amounts that can be claimed for are the following:

- Hotel Inner London, Reading, Newcastle, Birmingham, Warwick, Leamington Spa: £120 per night.
- Hotel in any other locations in the UK: £85 per night.
- Air B&B - not to exceed the cost of the allowed Hotel Rate within that area.
- Breakfast: £6 per meal (including drink).
- Lunch: £6 per meal (including drink).
- Dinner: £20 per meal (including drink).

Any other expenses incurred at the hotel cannot be claimed for. These include, for example, mini-bar service, laundry services, etc.

Items which cannot be claimed for

Guide Dogs will **not** reimburse:

- Any non-preauthorised activities. Any personal expenditure (e.g. laundry, newspapers, etc.)
- The purchase of alcohol, whether purchased for yourself, staff, other volunteers or service users. This also includes 0% alcohol free drinks.
- Speeding or traffic fines, parking tickets, etc. can never be claimed on expenses. It is every volunteer's responsibility to respect the laws and regulations.

Additional arrangements

If a volunteer lives with a disability or lifelong condition and is supported to perform their role, the pre-agreed expenses of the person supporting them will also be reimbursed as well as those of the volunteer, in line with the Volunteer Expenses Guidance Note for Volunteers and relevant appendices.

Equally if a volunteer requires professional support in order to perform their volunteer role - e.g. hearing loop etc. - this should be discussed with the volunteer manager at the earliest opportunity so that reasonable adjustments can be put in place.

We recognise that some volunteers may not always be in a position to cover the cost of expenses up front. If this applies to you, please speak with your volunteer manager who will be able to help and support.

We encourage all volunteers to claim expenses but are aware some choose not to. If this applies to you, and you are eligible for Gift Aid to be claimed on your donations, we'd encourage you to consider claiming the expenses owed to you and donating these back to us. If we are able to claim the Gift Aid, then this would increase the value of your contribution.

Documentation

The Volunteer Expense Policy and Volunteer Expense Claim Forms can be found on the [Volunteer Information Point \(VIP\)](#).

Information relating to volunteer expense amounts and flat-rate reimbursements for Puppy Raisers and Breeding Dog Holders can be found on the [Volunteer Information Point \(VIP\)](#).

Staff can access the [expense amount guidance for Puppy Raisers and Breeding Dog Holders](#) and a [statement to explain flat-rate expense reimbursements to motor insurance companies](#) on the Knowledge Hub.

Permissible exceptions

If a volunteer does not have a bank account, they should inform their volunteer manager to discuss an alternative, suitable way to reimburse their expenses.

A group of Corporate Volunteers being paid by their employer to enable their volunteering with us will claim their travel expenses through their employer.

It will be at the discretion of a member of the Executive Leadership Team (Director/Chief of) to authorise expenses which are not in line with the expense policy.

Governance Information

Governance Review & Approval Table:

Table contains 2 rows and 6 columns. Headings in row and column 1.

Governance Area:	H&S	Safeguarding	Insurance	Legal	Data Protection
Approved by (date & initial):			01/07/25	05/06/25	11/06/25

Review Frequency

Every 2 years.

Version control table

Table contains 2 rows and 4 columns. Headings are in row 1.

Date	Version	Status	Details of Change
05/09/25	1.0	Approved.	New document combining the updated Volunteer Expenses Policy and all Guidance in one (with the exception of the “Volunteer Expense Amounts Guidance Appendix C - Puppy Raisers and Breeding Dog Holders”).

End of document.