Royal British Legion Volunteering Policy

The Royal British Legion (RBL) was formed by volunteers in 1921 and volunteers have been the lifeblood of the organisation for a century. What started as a welfare organisation offering welfare support immediately after WW1, is now one of UK's largest charities.

RBL supports those we serve, the Armed Forces community. It provides lifelong support to serving and ex-serving personnel and their families. Support starts after one day of service and continues through life, long after service is over. RBL provides expert advice and guidance, recovery and rehabilitation and support for transitioning to civilian life and not just for members of the Armed Forces, but for their families too.

RBL is also here to ensure the enduring responsibility of Remembrance is understood and embraced across our nation. Every year the Royal British Legion leads the nation in commemorating and honouring those who have served and sacrificed, remembering those who lost their lives on active service in all conflicts; from the beginning of the First World War right up to the present day, as well as all those who have served and their families.

Volunteers, members, and supporters form the backbone of the RBL, and their contribution is vital to the achievement of RBL's objectives. This policy sets out the framework and principles which underpin RBL's approach to volunteering and its engagement with its volunteers. It is supported by the RBL Volunteer Agreement and Volunteer Handbooks.

Principles of RBL volunteering

The Royal British Legion will ensure that:

- Volunteers are properly included into the organisation and valued for their contribution to the work of RBL.
- Volunteers will not be asked to undertake roles which replace paid staff.
- Staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers.

Who is an RBL volunteer?

An RBL volunteer is someone who gives their time and skills to help the Royal British Legion achieve its charitable objectives, by undertaking one or more volunteer role(s) agreed by the RBL and has no expectations of payment for their time. This is in line with the National Council for Voluntary Organisations definition of volunteering.

This policy, underpins processes, procedures and guidance that support the framework of volunteering at RBL. Someone is defined as a volunteer when they are undertaking activities within this framework.

A volunteer can also be a member of RBL, but this is not a prerequisite for someone to become a volunteer. Voluntary activity takes place within the RBL membership, but their activities are usually supported by different policies and procedures.

Volunteer recruitment

RBL is committed to ensuring our volunteering opportunities are available to both the communities we serve and those that we work in, and that our recruitment procedures are consistent, fair, and transparent.

The key activities of, and core skills and competencies needed, for each volunteer role are set out in the respective role description, which are made available to potential volunteers when they first start to explore volunteering with RBL.

Volunteer vacancies are advertised as widely as possible with the aim of reaching a broad cross section of our communities. Wherever possible we promote our volunteering opportunities electronically, through print media as well as through our existing networks.

Volunteers will be asked to complete a registration and/or application form appropriate to their role, and anyone applying to volunteer with RBL will be provided with the details of the relevant recruitment process.

There is no upper age limit for volunteers, however some roles may have a minimum age restriction. Some roles may require specific knowledge or skills, and this will be advised within the relevant role description.

Selection and screening

For roles that require a regular commitment of time we will invite potentially suitable volunteers to an informal 'get to know you' interview to explore skills and suitability for roles. We use the outcomes from interviews to match individuals to appropriate vacancies, and an offer will be made subject to the outcome of screening checks. We also ask volunteers not already known to us to provide two references to help assess their suitability. References cannot be from family members, but do not have to be from current or previous employers where a potential volunteer is not able to offer such a referee. If a volunteer is already known to RBL, for example, as a member or volunteering in a different role, then we only require one reference.

Volunteers who carry out their roles with potentially vulnerable persons; often in welfare and support roles and in our care homes, are also required to undergo criminal record DBS (Disclosure Barring Service) checks. This is set out in the role descriptions. Having a criminal record does not automatically disqualify someone from volunteering with RBL, and we will review any disclosures sensitively, on a case-by-case basis.

RBL aims to follow the principles of fair recruitment and will only consider references and DBS checks once we have determined the suitability of a volunteer for the role.

Induction and training

All RBL volunteers should undertake an induction and welcome that will include an introduction to the history and work of the RBL and their own volunteer role. Depending on the role, some volunteers may also undertake further specific skills training. This may be a combination of online, face-to-face, or workbook-based training that must be completed within a specific time.

Further update training is provided as appropriate and relevant to the role concerned. Volunteers are advised in advance where training is a mandatory requirement for undertaking a particular role and this will be made clear on the role description and through the recruitment and volunteer journey.

Volunteers are provided with the information and access, which is necessary for them to fulfil the requirements of the role to which they are carrying out.

Support and supervision

All volunteers are given a named person within the respective team (volunteer manager/supervisor), who will serve as their main point of contact whilst volunteering with RBL. Depending on the volunteer role this may sometimes be another volunteer, particularly in relation to fundraising roles.

All volunteers have access to appropriate support and supervision to provide feedback on their progress, discuss further development and give an opportunity to raise any concerns. The frequency and format of this supervision may vary, depending on the role concerned, the individual volunteer and RBL's current resources.

Involving volunteers

RBL values the contribution volunteers make to achieving our work and supporting the Armed Forces community. RBL recognises that good communication is key to a successful volunteering programme and that information must flow two ways. Staff that act as the named contact point (volunteer manager/supervisor) for volunteers are responsible for ensuring that information about changes and developments and regular updates are communicated swiftly to volunteers, using the most appropriate method.

Expenses

RBL identifies the importance of and encourages reimbursing out-of-pocket expenses incurred whilst volunteering. Out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed to volunteers on production of associated receipts, in line with the RBL expenses policy. The volunteer manager/supervisor is the first line of contact for queries.

Valuing volunteers

RBL recognises and is grateful for the time, skills, and contribution of volunteers to support the Armed Forces community.

Volunteers with RBL are recognised in many ways including through informal and formal recognition items and events as well as more formal recognition, including nominations for local and national volunteer awards. Each year RBL celebrates the contribution of volunteers during recognised national volunteer recognition events.

Diversity and inclusion

RBL is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive organisation, reflecting the diversity of the Armed Forces community and of wider society. We aim to ensure that our volunteering programme is inclusive, accessible, and attractive to potential volunteers no matter what their background or personal characteristics and will ensure all volunteers are treated fairly and with respect, in an environment free from discrimination and harassment.

Confidentiality and data protection

RBL recognises its moral and legal responsibility to treat all information about the people we support, and that of our volunteers, members, and staff with the strictest confidentiality. Guidance is in place to ensure the personal data of our volunteers is stored and processed in line with RBL's data protection policies and volunteers provided with training and support to ensure they can adhere to the requirements set out.

Safeguarding

RBL passionately believe that staff, volunteers, members, and supporters of RBL, all have a responsibility to protect those we come into contact with; everyone shares responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people, and adults at risk.

Volunteers, as representatives of RBL, will be provided with briefings, training, and tools to enable response to and reporting of any safeguarding issues safely and effectively, this includes via volunteer manager/supervisors and the RBL Dedicated Safeguarding Leads (DSL's).

Health and safety

Volunteers are covered by RBL's health and safety policy. All volunteers receive training and guidance on appropriate health and safety issues, as part of their induction or volunteer briefing.

All volunteers are covered by RBL's insurance policies, whilst they are on our premises or engaged in the activities set out in each volunteer role description. Volunteers are not covered by our insurance if they go beyond the agreed boundaries of their volunteering role.

Personal possessions are not insured, and RBL's insurance policy does not cover car insurance costs associated with using a private vehicle as an RBL volunteer.

Problem solving

RBL recognises the importance of identifying and seeking to solve problems at the earliest possible stage. Volunteers should raise any concerns or complaints with their volunteer manager/supervisor or another member of that team in the first instance. Volunteering teams have their own processes for handling complaints; please contact the relevant team directly for further information.

When RBL volunteering comes to an end

RBL acknowledges that the time which people can commit to volunteering can sometimes be limited and that volunteers do leave the organisation. RBL seeks to ensure that volunteers are not leaving the organisation for avoidable reasons and to that end will undertake exit interview questionnaires and encourage feedback so that improvements can be made the volunteer experience.

RBL provides volunteers with a reference where appropriate and recognises the importance of this for those who volunteer to gain work experience and/or to develop their skills to support future employment plans.

Version control

Version	Date	Summary of Changes	Updated By
V1.3	04/11/1206	Removal of out of date links and information	Kitt Tindal