

Expenses Policy

A volunteer is defined as someone who, unpaid and of their own free will, contributes their time to assist Healthwatch Oxfordshire (HWO) in carrying out its work. A volunteer will carry out this work with the agreement of HWO.

A volunteer is not employed, is not paid a salary and can withdraw from their relationship with HWO whenever they wish to.

It is the policy of HWO to ensure that volunteers are not left out of pocket or financially worse off as a result of their involvement in volunteer activities. Board members are volunteers.

Claims for any volunteer expenses that are in addition to regular meetings/events that are organised by and are part of the routine business of Healthwatch Oxfordshire must be agreed with the Chief Executive of HWO. Who may consult with the Vice-Chair of HWO before the expense is incurred. The Chief Executive of HWO reserves the right to refuse to pay expenses that are not deemed appropriate.

Should a claim be refused by the Chief Executive of HWO the volunteer will be notified within five working days of receipt of the expenses form. An appeal against the decision may be made to the Chair of the Board of HWO within five working days of the refusal. The Chair of HWO will respond to the appeal within ten working days of receipt of the appeal; the decision of the Chair will be final.

Volunteers may claim reimbursement for any reasonable expenditure that they have incurred in connection with their volunteering. All expenses claimed, other than mileage, must be supported by receipts, which must be attached to the claim form.

Where any such substantial expenses are incurred, volunteers are invited to submit a claim as soon as possible so that we can ensure that they are not out of pocket for any longer than necessary. If a volunteer will be placed in financial hardship through their volunteering then HWO may purchase items on their behalf (such as rail tickets). Attendance at conferences will be organised by HWO staff and paid for directly.

HWO expects all volunteers to ensure expenses are incurred using the most cost effective option available.

Any volunteers making a false claim or misrepresenting the amounts or purpose of the expenses will be required to repay any overpayment.

Volunteers receiving state benefit should inform their Benefits Adviser that they are volunteering and check that receipt of expenses does not affect their right to receive benefit payments. HWO cannot accept responsibility for any loss of state benefit resulting from their volunteering activities.

HWO may on occasion pay expenses to other organisations to enable them to participate in community and voluntary group initiatives that they may otherwise be excluded from. Any expenses paid will be for work undertaken on behalf of HWO and not to support organisational costs.

Expenses covered by this policy

Travel

A mileage rate will be paid for use of your own car, bicycle or motorcycle; an enhanced rate may be paid if you carry passengers who are volunteers of HWO. Please note when using a car/motorcycle you should have a current MOT and tax certificate and check that your insurer will cover you for voluntary work.

HWO will not pay the cost of any fines or other penalties that you may face for not following motoring laws, nor will it pay parking fines or clamping charges.

If you travel by rail or bus then tickets should be attached to your claim.

Incidental expenses

Lunch expenses may be claimed for those who volunteer on behalf of HWO for longer than four hours where lunch is not provided, you may claim up to a limit of five pounds.

Stationery expenses you may claim for include, paper, stamps, envelopes and ink cartridges up to a maximum of £30.00 per annum.

Care for volunteers with responsibilities for children or other family dependants, HWO is willing to reimburse the cost of alternative care only if such a cost is necessary for the volunteer to perform duties on behalf of HWO.

Each case will be assessed on an individual basis and payments for care arrangements will usually be made in arrears, but in particular financial circumstances may be made in advance of expenditure. Payment will always be

made to the volunteer rather than directly to the organisation or individual providing the care and will be a maximum of £10.00 per hour; all such payments will be made at the Chief Executive's discretion.

Procedure

There are some simple rules we follow when deciding whether expenses can be reimbursed. These are:

- Prior approval by HWO to attend the event/meeting
- Receipts/proof of expenditure have been provided
- The expenses have been incurred because you are carrying out business on behalf of HWO
- The expenses form (*appendix 2*) is fully completed and signed by the volunteer
- Expenses forms must be received before the 20th of the month in order to be paid by the end of the said month (otherwise they will be paid at the end of the following month).
- If you have attended a meeting on behalf of HWO your expense claim form must be accompanied by a meeting report form (*appendix 1*) or this may delay your payment.
- The Chief Executive of HWO has authorised the expenses form for payment

The completed expenses form should be sent to:-

The Healthwatch Administrator
ORCC
Jericho Farm
Worton
Witney
OX29 4SZ

We encourage all volunteers to claim their expenses since there is an important point of principle at stake - i.e. HWO should not assume that any volunteer be willing to cover costs themselves. We wish to establish a culture that fully recognises and encourages proper reimbursement for any costs incurred.

Meeting Details	
Title & Topic	
Date & Location	
Key Attendees/ roles	
Brief Summary of Meeting	
Any actions for Healthwatch team?	

