Volunteer Expenses Policy

**Policy owners:** Head of Volunteering and Head of Finance

**Policy approved by:** Executive Team

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1. **Purpose and scope**

Volunteers increase our impact and are crucial in helping us tackle Diabetes as the fastest growing health threat of our time. Diabetes UK is committed to ensuring volunteers have a high quality experience and this Policy has been benchmarked against national volunteer management standards. Volunteering should be accessible and no volunteer should be left out of pocket as a result of their volunteering.

This policy provides information and guidance about volunteer expenses for Diabetes UK staff, volunteers and local group treasurers. Local groups should use this policy when reimbursing volunteers from group funds. Staff members should be familiar with and refer to the *Volunteer Expenses – Guidance for Staff document*. Diabetes UK Staff who undertake volunteering should use the staff expenses process and submit the Staff Expenses form to the relevant budget holder.

2. **Reasonable expenses**

Refunding volunteer expenses is a legitimate cost associated with any volunteer programme or project and we strongly encourage volunteers to claim their expenses. As with other project costs we need to ensure we are demonstrating value for money. We have set a maximum limit for travel, subsistence and accommodation. However we ask volunteers to support us in ensuring that expenses are reasonable and are made using the most cost effective method available, taking into account personal safety and wellbeing. Volunteers should also ensure that costs are a necessary expense incurred as a result of undertaking their Diabetes UK volunteer role.

3. **What is covered?**

We cover travel, subsistence and, where needed, accommodation costs for volunteers. In order to help ensure accountability we have set limits for spending in these areas, however people should not be excluded from volunteering and if volunteers need to exceed these limits or claim for expenses that do not fall into these categories they should feel comfortable in discussing this with their staff contact. Information on refunding other costs incurred as a result of volunteering is outlined in section 3.4 below.

3.1 **Travel**

We will reimburse volunteers for travel to and from their place of volunteering and travel undertaken as part of their volunteer role. When booking their own travel we ask volunteers, where possible, to book in advance and to choose the best value option. This includes choosing public transport over car if it is the cheaper option.

We will reimburse travel by public transport or car up to £50. However as stated above we understand that travel costs vary for different geographical areas and in some circumstances volunteers may need to exceed this limit. In this case we ask them to consult with their staff contact and obtain agreement in writing or via email for the expense. If volunteers need to take a taxi they should also agree this with their staff contact in writing or via email in advance. Where volunteers drive to and from, or as part of, their volunteer role we will reimburse the cost of petrol at 45p per mile, in line with HMRC guidance.

If a volunteer is travelling a long distance, for example to attend a national event, then their staff contact for the event or project will inform them of the cost limit well in advance of the event.

3.2 **Subsistence (food and drink)**

Where volunteers are volunteering over a meal time, and where a meal is not provided, we will reimburse the cost of meals as follows:
• Breakfast- where volunteer is staying overnight for their volunteering, see ‘Accommodation’
• Lunch up to £7
• Evening Meal up to £15 –if volunteering past 7pm in the evening

Reasonable costs of soft and hot drinks will be reimbursed, within the above limits. If volunteering for a full day or longer, subsistence costs for a volunteer should not exceed £25 in a 24 hour period. We do not reimburse the cost of alcohol.

While we have set limits for the amount to be claimed for food we want to ensure we support volunteers to have a healthy balanced diet and that special dietary requirements are met. Volunteers should therefore discuss any concerns with their staff contact.

3.3 Accommodation
There may be rare occasions where it is necessary for volunteers to stay overnight. In most cases we will try and book accommodation on behalf of volunteers. We will pay accommodation costs (bed and breakfast) at £80 (£120 in London). If breakfast is not included in the room price this should be added for the volunteer when the room is booked.

3.4 Other costs
As stated above, volunteers should not be out-of-pocket as a result of volunteering. We ask that volunteers agree other costs in writing with their local volunteering contact prior to purchasing items, such as stationary. Where a volunteer role requires a specific piece of equipment, Diabetes UK will look to buy these in bulk, and distribute these to volunteers. Two specific cost categories are covered in more detail below.

3.4.1 Childcare and carer costs
Due to cost implications, Diabetes UK does not cover formal or informal childcare expenses and is unable to reimburse expenses for respite care to volunteers with caring responsibilities. However we are happy to signpost volunteers to advisory services on care provision.

3.4.2 Telephone and internet charges
Where it is agreed that a volunteer needs to use a personal mobile phone or landline as part of their role, we will reimburse costs where the included minutes or data allowance of a volunteer’s phone or internet contract are exceeded as a result of their volunteering. Therefore the calls must be itemised on a bill in order to be claimed.

4. How can volunteers claim and when will expenses be paid?

In order to be as flexible as possible and make claiming easy, we can pay expenses by bank transfer (BACS), cheque, or cash (under £25). Expenses should be claimed within 2 month of the activity- this enables Diabetes UK to accurately plan and keep track of funds.

4.1 Expense claim form and accompanying receipts
For all expense claims volunteers must complete and sign a Volunteer Expense Claim Form. Original receipts must be attached to the form for this to be processed. For mileage claims, where no accompanying receipts are needed, the form can be electronically signed and submitted to the staff contact via email. The expense claim will be checked and signed off by the relevant staff contact before being submitted for payment.

4.2 Payment by bank transfer (BACS)
BACS payments will be paid within 20 working days of a correctly filled Expense Claim Form being submitted to the staff contact. However in most cases they will be paid sooner.
The staff contact should submit either the original or a copy of the expense claim and receipts to the Finance Team – i.e. only one set of documents should be submitted. The form and original receipts should be kept on file for 7 years for auditing purposes.

4.3 Payment by cheque
Cheques will be issued in person or by post from the local Diabetes UK office within 10 working days of the correctly filled Expense Claim Form being submitted.

4.4 Payment by cash
For expenses under £25 we can reimburse volunteers with cash. If the staff contact has been given notice of 5 working days, this payment can be made in person at the event. We can only do cash reimbursements in person and cannot post cash.

4.5 Paying expenses in advance
We understand that volunteers may need to be paid expenses in advance, particularly volunteers on low income. In these cases we will be flexible and will either directly purchase items on behalf of the volunteer or provide expenses payments in advance. Where payments are provided in advance, receipts must be provided once the money has been spent and any remaining funds should be returned.