



Royal College of
General Practitioners

Your guide to RCGP membership volunteering

Working together to shape general practice

rcgp.org.uk/volunteering

Welcome to the team and thank you for becoming a volunteer

Thank you for choosing to get involved with your College membership as an integral volunteer giving your time, voice and energy to help us support great doctors, providing great care.

Our membership volunteering has been at the heart of our work for over half a century, so you are joining a long tradition of dedicated people providing crucial support to our vision and purpose. You're the College's face in the local community and worldwide. You are champions of the profession as our College leaders and supporters of our policy and campaigns work. You ensure we are here for our members and your time and voice helps us shape and improve our member services and care. You are essential to everything we do!

It's our ambition to make sure anyone who gives their time to us feels valued, understood and proud to be part of the RCGP team. This handbook is here to explain the things you need to know about volunteering with us and your support network.

Thank you once again for deciding to get involved with your membership and your commitment to our College.



Prof. Amanda Howe

College President and Volunteer



Prof. Michael Holmes

Vice-Chair, Membership & International and Volunteer

Who is this guide for?

Whether as members of our Board of Trustees, as members of our Faculty Boards or a Discover GP Champion, to name a few, our members volunteer to support the RCGP by giving their **time** to carry out roles which have been initiated by or agreed with the College. The volunteering relationship is based on **trust** and does not involve the obligations associated with employment. No payment, other than reimbursement of agreed expenses, is made by the College to people who give their time as incredible volunteers.

This guide is intended for College members and fellows who have accepted an agreed volunteer role with the RCGP. It outlines the **principles** on which the relationship between volunteers and the College is based and provides basic **information** about volunteering with us.



About us

We represent and support over 53,000 hardworking and dedicated family doctors in delivering quality care to patients. As the professional membership body for GPs, we do this through our extensive membership services and products, policy and campaigns work, and through the support of our incredible people, be they staff or volunteers. You can find out more about our history, what we do, why we do it and how the College works by visiting rcgp.org.uk/about-us

Our vision

Our vision is for excellence in general practice for patients worldwide

Our objectives

We do this through the following objectives:

- Shaping the future of general practice
- Ensuring GP education meets the changing needs of UK primary care
- Growing and supporting a strong, engaged membership
- Being the voice of the GP (influence)

The RCGP Way

Our four values are **Excellence, Care, Leadership and Teamwork**.

We expect our values and behaviours to be demonstrated by all our people, be they our volunteers or staff. They are critical to our success. They define how we act, what we say and what we do. They should drive us as individuals and as an organisation. See our values towards the end of this guide.

About you

As part of your **five incredible reasons** for being a College member, we offer you exciting opportunities to be part of a community of volunteers through tailored, varied, and flexible opportunities ensuring you can make the biggest impact to general practice with whatever time you have available. By volunteering you will network and connect with your peers, develop personally and professionally and know you are supporting great doctors, providing great care – three fantastic reasons for having chosen to get involved.

To find out more about our volunteers and the different ways they get involved visit rcgp.org.uk/volunteering



Our commitment to you

- Welcome you and make efforts to help you to feel a valued part of your team and the College as a whole.
- Be clear on our expectations of you including clarity around your role and responsibilities and to encourage you to maintain them.
- Provide a named person, a lead staff and/or another volunteer member(s), acting as your RCGP point of contact, who you can contact and keep in touch with to guide and support you in your role.
- Provide an induction brief, training, support and/or resources as best as we can for your responsibilities and the work of RCGP.
- To provide adequate insurance cover whilst undertaking voluntary work approved and authorised by us.
- Provide you with opportunities to feedback through on-going communications with us when volunteering regularly.
- Only ask you to undertake activities that are within the scope of your role and that you have the skills to carry out.
- Endeavour to understand and cater to your motivations for getting involved and supporting us.
- Treat you and all volunteers with dignity and respect and in accordance with our commitment to equality and diversity.
- Provide a safe volunteering environment.
- Where required, reimburse agreed, actual and reasonable expenses incurred while volunteering.
- Protect your personal information and never share it with any third parties without your agreement.
- Recognise that you have other commitments and be flexible to accommodate them where possible.
- Listen to and act on your concerns if things are not going well and try to resolve fairly any problems, concerns and difficulties while you volunteer with us.
- Recognise your valuable contribution.
- Keep you informed about changing volunteering requirements at RCGP.
- Be an approachable and diverse organisation which values and respects people's different backgrounds, characteristics, ideas and beliefs and is responsive to our peoples' needs.

What we need from you

- To commit to the aims and values of RCGP: [Care, Leadership, Excellence and Teamwork](#).
- Undertake your role to the best of your ability.
- Operate within our agreed policies, standards, procedures and guidance.
- Undertake all training and learning required for your role.
- Ask questions if you do not understand your role or what is expected of you.
- Tell us if you feel you are not able to undertake a particular task and we will make alternative arrangements.
- Uphold our commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion when volunteering with us.
- Treat everyone you come into contact with through your role with dignity and respect.
- Try to be as reliable as possible and provide as much notice as you can if you are unable to fulfil your volunteering agreement or no longer wish to volunteer.
- Talk to your College point of contact straight away if you have a problem.
- Use all equipment required for your role appropriately and in line with the organisation's guidance.
- Not provide any information about RCGP or anyone involved with the organisation, to any third party without the approval of our Data Protection Officer.
- Not provide any information to the media without the approval of our PR and Corporate Communications team.
- Remain committed to safeguarding the well-being of all children and adults who are involved in or affected by our work and prevent the abuse of children and adults by reporting any safeguarding concerns to the relevant person.
- Not discriminate against to exclude anyone and ensure that your behaviour is not abusive or offensive.
- Behave in a way that upholds our values and behaviours while representing and supporting us.



Your volunteering

Upholding our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion

We encourage people from all backgrounds to be a College volunteer.

We will make reasonable adjustments to ensure our volunteering opportunities are as widely accessible as possible. Our volunteers are accepted based on their capability to undertake a role rather than on their personal characteristics. In accordance to the terms of the Equality Act (2010), we provide a fair and open environment in which all members can contribute and participate.

We expect all volunteers to play their part in upholding these commitments and treat everyone they come into contact within their role with dignity and respect.

Your support network

We want to ensure that you are happy, confident and motivated in your role. To help us all get the most out of your time volunteering:

- You'll have a named **College point of contact(s)** who will support you in your role. They will usually be a staff member or lead volunteer member(s) who manages the area of work in which you are involved.
- You will receive an induction or brief to introduce you to the organisation, your role and team and everything you need to know to get started and stay safe.
- We'll give you opportunities to reflect and give feedback.
- We'll make every effort to support you with your on-going learning and development to help you with your role.

Communication and feedback

It's important that we ensure you receive and you are able to share with us information relevant to your role.

Your [College point of contact](#) will discuss the methods and frequency of communication appropriate to your role during your induction. We hope that by providing you with these regular opportunities to give feedback and reflect on your volunteering with us we will help you to feel valued and listened to, while also enabling us to make the most of your contribution and skills.

[On-going communication](#)

Effective communication is a two-way process so we recommend that you make the most of whatever communication and support channels you have in place as part of your role. These might be [one-to-one sessions, telephone or email 'check-ins', group or team meetings or informal catch ups](#).

We encourage you to reflect upon and share your successes and challenges and provide us with feedback about how we can continue to improve our support for volunteers.

We greatly encourage all our volunteers to provide each other with mutual support, where practical, including through our volunteer conferences, online volunteer networks and through celebrating each other's efforts and achievements.

You can also keep up to date with what is happening at the College through our social media pages, College publications, your membership email bulletins and by visiting the [College news](#).

Our [Volunteering Development Manager](#) is also always available to provide support to you if you would like to talk to someone who isn't directly involved in your activities.

Getting time away from work

As a volunteer supporting your medical professional body you are usually entitled to take employer supported (paid) 'professional leave' separate to your usual study and annual leave allowance. Most workplaces like you to give as much notice as you can (at least 4-6 weeks). Let your College point of contact know and they can provide a letter confirming your role. If you find it difficult to arrange time away from work, we can look at reasonable adjustments such as setting up teleconference or Skype calls so you can still attend a meeting for example.

Recognition and appreciation

You are an important part of the College and without your time, energy and commitment we would not be able to have anywhere near the impact that we do for general practice in the UK and worldwide.

We are proud of our volunteers and take the following opportunities to recognise your valuable contribution:

- We say thank you – again and again.
- We try to understand your motivations for supporting us and do our best to cater to them.
- We celebrate you and your peers in Volunteers' Week every year at the beginning of June.
- We ask for your opinion and input, where possible, feedback to you afterwards.
- We try to give you opportunities to develop new skills.
- We'll support you with a reference with any regular volunteering role.
- We recognise the contribution all our volunteers make through our College Inspire Awards and other external volunteering awards, celebrating your membership impact.

Raising and resolving issues

We do everything we can to make sure your volunteering is as positive an experience as possible. Equally we also recognise that with a large number of volunteers getting involved, sometimes things might not go so well and you may wish to raise an issue.

We ask that you raise any issues with your College point of contact, as they will be keen to provide advice and support.

If you feel the role isn't working out, you and your point of contact will be able to decide together if it is possible to make changes to improve things within the role.

If, ultimately, you feel that the role is not right for you, we will completely support you and we can help you explore alternative opportunities to get involved if you wish.

If you do have an issue, following the steps outlined below will help to ensure it is dealt with fairly and as quickly as possible.



Raising an issue

1. Discuss any issues you have with your College point of contact as soon as possible – they will want to hear from you no matter how small the issue may seem.
2. In the unlikely event that the issue directly involves your College point of contact, we encourage you to raise it with them directly in the first instance, but if you do not feel comfortable doing so, you can contact their line manager or the Volunteering Development Manager.
3. Before you raise an issue, consider how long it has been going on, who is involved and what could be done to resolve it and make a record of as much relevant information as possible.
4. Make a note during the meeting or phone call of any actions that have been agreed to help resolve the issue.
5. Keep your College point of contact (or the person to whom you raised the issue) informed of any additional developments that arise.
6. Help us to resolve issues informally wherever possible.
7. If you are unable to resolve the issue you are welcome to contact the Volunteering Development Manager for an independent view.

For more information about our full raising and resolving volunteer issues and concerns procedure please get in touch with your point of contact or the Volunteering Development Manager.

Whistleblowing

This comes into effect on the rare occasions when volunteers getting involved with us wish to raise a concern in good faith about malpractice or wrongdoing within the organisation, for example, illegal or dishonest practice. In such instances volunteers should raise their concern with their College point of contact. Unless you feel the matter is suitably serious or sensitive or that you believe your point of contact is involved, in which case you should raise the issue with the Volunteering Development Manager.

In all instances the whistleblowing policy and procedure will then apply.

Boundaries and behaviour

Confidentiality and data protection

The General Data Protection and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations Acts guide how organisations can collect, manage and work with personal information.

We all have a role to play to ensure we maintain the highest standards regarding protection of data and avoid the consequences of non-compliance. As a College volunteer, it's important that you:

- Know how we **identify** personal and sensitive data (including any information you may be given, record or have sight of).
- Be aware of how we **maintain** any personal and sensitive data.
- Know how to **report** on issues and data breaches.

You can find more information by accessing our [full Data Protection and Information Security Policies](#) (see the further information section below).

Representing RCGP

We rely on volunteers to represent our values in every aspect of their behaviour when volunteering with us. We ask that you:

- Always adhere to our [brand guidelines and editorial style](#) when creating any promotional materials.
- Never provide any information about RCGP or anyone involved in the organisation to the media without prior approval from our PR and Corporate Communications team.
- Never give our logo to other organisations without agreement with the College. We have a support process for considering third-party endorsements through the Honorary Secretary's office.
- Please remember that even when not actively volunteering you may still be seen as being associated with us, whether in person or online.

Reliability

Whatever your role with us you should have agreed your volunteering arrangements with your College point of contact. We ask you to make all efforts to honour that agreement. We hugely appreciate that you are giving your time for free. Equally, you play a key role in our organisation so we simply ask that you let your point of contact know as soon as you can if you will not be able to participate on a particular occasion. This way we can make alternative arrangements. If volunteers regularly are unable to fulfil their agreed role, we may have to review the volunteering arrangement.

Maintaining boundaries and dignity at work

Clear boundaries and appropriate behaviour are important for everyone involved in the College's work and ensure we deliver our activities fairly and with positive impact.

While we recognise that getting involved is a rewarding experience, you are also expected to maintain professional boundaries with other members and staff. This involves respecting their position as colleagues, treating them fairly and equally and not having the same expectations of them in terms of attention and support as you would friends and family. Please see the further information section for our policies on [personal relationships at work](#), [dress code](#), [bullying and harassment](#), [code of business conduct](#), [drug and alcohol abuse and sponsorship \(money, gifts and goods\)](#).

For more information about dealing with dignity at work issues such as bullying, harassment or discrimination see the 'Raising and resolving issues' section.

Conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest exists where the interests or benefits of one person or entity conflict with the interests or benefits of the College. This might be through your volunteering or through another role you have.

If you become aware of any actual or potential conflict of interest you should immediately disclose these to your relevant department Director, Hon Sec or other relevant person depending on your role.

Please see the further information section for our full [Conflicts of Interest Policy](#).

Copyright and intellectual property

The rights to any original works that you may produce in the course of volunteering with us will belong to RCGP, unless otherwise agreed. Examples include photography, artwork, graphic design and written work, including the results of research.

Safeguarding

We are committed to safeguarding the well-being of all service users, employees, volunteers and other representatives who are involved in or affected by our work. All children and adults, regardless of age, disability, sex, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation, or gender identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse and the right to be treated with respect.

- All volunteers have a duty to prevent the abuse of children and adults and report any safeguarding concerns to your College point of contact and/or the Volunteering Development Manager.
- All volunteers must read, understand and adhere to our [safeguarding policy](#) and associated [code of conduct](#).



Volunteering internationally

Getting involved with our overseas work can be rewarding and challenging, including working within different cultures, practices, legal systems, environments and with many local partners. We will consider all these factors as part of our planning assessments, including access to our dedicated personal safety and crisis management support. Before travelling be familiar with:

- Up-to-date [travel advice](#) from the UK FCO relevant to your country visit.
- Any pre-departure and in-country briefs and post placement debriefs.
- Travelling on College business or volunteering accompanied by family members is not permitted, with the only exception of representing the College when attending overseas conferences.
- Guidance on the UK [Anti-Bribery Act 2010](#) which British nationals travelling overseas are subject to, offences covering the offering, promising or giving advantage and requesting, agreeing to receive or accepting of a business advantage, including bribery of a foreign public official. We have zero-tolerance of bribery in any form, as contrary to fundamental values of integrity, transparency and accountability.



Your safety and wellbeing

Health and safety

Any activities you carry out as a volunteer are covered by the same health and safety legal requirements as those carried out by RCGP staff and we will uphold our duty to protect you from harm.

In turn, we expect our volunteers to **contribute** to maintaining a **safe working environment**.

- Take **reasonable** care for the health and safety of yourselves and other persons who may be affected by your actions.
- **Co-operate** with staff by assisting them to fulfil their Health and Safety duties.
- **Follow** the College health and safety policy and measures put in place or by any organisation whose premises you may be working on.
- **Report** safety concerns, accidents, incidents, and near misses with your College point of contact as soon as possible for them to record and pass on to a Health and Safety representative at RCGP.
- In an **emergency**, you should contact the emergency services immediately.

You should have provided us with an **emergency contact** when you started your role so that, in the unlikely event anything happens to you while carrying out activities for us, we know who to get in touch with. Please get in touch with your College point of contact if you have not done so.

Expenses

You may request reimbursement of agreed and reasonable out-of-pocket expenses that you incur as part of your volunteering up to agreed maximum levels. Your College point of contact will clarify this with you, including any restrictions within a specific project and how to start making a claim if it is your first one. Claims must be agreed in advance and receipts, tickets or mileage records will be required. We ask you to submit claims within three months of incurring the expense.

Protecting your information

As a volunteer we collect, store and use the information you give us for your safety, to communicate with you and for internal monitoring purposes only. We will never share your information with third parties without your consent.

To find out how we respect and protect your personal information in line with GDPR, read our [privacy statement](#). **Please inform your College point of contact if any of your contact information changes.**



Insurance

RCGP has appropriate types of insurance in place to cover volunteers. These include Employer's Liability Insurance for injury to volunteers or employees as a direct result of our activities; Public Liability Insurance in the event a third party being injured or damage to the property of a third party as a result of the actions of a volunteer performing College duties; professional indemnity covering negligent work/professional services or advice by volunteers performing College activities (**excluding** medical service delivery) and travel insurance covering overseas volunteering (if you are under the age of 80) including cover for overseas medical expenses, for illness or injury. For volunteers travelling overseas who are 80 or above we will seek alternative arrangements on an individual basis. Please inform us if this affects you.

If you require more information about the specifics of our insurance protection you can ask your College point of contact.

Use of own home for RCGP purposes

You should avoid using your own home for training and meetings before agreeing it with your College point of contact and checking that volunteering activity is specified in your personal home insurance policy. It is usually agreed to readily at no extra cost.

Using your own vehicle

RCGP does not provide motor insurance for you as a volunteer. Driving in connection with volunteering is normally classified by insurers as "social, domestic and pleasure" which is usually part of your standard cover. However we do ask that you **check with your insurer** because driving on business as part of your volunteering may not be automatically covered.

Some insurers may categorise volunteering as business use but should not raise the premium.

As a volunteer driver you should not accept an increase in premium and may wish to change insurer or consider using public transport for your role if your current insurer insists on an extra charge.

If we have agreed to reimburse your expenses for travelling in your own vehicle, we use the government standard mileage rate.

Lone working

Many of our volunteer roles involve volunteering outside our normal office hours or volunteering alone without direct or close supervision, whether it's delivering talks in the local community, mentoring another member or attending an evening board meeting. Lone working can increase vulnerability to personal safety.

Where possible, we will ensure that arrangements to protect your safety are in place but all volunteers have a responsibility towards protecting their own personal safety. You should:

- Have a designated friend or family member who is aware of where you will be.
- Know how to summon help in the event of an emergency or an accident.
- Be aware of your personal situation and never put yourself in danger.
- If you find yourself in immediate danger phone 999.
- If based in one of our premises, find out how to locate and use fire and first aid equipment.

- Hold evening meetings in venues with security arrangements.
- Know how to deal with visitors, members of the public or other RCGP members who may approach you as part of your role.
- Know how to report any incidents, no matter how small, to your College point of contact for them to record and pass onto a Health and Safety representative at RCGP.

Using information technology

It is extremely important that all volunteers adhere to our information security and technology policies regarding disclosing information publicly online that can be connected to the RCGP and working safely and effectively when using either College provided or your personal devices to carry out College activities. [Please see the further information section to access our social media, Colleague security and Bring Your Own Device \(BYOD\) policies.](#)



When you leave or move roles

We hugely appreciate every hour that our volunteers give and we recognise that, for many of you, after a period of time in a role you will be ready for a new challenge.

We hope that when you feel it is time to finish your role you will consider continuing to support our work in some way, whether it is taking up a [new volunteer role](#), supporting our [policy and campaigns](#) work or [following us online](#).

When you do finish a role with us, irrespective of whether you will be taking up another opportunity within the College, we would appreciate if you can complete our [Volunteer Exit Survey](#). This will help you reflect, but is also extremely valuable for us to learn and continue to improve the way in which we involve volunteers at the RCGP.



Support and advice

If you would like further information or advice on any aspect of your volunteering with us, please ask your point of contact or contact the Volunteering Development Manager:

Your **RCGP contact(s)** who will guide and support you in your role is:

[Insert name, position, contact details]

[Insert name, position, contact details]

Rashpal Saini

Volunteering Development Manager

T: 020 3188 7432

E: Rashpal.Saini@rcgp.org.uk

W: rcgp.org.uk/volunteering

Further information

We recognise your volunteering contribution as vital to the work of the organisation. This is borne out in the policies and procedures the College has developed, which cover both staff and volunteers in their work.

- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Stress Management Policy
- Data Protection, Data Breach Incident and Records Management Policies
- Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct
- Colleague Security Policy (IT)
- Bring Your Own Devices Policy (IT)
- Social Media Policy
- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Code of Business Conduct and Dress Code Policy
- Drug and Alcohol Abuse Policy
- Personal Relationships at Work Policy
- Travel, Subsistence and Expenses policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Sponsorship Policy
- Endorsement Policy
- Conflict of Interests Policy

For a copy of any of the above documents, please ask your [College point of contact](#), contact the [Volunteering Development Manager](#) or refer to our online [Volunteer Resources](#).

The RCGP way values



I deliver **Excellence** by

- Sharing ideas, knowledge and best practice to ensure the same level of quality is sustained across the College.
- Focusing on facts and evidence rather than personal opinion for decision-making.
- Striving to deliver excellence and encourage colleagues to do so.
- Being open to transformation and to new technologies to improve the quality of our work.
- Embracing change and taking advantage of new opportunities.
- Thinking about the impact of my decisions.



I **Care** by

- Treating others the way I would like to be treated.
- Being approachable and aware of other priorities around the College.
- Making sure I action something that I said I would do.
- Supporting teams and helping everyone to feel valued.
- Looking out for others and respecting their views.
- Encouraging my colleagues to work to their full potential by being honest, open and respectful.



I demonstrate **Leadership** by

- Raising issues that affect how work is done and not blaming others.
- Identifying things that are not working or not good enough.
- Understanding and accepting that everyone has their own opinion which can be shared openly and be respected by all.
- Seeking out views and opinions that challenge my own.
- Respectful listening to everyone's views and taking them onboard accordingly.
- Being prepared to change my ways of doing things.



I show **Teamwork** by

- Always being open and honest.
- Actively collaborating with colleagues across the College and encouraging others to do the same.
- Encouraging communication between teams to gain a better understanding of their work areas and needs.
- Communicating clearly with colleagues in a respectful manner.
- Connecting with colleagues and getting to know them better.
- Building positive relationships, not just seeing them as a means to meet deadlines and budget.



Royal College of
General Practitioners

Thank you

We appreciate everything you do.

By giving your time you're
helping us support great doctors,
providing great care.

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