

Volunteer Policy

Version One
July 2017

Pets change lives
We change theirs

BLUE FOR
PETS
CROSS



Volunteer policy

This policy sets out our principles of volunteer involvement at Blue Cross. It covers the scope of our volunteering programme and our expectations; informing our volunteer charter and handbook, so that our volunteers:

- can maximise their positive impact on our work
- have clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- are adequately and appropriately supported whilst volunteering with us
- do not place Blue Cross at risk and are not putting themselves at risk
- adhere to our policies and procedures

Who this policy applies to:

- Blue Cross volunteers
- All employees who work with Blue Cross volunteers
- Organisations and individuals that work in partnership with Blue Cross

Responsibilities

- **Trustees** – to create a culture of volunteer involvement and development, drawing from their own experience as Blue Cross volunteers
- **Executive team** – to sponsor and endorse policies and plans to enable volunteer involvement and development
- **Volunteering development team** – to oversee the volunteering programme and create and maintain policies and procedures relating to volunteers to enable us to effectively involve them
- **Volunteers** – to adhere to the volunteering policy, charter, handbook and associated policies and procedures
- **Volunteer managers** – to understand, implement and adhere to associated policies and procedures
- **All teams** – to adhere to this policy and associated procedures and to treat volunteers as team members with due consideration

Definition of volunteering

Blue Cross defines a volunteer as someone who:

- gives their time freely and willingly
- has completed the volunteer recruitment and induction process
- performs tasks at the request of, and on behalf of, Blue Cross, without receiving financial compensation beyond the reimbursement of expenses

Volunteers are not employees and should not be treated as such. The policies and practices that define our relationship with volunteers are consistent with the voluntary nature of volunteering and are separate from formal, legal employment contracts and relationships.

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The volunteer relationship is binding only in trust and mutual understanding. It is not intended to be legally binding.

No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, can be imposed on volunteers to give their time. Likewise the charity does not provide payment or other such benefit in return for any volunteering activity. It does not guarantee to provide regular volunteering opportunities, nor does it set any obligation about how often or for how long volunteers must carry out their roles – or apply sanctions if volunteers don't attend.

We recognise that some people may carry out both paid and voluntary roles within Blue Cross. These roles will be clearly defined and managed accordingly under the appropriate policies.

Equal opportunities and diversity

As a matter of respect and dignity, we believe volunteers should be treated fairly and inclusively wherever reasonable. Our policies and procedures are designed to ensure that no volunteer receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, sex, sexual orientation, religious belief, marital status or age.

Everyone at Blue Cross has a responsibility not to discriminate on these grounds, or encourage others to do so, and to report discrimination so that appropriate action may be taken.

We recognise that people often have different needs and requirements. Volunteers are encouraged to tell their manager anything they need to know to ensure we can make the best of their volunteering contribution.

Key steps – the volunteer journey

Identifying roles: Volunteer managers are responsible for recruiting volunteers locally, according to the needs of the service. Managers will plan and resource how they will involve volunteers before recruiting them. All volunteers require an approved role description.

Advertising roles: There are many ways local managers can promote volunteering opportunities both online, within local communities and with partner agencies as laid out in the volunteer toolkit. Blue Cross does not accept 'mandatory placements' where a person may be at risk of a detrimental outcome, such as a loss of benefits, and as such, any enquiry of this nature should be referred to the volunteering development team.

Enquiry process: Blue Cross values the diversity volunteers bring and welcomes applications from all sections of the community. The minimum age to volunteer at Blue Cross is 14 years, for some roles there is a higher minimum age and for anyone under 16 a work permit may be required by the local authority. We do not specify an upper age limit. All enquiries will receive a prompt and welcoming response.

Application process: All volunteers will complete an application form, preferably through our online system to save time and costs. A paper-based application is also available. Help will be offered if necessary to complete this.

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Selecting volunteers: All applicants will be offered an informal discussion to establish their motivations for volunteering, and skills and experience relevant to the role. Selection will be based on each volunteer's understanding and suitability for a specified role and the current needs of the service. Volunteers will be encouraged to consider it's the right role and commitment for them.

Whilst volunteers form an integral part of delivering our mission, we are under no obligation to provide volunteering opportunities and it is essential that the right people are matched to the right roles for the relationship to be reciprocal so both the volunteer and Blue Cross benefit from the time given.

If successful, the volunteer will be invited to start a supervised trial period. If a volunteer is not suitable for the role, feedback will be provided either offering an alternative role, or referring them onto another volunteer agency as appropriate.

Checks and screening: Some volunteer roles require references and/or a DBS check, as laid out in the volunteer toolkit. All volunteers will receive a trial period. Before commencing the trial period, volunteers will be invited to sign the volunteer charter to clarify reasonable expectations of both the volunteer and the charity. A personal profile will be created on Connect for Pets, our online volunteering system.

On being offered a role, a health questionnaire along with any necessary risk assessments will be completed by the volunteer and the volunteer manager will give consideration to any reasonable adjustments. Volunteers must advise their volunteer manager in a change of circumstances of health that may affect their role. Volunteers must not continue beyond a point where it could be detrimental to their own, or other people's, health and safety.

Induction: Volunteers will be emailed an invite to take the Blue Cross induction online. Locally, they will receive an induction covering the role, health & safety along with relevant policies and procedures and familiarisation with their area of work. They will receive a copy of the volunteer handbook providing key information as part of their Induction.

Management, training and development: Volunteers will be provided with a named manager who will offer relevant support. Volunteers will be invited to undertake additional training relevant to their role to help them be effective and successful, which will be explained at selection. Volunteer reviews will be offered at appropriate times to establish opportunities for feedback and development.

Recognition: It is essential volunteers are valued for the huge contribution they make. This is achieved in various ways from a simple 'thank you' to more formal long service letters. There are also various awards, both internally and externally, that volunteers can be nominated for by the local manager at appropriate times. Further procedures around recognition are in the volunteer toolkit.

Resolving problems: The volunteer toolkit contains the steps to take to address any issues identified. Volunteers can also raise concerns using the Blue Cross complaints process.

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Ending the relationship: The volunteering relationship is not a legally binding contract and can be cancelled at any time by either party. Volunteers are asked to inform their manager if they no longer wish to volunteer. In a case of Blue Cross withdrawing a role, the manager will explain the position and where possible, offer an alternative or refer them onto another volunteer agency as appropriate. A leaver's survey will be emailed to the volunteer giving the opportunity to give feedback.

Volunteer information: All volunteers will be required to share their relevant personal details with Blue Cross so we can contact them relating to their volunteer role. This information will be stored and managed securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. In addition volunteers will have the option to receive information about Blue Cross work and the different ways that they can support us. These preferences can be updated or changed at any time.

Key policies and procedures:

The key policies and procedures that need to be covered with volunteers, to ensure they can safely and effectively carry out their roles are:

- Volunteer charter and volunteer handbook – setting out both the expectations of Blue Cross and volunteers
- Health & safety policy and procedures
- Young & vulnerable persons policy and procedures
- Data protection and confidentiality
- Volunteer expenses policy
- Complaints procedure and arrangements for dealing with problems or raising concerns
- Animal euthanasia policy
- IT and Social media policies
- Driving policy and checks (role specific)
- Supporter Charter

The key policies and procedures that apply to volunteer management to help us effectively manage volunteers are:

- Volunteer toolkit, charter and handbook
- Younger volunteers procedure and guidance
- Mandatory work activity procedure
- Connect for Pets guidance

Other relevant organisational wide policies apply where relevant to the volunteering role.

Document Control

Version	Date issued	Authored by	Approved by	Review date
One	25 July 2017	Liz Reed and Karen Janes	Executive Team, 18 July 2017	July 2018