



the brain injury association

Headway North Cumbria

www.headwaynorthcumbria.org.uk

HEADWAY NORTH CUMBRIA VOLUNTEER POLICY

INTRODUCTION

1. Headway North Cumbria recognises the value of volunteer participation in helping achieve its strategic aims and extend the delivery of services offered. Furthermore, it believes that volunteers enhance the credibility of the organisation. Headway North Cumbria understands that the interests, life experiences and diverse range of skills of volunteers can complement that of other team members and that volunteers can bring a different and fresh perspective to its work, often one that reflects the views of the local community. Headway North Cumbria is committed to making volunteering a worthwhile and enjoyable activity that benefits both the individual and the organisation.

2. Volunteers are vital to the work of Headway North Cumbria. There are many ways in which volunteers can help with their time and effort. It could be a few hours a week giving administrative help, helping with activities for those with a brain injury or organising outings and events. Help may be needed with activities such as art and crafts, hobbies, and computer skills. Volunteers may also give their time as a committee member, attending committee meetings and working with others to achieve the aims and objectives of the branch. Every single voluntary role is important, and we want to ensure our volunteers feel supported, confident, and happy in their roles.

AIM OF THE POLICY

3. This policy supports the mission, aims and objectives of Headway North Cumbria. It acknowledges the role of volunteers and describes what our volunteers can expect from us and what we expect from them. It also describes the recruitment and selection process and the training and development opportunities for volunteers. It seeks to encourage and enable, rather than limit the involvement of volunteers.

DEFINITION

4. A volunteer is someone who commits time and energy for the benefit of others, who does so freely, through personal choice and without expectation of financial reward, except for payment of actual out-of-pocket expenses.

SCOPE

5. This policy applies to all volunteers and committee members of Headway North Cumbria.

WHAT OUR VOLUNTEERS CAN EXPECT FROM US

6. Our volunteers are an incredibly important part of our organisation and we could not support brain injury survivors without their time, effort and skills. Headway North Cumbria will do everything it can to ensure they have a positive experience. In particular Headway North Cumbria will:

- a. provide appropriate information, basic training, and assistance so that volunteers can meet the responsibilities of their role.
- b. provide regular support through a named contact.
- c. respect the volunteer's skills, dignity, and specific needs, and to do our best to adjust to their individual requirements.
- d. treat volunteers as an equal; jointly responsible for the welfare of our members and fulfilment of our mission.
- e. provide adequate insurance cover for volunteers whilst carrying out the charity's business.
- f. resolve fairly, any problems, grievances, or difficulties a volunteer may have while volunteering for us.

WHAT WE EXPECT FROM OUR VOLUNTEERS

7. A volunteer is the face of Headway to all the people we support. We expect all of our volunteers to uphold our values in their work and feel proud to be representing the charity. Volunteers should be able to demonstrate that they:

- a. are good listeners.
- b. have the ability to develop and maintain supportive relationships with people affected by brain injury.
- c. respect different lifestyles and ways of managing difficulties.
- d. are willing to learn about brain injury and its effects on those with the injury and their families and carers.

- e. understand the need for confidentiality and liaison with Headway committee members.
- f. are willing to increase their knowledge and skills by attending training.
- g. are willing to commit to an agreed amount of time each month.
- h. are willing to work towards the aims of the branch and follow the branch volunteer code of conduct.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER AS A VOLUNTEER

8. While there are lots of different roles and activities a volunteer can take part in there are some important things which always remain the same regardless of the role.

9. **Boundaries.** Volunteering at a Headway branch is first and foremost about working with people; however, the relationship between the volunteer and the people they support is a more “formal” relationship, so whilst a volunteer will be friendly, warm and build up a rapport with members it is different from personal relationships. A volunteer engages in a supportive relationship that focuses on the needs of the Headway member. Moving the focus of care away from meeting Headway members’ needs towards meeting the volunteer’s own needs is unacceptable.

10. **Working in partnership.** It is important to do things with people, not for them or to them. There are lots of different agencies and people that we work with when supporting someone. The people we support may sometimes also use other agencies, such as health and social care. If a volunteer does not know about these services, then this may be something they want to discuss with the branch contact.

11. **Active Listening.** Being truly listened to and allowed to talk about your experience in your own words, without being rushed or interrupted can be an incredibly powerful experience. As a volunteer, one of the most important parts of the role is listening to the people who benefit from Headway’s services. Everyone’s experience of brain injury is different, and it is only by listening and hearing their own description that we can really understand how life is like for them. Volunteers must be aware of the difference between being a counsellor and using counselling skills (such as active listening with a non-judgmental approach) that are appropriate for the delivery of care and support. Counselling is not an appropriate role for volunteers and members should be given advice and support to access other appropriate agencies where necessary.

12. **Language.** Language is a very personal thing. The words that one person feels comfortable with, might be offensive or have a different meaning to someone else. Be careful when using words like “disabled” or “survivor” for example. Although these expressions may be familiar, they may feel uncomfortable for others. A good guide can be to listen to the language the person uses and adopt that in your conversations with them.

13. **Independence.** Headway North Cumbria’s role is about supporting people to stay as independent as possible. It is a matter of working alongside them, not taking over. It is about doing things with people, rather than for or to them. For some, this means a gentle prompting; perhaps helping them learn or re-learn how to do things. For others, more assistance to do things may be required, for example, because of their health. For everyone, it means doing as much as possible to help people help themselves and stay in control of their own lives. The challenge is that any time a person supported by Headway has to settle for less independence than they had before the reasons are identified, and other ways to support them to achieve their full potential are investigated.

14. **Gifts.** It is a strict policy that no volunteer or committee member will accept gifts or money from members or service users, or any bequests in their wills. A volunteer should notify the branch contact, the chair of the committee, or the Headway UK network support coordinator, if any such gift or bequest is offered. Volunteers must not provide help or advice on the preparation of wills, deeds of gifts, or any other document created to pass property, or provide any other type of favour.

15. **Insurance.** Headway has public liability insurance cover which protects volunteers when carrying out the charity’s business. A volunteer will be required to have business insurance cover for their car if transporting any Headway members, in conjunction with a risk assessment (which will be provided by the branch). Most insurance companies do not add an additional charge for this cover, which includes carrying passengers in connection with volunteering. However, it is important to check that any passengers are insured with your insurer. Headway North Cumbria cannot be responsible for loss or damage to your personal possessions.

16. **Social Media.** Social media is a useful tool in raising awareness of Headway and with engaging with people who may benefit from our services. If a volunteer is using their social media platform to promote the work of Headway North Cumbria and are referencing your role as a volunteer, then they sure ensure that the language and content is appropriate.

17. **Safeguarding.** Headway North Cumbria is committed to creating and maintaining a positive environment and accepts its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all adults it supports and who are involved in its services, projects and activities. This includes service users, beneficiaries, members, and volunteers.

18. Safeguarding disclosures are rare, but if a service user discloses that they are being abused or their wellbeing is at risk there are some key things that the volunteer should remember: Stay calm. Let them talk, use open questions and stay non-judgemental. The volunteer should ask the service user what they would like to happen next, but also inform them that they must pass information on if they are in danger. Details of the disclosure are to be written down as soon as possible, including when, where, how and what was said or done. The information should be passed immediately to a committee member and they will take it from there. The lead safeguarding officer will contact and inform the relevant agencies if necessary.

RESPONSIBILITIES

19. Headway North Cumbria will provide volunteers with information, support, and training and development opportunities.

20. The Headway North Cumbria committee will monitor adherence of the policy and report findings to the committee and/or Network Support Co-ordinator and/or Headway National as appropriate.

21. The lead volunteer and/or committee member assuming responsibility for the Day Centre, activity session, meeting or other headway related event will ensure that all volunteers have access to, and are aware of this policy

22. Volunteers are expected to:

- a. adhere to this policy and seek the guidance/advice from the Headway North Cumbria committee, Network Support Co-ordinator or Headway National.
- b. read and comply with the Volunteer Code of Conduct and sign a declaration to that effect.
- c. read and comply with the Confidentiality Policy and sign the Confidentiality Agreement¹ to confirm they have done so.
- d. read and comply with all other relevant Policies, Procedures, and sign to confirm that they have done so. This will be recorded on file.
- e. participate in volunteer reviews and training where appropriate for their role.

¹ The Confidentiality Agreement is part of the Volunteer Code of Conduct Declaration.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

23. Headway North Cumbria will ensure recruitment and selection of volunteers is carried out fairly. To this end:

- a. Volunteers will be provided with information about Headway North Cumbria, the role and training expectations prior to commencement. This will allow volunteers to make an informed choice about the suitability of this volunteering role.
- b. Volunteer interviews will be informal and conducted by the lead volunteer, committee member or other appropriate person.
- c. Two character references will be sought within the first 6 weeks of starting work with Headway North Cumbria.
- d. The role and relationship between Headway North Cumbria and the volunteer will be by mutual agreement.
- e. Disclosure and Barring (DBS) clearance at an appropriate level will be required for volunteers. This will be sought following the outcome of the volunteer's 6 week review. Volunteers will be unable to work unsupervised until this clearance is obtained.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

24. Volunteers are valued members of the team and as such, Headway North Cumbria takes their training and development seriously and will ensure:

- a. that all volunteers have access to training and development opportunities relevant to their roles to comply with legislation and internal policies and procedures; in particular Health and Safety, Equality and Diversity and Confidentiality.
- b. Volunteers receive an Induction within 12 weeks of starting and as part of the induction read and discuss the key Headway North Cumbria policies and procedures. Information about the 'Effects of Brain Injury' should also be provided.

25. Volunteers are encouraged to attend volunteer meetings. The dates of these meetings are arranged in advance and the day of the meeting is varied.

26. Volunteers should have the opportunity to have review meetings.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

27. Volunteers will be required to provide only relevant personal information and will be told why it is needed. The information will be kept in a secure and responsible manner in accordance with the Data Protection Policy; no information will be given to anyone else without permission. Volunteers will have the right to access their personal information held by Headway North Cumbria in line with our confidentiality policy.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

28. Headway seeks to challenge discrimination and lack of opportunity in its policy and practice. Headway North Cumbria will seek to foster a culture that respects and values others' differences and sees these differences as an asset to the charity. Volunteers are expected to demonstrate equality and diversity values and working practice.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION – CAR INSURANCE

29. Volunteer drivers are those who work for voluntary organisations but do not receive any payment for their work. Most motor insurance providers recognise the value of drivers that wish to help their communities through volunteer driving and have signed up to a commitment promising volunteer motorists that they would not be charged extra premiums. Some insurance companies however did not sign up to the commitment and state that any undisclosed volunteer work - even if it did not involve a car - may void a policy.

30. The Association of British Insurers (ABI) has introduced volunteer driving commitments to provide guidance on the matter. Insurers who do not charge extra for volunteer driving have signed up to the [ABI's volunteer driving– the motor insurance commitment \(pdf 781kB\)](#). This commitment applies to private cars insured on private car insurance. Some of these insurers require you to tell them that you are using your vehicle for volunteer driving even though they do not charge an extra premium. Further details can be found at the ABI's website:

<https://www.abi.org.uk/products-and-issues/choosing-the-right-insurance/motor-insurance/volunteer-drivers/>

31. If you are a volunteer driver you may not therefore be automatically be covered by your regular motor insurance policy. It is recommended that if you use your own vehicle for volunteer driving you should:

- contact your insurer to find out if you are covered by your regular motor insurance policy

- include your volunteer driving miles when declaring your annual mileage to your insurer

RELATED HEADWAY NORTH CUMBRIA POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Code of Conduct for Members
 Confidentiality Policy
 Harassment & bullying Policy
 Health and Safety Policy
 Privacy and Dignity Policy
 Safeguarding Policy
 Volunteer Code of Conduct
 Whistleblowing Policy