

# Healthwatch Telford and Wrekin Volunteer Expenses Policy

April 2024

Version: 4.0

Approved: April 2024

Review: April 2025



# Volunteer Expenses Policy

*Throughout this document, reference to 'volunteers', applies to all volunteers including Healthwatch Independent Strategic Advisory Board members unless otherwise stated.*

## Policy Statement

As part of Engaging Communities Solutions (ECS) CIC's commitment to ensuring equity of access to volunteering opportunities, out of pocket expenses that are incurred solely in undertaking a volunteering role with us will be paid.

- Expenses must be approved in advance by a member of staff / manager and claimed using the Volunteer Expense Claim Form.
- Claims will only be paid for actual expenses incurred, as evidenced by receipts.
- Expenses will be reimbursed by 20<sup>th</sup> of the month, when expenses are submitted prior to the deadline of 6<sup>th</sup> of the month, with payment via BACS direct into a bank account, however if volunteers need to be reimbursed sooner speak to your volunteer lead / coordinator and this can be arranged.

## What can be claimed?

### Travel

Wherever possible, volunteers will choose the most cost-effective and efficient method of travel to volunteering activities. In many cases this will usually be public transport unless there are special circumstances. We note that due to the geographical area we cover public transport may not be the first option or regularly available.

Where a volunteer uses their own vehicle, they will confirm that it is taxed, insured, has a MOT if appropriate, has business insurance and the insurance company is aware they are using the vehicle to carry out volunteering activity.

This will be evidenced by a signed disclosure on the Mileage Expenses Claim form.

Mileage is payable in line with HMRC guidance, currently 45p per mile.

- Car parking will be refunded where a volunteer has incurred costs; receipts must be provided.
- The use of a taxi must be approved by prior arrangement **only**, and receipts must be provided.

### Motor insurance

ECS does provide motor insurance cover. Volunteers must hold appropriate motor insurance cover if they use vehicles while volunteering. Volunteers will be asked to sign to confirm they have appropriate cover before we can reimburse mileage costs. NCVO has [information](#) on this issue.

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### Refreshments

- Where a volunteer is attending a function representing ECS / Healthwatch and no refreshments are provided, a refreshment allowance of up to £5 is claimable. Receipts must be provided.

### Online/remote working

Online or remote working may mean a volunteer uses a phone e.g., for phone interviews with members of the community. If you incur charges above your personal home telephone package, we will reimburse these. In these cases, evidence of the calls such as itemised bills need to be provided. These will be reimbursed in line with our policy.

In the case of a volunteer using broadband for ECS/ Healthwatch activity if the broadband usage is part of their package, they should not occur any additional charges. A volunteer should speak to their volunteer coordinator if they are incurring charges because of their volunteering activities.

### Claiming benefits

If volunteers get more than out of pocket expenses, you will be treated as if you are in paid work and this may impact upon any benefits you are claiming and your tax status. This also applies to payments in kind.

The expenses we pay are to reimburse you for out-of-pocket expenses that you've incurred in order to volunteer, such as travel costs and where applicable meals while out volunteering.

We will collect receipts from you and reimburse exactly what you've spent. This means that if needed, you could show your benefits adviser that any money you were getting was a reimbursement and not a payment.

### Exceptional circumstances

As part of our commitment to inclusivity, where a volunteer has additional support needs which may prevent them from volunteering, we will seek to address these where possible and reasonable to do so. Each case will be assessed on an individual basis.

Requests for expenses not covered by this document should be made to the local Healthwatch Manager in advance of incurring the cost and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

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Version	6.0
Author	Elizabeth Learoyd
Approved by	Board of ECS
Date approved	April 2024
Effective date	April 2024
Review date	April 2025