



Sonning Common Health Walks volunteer policy

What is covered in this policy:

- Introduction..... 2
- About Sonning Common Health Walks and Walking for Health 2
- What is volunteering?..... 2
- Volunteering at Sonning Common Health Walks 2
- Our vision and commitment to volunteering 3
- What volunteers can expect from us 3
- What we expect from our volunteers 4
- Opportunities and recruitment 4
- Equal opportunities and diversity..... 5
- Induction and Training..... 5
- Expenses 6
- Equipment and resources..... 7
- Support and supervision 7
- Reliability and commitment 7
- Dealing with problems..... 8
- Taking a break from volunteering 8
- Health and Safety 9
- Insurance 9
- Safeguarding..... 10
- Confidentiality 10
- Data protection 11
- Contacts and more information 11



Introduction

Sonning Common Health Walks are part of Walking for Health, which is helping people across the country to get healthier and happier – but we couldn't do this without all the amazing volunteers that make our health walks possible. From volunteer walk leaders and assistants to admin and promotion roles, our volunteers do a fantastic job in supporting and developing Sonning Common Health Walks and Walking for Health.

This policy

This volunteer policy is designed to provide guidance about volunteer management for our volunteers and staff. It's also intended to show our commitment and that of Walking for Health, to volunteers and describe the reasonable expectations that we have for volunteers and staff. It's not intended in any way to be a legally binding contract, or employment relationship with volunteers either now or in the future. The policy will be reviewed annually, to make sure it's always following the latest best practice.

We've covered a number of key topics here in brief and also included links to other useful information at the end, but please contact us if you have any queries.

About Sonning Common Health Walks and Walking for Health

We're part of Walking for Health, England's largest network of health walk schemes, helping all kinds of people to lead a more active lifestyle. We've done this with great success for over 16 years now, improving people's lives. Our walks are short, free and volunteer-led. They're usually open to all but our First Steps walks are particularly aimed at inactive people, those with long term health conditions.

The Walking for Health national programme is now run by the Ramblers and Macmillan Cancer Support and their goal is that everyone will have access to a short, free and friendly health walk within easy reach of where they live, to help them become and stay active.

What is volunteering?

Volunteering is freely choosing to contribute time, energy and skills to support an organisation or activity, without being paid or receiving benefits other than those required (for example training). It's for the benefit of others - that could be people (other than close relatives), organisations, or society more generally.

Volunteering at Sonning Common Health Walks

Volunteering is at the heart of Walking for Health and is the key to the success of Sonning Common Health Walks. We currently have 37 volunteers leading or supporting 10 local walks every week across Oxfordshire and Reading, helping over 120 regular walkers to get active and stay active. All of our volunteers are walk leaders. In addition to



leading some volunteers help support the scheme by carrying out administrative roles such as poster & leaflet distribution, organising rosters and data input.

What are the benefits for our volunteers?

By getting involved with Sonning Common Health Walks and being part of the national Walking for Health programme, volunteers get:

- The opportunity to develop new skills, such as leadership, working with people, marketing and administration
- The chance to meet new people, including other like-minded volunteers
- The experience and satisfaction of being part of our scheme
- The opportunity to discover more of their local area and spend time being physically active outdoors
- The chance to take part in training (depending on the role) with a nationally-recognised and well-respected programme

In addition, volunteers have access to a range of resources to support them in carrying out their role including:

- On-going support and guidance from us and Walking for Health
- Access to Walking for Health resources such as manuals and online guidance, as well as equipment to help them carry out their role
- Reimbursement of reasonable out-of-pocket expenses (according to guidelines on page 7 of this policy)

Our vision and commitment to volunteering

Our vision is to make sure all our volunteers enjoy a quality experience with us and feel supported and valued in their role. We want our volunteers to be inspired by Walking for Health, becoming advocates for our scheme and the national programme.

What volunteers can expect from us

We want to make sure volunteers enjoy their role and gain real benefits from it, so we are committed to:

- Always treating volunteers with respect, consideration and appreciation
- Promoting volunteer health and wellbeing, making sure they can carry out their role in a safe, supportive and inclusive environment
- Ensuring volunteers understand their responsibilities, including the length of time we'd like them to be involved (if this is relevant, but there is no obligation for volunteers to be involved for any defined period)
- Giving volunteers information about the training and support available to help them carry out their role



- Being clear about any obligatory requirements for volunteers, for example, walk leader training
- Providing volunteers with support through a named contact, Bernard Novell, who they should see/speak to on a regular basis
- Offering fair, honest and timely feedback on a volunteer's work
- Updating volunteers about how their work is making a difference
- Treating volunteers fairly, and ensuring we follow volunteer-specific procedures and policies, for example, equal opportunities and health and safety
- Providing volunteers with civil liability insurance cover from Walking for Health
- Offering advice about alternative roles and helping them to find another more suitable role if a decision is made that a volunteer is not suited to their current role

What we expect from our volunteers

In order for us to really live and breathe our vision, both Sonning Common Health Walks and Walking for Health expect high standards from all volunteers and staff. We ask volunteers to:

- Always treat staff (including national Walking for Health team), fellow volunteers and walkers with respect, consideration and appreciation
- Act in a friendly and welcoming way when representing us in public - volunteers are our ambassadors
- Act in a way that is inclusive and as accommodating as possible (there is more information about equality, diversity and safeguarding in this policy)
- Provide as much notice as possible to their scheme coordinator and/or fellow volunteers if they can't fulfil their volunteering commitments, or if they no longer wish to be involved
- Ask their scheme coordinator for guidance if they don't fully understand their role and responsibilities
- Take part in any training required for them to carry out their role, for example walk leader training for volunteer walk leaders
- Offer fair and honest feedback to our staff, the national Walking for Health team where appropriate and fellow volunteers
- Follow our procedures and policies, for example, equal opportunities and health and safety

Opportunities and recruitment

There are lots of ways to get involved as a volunteer. As well as being a walk leader or a walk assistant, volunteers can also help us to promote our walks, put together the walk programme, manage the paperwork and database or complete other administration tasks.



Our walks take place in communities across Oxfordshire and Reading and we need volunteers from these communities and from time to time, further afield. Whatever the reason, and wherever they're from, we need their help to keep our walkers on the move.

Our recruitment process for volunteers comes from within our walking group and for administration roles within our regular leaders. However we have, in the past, used volunteers who are not leaders in certain administrative roles.

Walking for Health has no upper age limit for volunteers. In order to meet our policy requirements for safeguarding the minimum age for walk leaders is 18.

Equal opportunities and diversity

As part of Walking for Health, providing more people with more opportunities to walk in their local communities is a fundamental part of our vision. To fulfil that we are committed to:

- Providing equal opportunities for all and not discriminating against anyone because of race, colour, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marital status, disability, long term conditions or age.
- Celebrating differences, acting with fairness and honesty, and valuing all contributions from all people.
- Being open to making reasonable adjustments to the way we do things in order to accommodate volunteers with specific needs.

Induction and Training

We want to ensure all our volunteers are happy and confident to carry out their role. All our volunteers have access to the appropriate induction and training they need depending on their role and this includes an opportunity for them to:

- Go through this policy and any other relevant information
- Ask questions, and be clear about what is involved and expected of them
- Be introduced to their team, for example fellow walk leaders or other office staff and volunteers
- Go over health and safety requirements and be provided with information about any training
- Have a settling-in period to ensure everyone is clear about the role and expectations.

For walk leaders, we provide training through the national Walking for Health training programme, usually delivered by a local cascade trainer. New walk leaders will need to attend at least one walk so that they know what is involved before they attend the walk leader training. At the training volunteers will receive everything they need, including a



card to help them track their progress towards gaining a certificate. Walk leaders need to shadow an existing leader and lead a walk before they receive their training certificate from us. Once they have this, they're able to take responsibility for leading walks unsupervised. We recommend that our walk leaders have regular refresher training to make sure they keep up to date with any changes and developments to the content of the training and our processes for leading walks.

All our volunteers, in all of our different roles, can:

- Sign up to receive Walking for Health volunteer newsletters
- Have access to various resources and tools on our website www.sonningcommonhealthwalks.co.uk and on the Walking for Health website
- Set up an account with Macmillan's online learning website Learn Zone, which provides free and easy access to a wide variety of online resources, e-learning programmes, professional development tools and other learning opportunities.

Expenses

We reimburse volunteers for any reasonable out-of-pocket expenses. This is for any Walking for Health activity, including attending and leading walks or attending training.

We only reimburse the amount spent as a result of volunteering, up to agreed maximum levels. Volunteers should provide tickets and receipts to be able to reclaim this money. It is the decision of the individual volunteer as to whether they want to claim expenses or not.

The Walking for Health team doesn't supply volunteer expenses except for coordinators attending advisory panels or cascade trainers attending training.

Volunteers should provide receipts for tickets or cost of stationary to support their potential claim. If in doubt, the Volunteer should discuss their likely claim with the Treasurer prior to spending any money of their own.

As an independent volunteer group Sonning Common Health Walks retain a small cash account acquired from occasional fund raising activities or donations. The money is used for Volunteer walk equipment or may be spent on improvement of the walking environment after agreement by Volunteers.



Equipment and resources

To ensure Sonning Common Health Walks walkers and volunteers get the best possible experience, volunteers receive appropriate guidance and support during their volunteer journey. Walking for Health have created a number of branded resources to help volunteers in their role and make sure they feel part of the Walking for Health family. We order these for our volunteers from their website. There are also a number of resources available (in electronic format) directly to volunteers there too.

Walking for Health website resources for volunteers

- FAQs
- Walk leader manual (pdf)
- Walk leader kit
- Information about insurance and risk assessments
- Quarterly e-newsletters

Other Walking for Health resources and equipment available from us:

- Walk leader manual and hard copies of the essential paperwork
- A high visibility vest
- A clipboard and pen
- A t-shirt

Support and supervision

Volunteers will be directly supervised or supported remotely (depending on their role) by the Chair Person of Sonning Common Health Walks. A walk leader will also have support from their fellow leaders and is likely to be part of regular walk leader meetings.

Reliability and commitment

To ensure the walks take place as planned, it's important for volunteers to be reliable, whether they are the volunteer leading the walk or helping to promote it.

We would like some form of commitment from our volunteers over the period of our walk programme to ensure each walk has enough leaders and support, or to ensure they have enough help getting publicity materials distributed. We issue regular walk rotas, to make sure we have enough walk leader cover.

We understand that circumstances change and things come up, sometimes at short notice. If volunteers can no longer make their walks or an agreed arrangement they should let us know as soon as possible. We also ask our walk leaders to share their details with one another so they can make arrangements to swap or cover walks with other walk leaders directly.



Dealing with problems

While volunteering is largely a positive experience for everyone concerned, sometimes things do go wrong. Whatever the issue, whether it's with a volunteer's role or a complaint, we want our volunteers to feel comfortable to raise it informally with us as soon as possible to allow us to deal with the situation straight away. The same applies to any issues we may have with a volunteer.

Taking a break from volunteering

Sometimes personal circumstances change or things may arise which mean volunteers need to take a break from volunteering. Volunteers should let us know if this is the case.

Leaving a volunteer role

Sometimes volunteers may wish to leave their role and that they can do so at their own discretion, at any time. We're committed to making sure all volunteer experiences are great ones and we will want to talk to the volunteer to find out why they're leaving. This will normally be through an informal chat, the content of which will remain confidential.

If appropriate, volunteers will be offered the opportunity to be involved with Sonning Common Health Walks or Walking for Health's work in future. They are encouraged to keep in touch through the e-newsletter and may be made aware of other opportunities. We will also provide them with a written reference, if or when they need one.

Equally, we may sometimes need to cancel a volunteer role, which we can do at our own discretion.

Health and Safety

Sonning Common Health Walks, as part of Walking for Health, is committed to looking after the health, safety and wellbeing of all our volunteers and walkers.

All volunteer activities are risk assessed and appropriate actions taken to reduce risks. These risks are not limited to personal injury. For example, they could also include stress. Depending on the circumstances, actions to reduce risks could include giving volunteers specific information, training or equipment. However, volunteers need to recognise that they're also responsible for their own health and safety, and that of those around them.



Volunteers with specific responsibilities for health and safety, for example walk leaders, receive Walking for Health training and guidance to help them to fulfil their responsibilities. We also provide basic first aid training, when possible and according to availability. First aid training is not a requirement to become a volunteer walk leader.

It's important that volunteers:

- Carry out duties without endangering either their health and safety or that of staff, volunteers, walkers or the general public
- Comply with all relevant instructions and procedures relating to safety and follow any guidance provided by us
- Inform us of any personal health and safety or wellbeing requirements that they may have, or if they have any doubts regarding their health and safety responsibilities

Insurance

Civil liability insurance

This insurance relates to our volunteer walk leaders leading Walking for Health walks. The Walking for Health policy covers walk leaders who have successfully completed their Walking for Health volunteer walk leader training course, while they're leading recognised Walking for Health activities. It provides cover against legal liability for damages in respect of:

- Accidental injury or death to any person
- Accidental damage to property
- Nuisance, trespass to land or trespass to goods

The policy gives protection to individuals in the case of a claim being made against them by a third party, such as a landowner, a walker, or a member of the public. For such a claim to be successful, the injured party has to be able to show that they have suffered as a result of negligence. So if the claim arose, for example, as the result of an incident on a health walk, the injured party needs to show that the walk leader abdicated their responsibility in a reckless or negligent manner.

Employers or personal liability insurance

Walking for Health doesn't provide employers or personal liability insurance for volunteers.

Car drivers



Sonning Common Health Walks volunteers using their own car for Walking for Health activities are recommended to inform their insurers that they're using their cars as a volunteer and this should be regarded by the insurer as 'social, domestic and pleasure use'. Most insurance companies agree to cover this at no extra charge to the premium, but some may not separate this activity from 'business use' and may try to charge accordingly. Volunteers' cars are not covered by the Walking for Health civil liability insurance described above.

Safeguarding

Sonning Common Health Walks, as part of Walking for Health welcomes children and vulnerable adults on walks and activities, as long as they are suitable for them. We're committed to equal opportunities and aim to treat everyone with dignity and respect, and not to discriminate on grounds of race, colour, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marital status, disability, long term conditions or age.

However, we don't expect our schemes and volunteers to provide specialist care and support for people who have special needs or who are unable to care independently for themselves. We also don't expect our schemes to take special responsibility for looking after children and young people under the age of 18.

We're committed to ensuring the wellbeing of everyone, including children, young people and vulnerable adults, who participate in our Walking for Health activities. We will take every practical step to minimise the risk of harm, paying particular attention to the needs of those who are most vulnerable, including children and vulnerable adults.

We're also committed to supporting our volunteers in their work, including protecting them from potential liabilities, false suspicions and allegations of abuse. Full details of our policy and guidance on safeguarding are available in the volunteer section of the Walking for Health website.

Confidentiality

Sonning Common Health Walks, as part of Walking for Health, is about welcoming and supporting lots of different people to join our walks, for whatever reason. As part of our duty of care towards those walkers, who may have joined for sensitive health reasons, we ask them to complete a health screening form or 'Outdoor Health Questionnaire'. There may also be other information that is shared on the form or face-to-face.

It's important that all our volunteers in any of our roles recognise and maintain confidentiality of all information whilst representing Sonning Common Health Walks and Walking for Health. By agreeing to our volunteering policy they are also agreeing to a confidentiality declaration and this means that confidential information about walkers, volunteers, Walking for Health employees, and our work is kept private, unless sharing this information is required by law.



Data protection

Walking for Health, Sonning Common Health Walks, and all our volunteers have a legal responsibility to collect, store and use data about individuals (walkers or volunteers) in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act. This is a legal act to protect personal information.

Contacts

Volunteer or looking to volunteer? To find out how to get involved or query something in the policy, get in touch with us via the contact details on our website....

www.sonningcommonhealthwalks.co.uk

More Information

This policy has been produced by Walking for Health which has referred to guidance and resources from Macmillan, the Ramblers, and local schemes, along with national guidelines from volunteer organisations such as Volunteering England and their host organisation, NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations). We've also included local policies and guidance from Sonning Common Health Walks

For more general information on volunteering policy, guidance, and good practice please see:

NCVO

www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/volunteering

Volunteering England (part of NCVO)

www.volunteering.org.uk

Walking for Health

www.walkingforhealth.org.uk

www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/volunteer-resources

Ramblers

www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer

Macmillan Cancer Support

www.macmillan.org.uk/

www.learnzone.org.uk/

