

Our volunteer handbook

Everything you need to know
about volunteering with us

Together we can make a difference



Thank you for working with us to help change the future of muscle wasting conditions

Without the involvement of volunteers like you, we wouldn't be able to reach and improve the lives of the thousands of people living with muscle wasting and weakening conditions.

You – our volunteers – are our strength. You represent us, you raise money for us, you campaign for us, you support and encourage others for us. By giving us your time, your experience and your expertise, you enable us to provide vital services to those who need them. You spread the word to those who need us but don't know about us, you take us into your communities and help raise awareness of the positive difference our work makes.

We've put together this handbook for you. A guide to details about volunteering with us, and of our commitment to you. If you require more information about anything in this handbook, ask your charity contact; they're here to make this work for you and for all of us.

Thanks again for choosing to be a volunteer with us. You're joining a wonderful community of like-minded people helping us to be here for everyone affected by a condition from the point of diagnosis to living the best life possible. Together we can change the future of muscle wasting conditions.

Thank you, and welcome!



About us

We're the leading charity for more than 110,000 children and adults in the UK living with one of over 60 muscle wasting and weakening conditions.

For over 60 years, we've been building our community of people living with a muscle wasting or weakening condition, families and carers, scientists, health professionals, supporters, volunteers, and donors.

We share expert advice and support so people can live well now; fund groundbreaking research to understand different conditions and lead us to new treatments; work with the NHS towards universal access to specialist healthcare; and together campaign for people's rights, better understanding, accessibility, and access to treatments.

Volunteers are a vital part of our work and our community. They make a massive contribution to our work and we're grateful for any support you can offer.



How you add value to our work

Thank you for joining our team of over 300 volunteers. We're grateful you've chosen to support us, and we hope you enjoy your time with us!

Volunteers like you make a huge difference to all aspects of our work by:

- Supporting others affected by muscle wasting and weakening conditions through one-to-one peer support, leading support group meetings, and moderating online support groups.
- Shaping the charity's work through our content advisory group, research panel, services development committee.
- Supporting at one of our many events.
- Fundraising, in particular regional fundraising roles, through all sorts of different activities, from opening your garden to raise money, holding a bake sale, Going Bright for a day or chairing a fundraising group.
- Supporting us in our campaigning work.



Tell us your ideas!

The best ideas come from working together.

If you have skills you'd like to share, a suggestion of how you'd like to volunteer, a support group you'd like to set up, speak to us and we'll see what we can do.



I've been volunteering for around 15 years now. I was put in touch with the helpline team in my 30s when struggling with my disability benefits reassessment. They helped me so much I decided to give something back. My involvement in different areas of volunteering spiralled from there.

Amanda Hayes

Our commitment to you

We value your time and willingness to help. In return for your commitment to us, we're committed to supporting and developing you.

You can always expect the following from us:

- Training and support throughout your time volunteering.
- The *Volunteers Handbook*, along with regular updates on our work
- Opportunities for you to connect with other volunteers.
- Being able to claim back reasonable expenses as agreed with your charity contact.
- Insurance cover, while volunteering, under our public liability insurance.
- Your personal data held securely in accordance with GDPR and our privacy policy.
- Any complaint you might have dealt with promptly and fairly.

What we need from you – our volunteer code of conduct

We expect the best from everyone who is part of our charity – staff and volunteers alike.

We ask you to always adhere to the below points while volunteering for us. This is to ensure a positive experience is had by you and all volunteers, staff, supporters, and members of the public you meet while volunteering.

You agree to:

- **Fulfill your volunteering role** as outlined in the role description to the best of your ability. This includes undertaking any training required.
- **Follow the charity's policies and procedures** as well as any instructions or directions provided by our staff.
- **Ask your charity contact or the Volunteering Engagement Manager questions** if you're unsure about any area of your role. Communication between staff and volunteers should always be two-way, with both sides feeling listened to.
- **Provide us with feedback** on how we can improve the volunteering experience and report any concerns you have promptly to your charity contact.
- **Show enthusiasm and commitment** to supporting our work, and support our aims and objectives.
- **Maintain and uphold our reputation and good name**, and refrain from taking any action that would result in negative publicity for the charity. We ask that you always check in with your charity contact before agreeing to speak publicly on behalf of us.

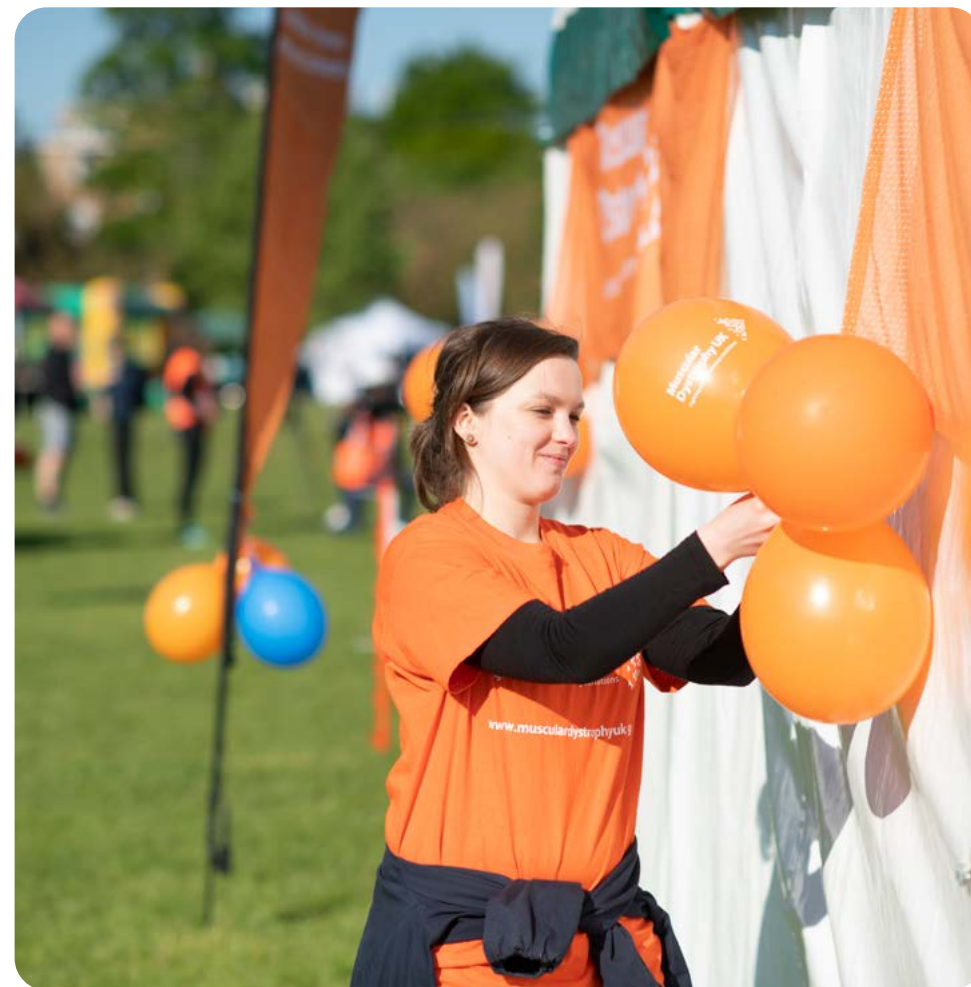


- **Work co-operatively with staff members, volunteers, supporters, and others you meet** as part of your volunteering role – treating everyone with respect and never acting fraudulently or dishonestly. Be approachable, understanding and caring to all. Rudeness, bullying, harassment or any action that causes physical or mental harm or distress to others will result in disciplinary action.
- **Support the charity's policies on [equality, diversity and inclusion](#)** and actively promote these values while volunteering. We do not tolerate any discrimination on grounds of age, disability, gender, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.
- **Take reasonable care of your own health and safety** and that of others around you while volunteering. If driving as part of your volunteering role, any incidents should be reported to your charity contact as soon as possible.
- **If you've been given a charity email address or access to our IT systems**, only use these to carry out your volunteering role and in accordance with the guidance given to you by our staff. Passwords should be kept secure.
- **Always maintain confidentiality**, ensuring any personal data or private charity information you have access to is not shared with unauthorised parties. We expect you to exercise caution and care with any possessions, documents, or materials you have access to while volunteering. You'll receive GDPR training to help you manage data effectively.
- **Declare any interests** (work or personal) that may conflict with your volunteering role. If you're unsure, always seek guidance from your charity contact or the Volunteering Engagement Manager.
- **Never volunteer while under the influence** of alcohol or non-prescribed drugs or engage in illegal activity.
- **Provide reasonable notice** if you're unable to meet pre-agreed commitments and tell us if, for any reason, you can no longer commit to volunteering for us. All charity materials or equipment should be returned at the end of your time volunteering.



If your conduct is found to be in breach of the above, we will follow the steps set out in our Disciplinary Policy and Procedures for Volunteers which can be found in our Volunteer Policy. The first step will usually be an informal conversation with your main contact, and we hope most issues would be resolved at this stage.

However, we reserve the right to intervene or to bring your volunteering to an end any time should we believe that you have behaved inappropriately or deliberately contradicted the terms set out in your role description and this Code of Conduct.



We're with you every step of the way

Training and induction

When you start volunteering with us, you'll receive an induction and training to help you settle in. Training may be via Zoom, in person, via our e-learning platform or informal on the job training – in many cases it will be a mix of all the above. We want you to feel happy and confident in your role, so please let us know if there are areas you need more training on.

Flexibility and accessibility

We're committed to creating volunteering opportunities that

work for all and will be as flexible as we can. Should your health or caring responsibilities affect your ability to volunteer, or you need any accommodations, just let us know. Taking a break from volunteering is also fine – just let us know.

Ongoing support

You'll be kept in regular contact with the people in our charity team you're volunteering with. If you need any further support, please don't hesitate to talk to your contact or email volunteering@muscular dystrophyuk.org



I received lots of support when I first enrolled as a Peer Support Volunteer. I took part in interesting training sessions where volunteers meet each other, share life experiences and learn about the role.

Joan



Our policies and procedures

Accidents and incidents:

At all our events there will be a first aider on site or a staff member you can report accidents or incidents to. Please report any accidents or incidents to your charity contact and we'll ask you to complete a form. In an emergency, contact the emergency services first.

Boundaries:

It's important for the safety and wellbeing of all volunteers, staff and supporters that we have clear boundaries. During your induction, we'll explain what this means for your specific role, but please do let us know of any potential conflicts of interest when you start volunteering – for example if you worked for a pharmaceutical company and wanted to volunteer on our Lay Research Panel.

Confidentiality:

We expect all volunteers to maintain confidentiality and you agree to do so when you sign our Code of Conduct. This includes information about people we support, other volunteers, staff and any private information about our work shared with you as part of your volunteering role.

DBS checks:

If your role involves working closely with children, young people or potentially vulnerable adults, you'll need to undergo a criminal records check with the Disclosure and Barring Service. We'll let you know if this is needed for your role and if it is, will support you through the process.

Data protection:

We're required by law to get consent before we collect, keep or use individual's data. While volunteering, you may have access to others' personal information. If you do, we'll make you aware of our data protection policy and ask you to complete a short e-learning module about General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Diversity:

We're committed to treating all volunteers, staff and members of our wider community with respect and dignity, and to ensuring no-one is subjected to harassment or discrimination. You can read more in our EDI policy, which we ask all volunteers to keep to while volunteering.

Expenses:

We never want volunteers to be out of pocket and will reimburse any reasonable expenses incurred while volunteering. These should be agreed in advance with your charity contact – you'll need to keep your receipts to reclaim these costs.

Gifts:

Giving or receiving gifts is a nice gesture but can suggest favouritism or raise expectations around the level of support you can provide as a volunteer. So, we ask volunteers not to give or receive personal gifts from staff or anyone you are working with as part of your volunteering role.

Health and safety:

All of your volunteering activities are covered by the same health and safety regulations that apply to our staff. Risk assessments will be prepared in advance of activities, and we'll discuss any specific responsibilities you have in relation to health and safety ahead of events.

We ask that you:

Fulfil your role without endangering your own or anyone else's health and safety. Follow all instructions and procedures relating to safety, and our guidance, notifying your charity contact if you've any concerns or requirements in relation to health and safety.

Insurance:

We have employers' liability insurance. This provides insurance against liability for injury and illness experienced by volunteers or staff as a direct result of involvement in charity activities. As a volunteer, you're also covered by our public liability insurance while volunteering. This covers our legal liability to pay compensation for injuries or illness to a third party or damage to the property of third parties as a result of our negligence at events. It does not cover pure accidents or malicious damage.

Our insurance does not cover car journeys made as part of your volunteering. You should inform your car insurer if your

volunteering role requires you to drive, for example if you are making deliveries on behalf of the charity. In most cases, insurers will cover this at no extra cost. Car journeys to and from volunteering are usually covered as standard by your car insurance, but it's always worth checking with your car insurance provider. You can find out more here: <https://www.abi.org.uk/products-and-issues/choosing-the-right-insurance/motor-insurance/volunteer-drivers/>

No smoking:

Smoking is not permitted anywhere on our property or at any of our events.

Social media:

We welcome our volunteers being active on social media; It's an excellent way to develop networks and reach people who could benefit from our help or may want to support the charity. If you talk about your volunteering role publicly on your social media, you need to ensure that content you post on your social media reflects the values of the charity. You can

find out more about our social media guidelines in our Volunteer Policy which your charity contact can share with you.

You can follow our social media accounts here:



@Muscular Dystrophy UK



@MDUK_News



@Muscular Dystrophy UK



@musculardystrophyuk

What to wear:

Depending on your volunteering role, we can provide you with an official charity t-shirt. Otherwise, please dress appropriately for the role or activity you are undertaking, and if you're not sure ask your charity contact.



**Together we can
make a difference**

The value you can add

As well as making a big difference to the lives of people affected by muscle wasting and weakening conditions, you can get the following benefits through volunteering:

- **Gain new skills.** Depending on your role, you could improve your organisation, public speaking, time management, event planning, writing, computer skills and more! We can also provide a reference to help you with future employment or volunteering elsewhere.
- **Receive discounts.** Discounts on shopping, travel and more with Charity Worker Discounts: <https://www.charityworkerdiscounts.com/>
- **Meet new people.** Many of our teams have regular volunteer socials, often on Zoom so you can attend wherever you live.



When things go wrong

We want your time volunteering with us to be as exciting and rewarding as possible, but we know there may be times where things aren't going as well as we'd like. If this is the case, here's what you can do.

Issues about your role:

If you're having challenges with any aspect of your role, please talk to your charity contact as soon as possible for guidance and support. We're happy to provide more training or look to changing your role if necessary. We want volunteering to work for you so please talk to us if it isn't working. Email volunteering@musculardystrophyuk.org if you want to discuss further.

Grievances and complaints:

We have a grievance policy for volunteers, which we can share with you. If there is an issue that can't be resolved through our grievances policy, or if the issue is more serious, you've the right to make a complaint. We take all complaints seriously, whether they're given informally or formally. We can share

our formal complaints policy with you, and all questions can be directed to our Head of HR Jacqueline Gaffin on jobs@musculardystrophyuk.org.

Safeguarding:

We're all responsible for making sure our volunteers, staff and our wider community are kept safe. We'll discuss safeguarding responsibilities specific to your role as part of your training, and we also have e-learning modules available to volunteers about safeguarding both adults and children.

If you ever have concerns about someone's safety or wellbeing, it's important you discuss this with one of our safeguarding leads Jacqueline Munro and Neeru Naik info@musuclardystrophyuk.org.



Important contact details

Our volunteering email:

volunteering@musculardystrophyuk.org

Our Care and Support team:

info@musculardystrophyuk.org

0800 652 6352

Our Regional Development team

regionaldevelopment@musculardystrophyuk.org

Our Fundraising hotline:

0300 012 0172

Our research helpline:

research@musculardystrophyuk.org

Muscular Dystrophy UK

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www.musculardystrophyuk.org

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