

## **Becoming a Visiting Volunteer: Frequently asked questions**

### Background / About

#### **What are Visiting Volunteers?**

Visiting Volunteers visit applicants and beneficiaries of the Masonic Charitable Foundation to help them to make applications for assistance from its wide range of support. This includes completing the Foundation's application form, collating supporting documents and paperwork and writing a report. The locally recruited volunteers receive centrally provided training on visiting applicants and helping them to submit an application.

#### **Who should think about becoming a Visiting Volunteer?**

We welcome people from a range of backgrounds and experiences and provide full training for the Visiting Volunteer role. The key skills needed are: a caring nature; the ability to remain objective in sometimes difficult situations; a good level of literacy, numeracy and IT skills; an organised approach; and an understanding of confidentiality and commitment to safeguarding personal information. Knowledge of state benefits is helpful but is not essential. Our Visiting Volunteer role description provides more information.

#### **How much time do I need to have available?**

The number of visits a Visiting Volunteer will be asked to make will depend on how many requests for assistance are received in their area, however, the time needed to complete a visit could be several hours. Your Provincial Grand Lodge should be able to give you details of the typical numbers of applications in your local area.

#### **Do I have to be a Freemason?**

No. While most Visiting Volunteers are members of Lodges under United Grand Lodge of England individuals with the relevant skills/experience and a strong link to their local Masonic community can also apply.

#### **Do I need to have access to my own computer?**

Yes. In order to carry out visits and complete and submit applications you will need to have access to a computer with an internet connection, a scanner and a printer. Due to the sensitive nature of the information you will be handling it is not appropriate for Visiting Volunteers to make use of computers in public locations such as libraries. You will also need an email address which can only be accessed by you in order to receive Visit Commissions from the Foundation or your Provincial Contact.

**I don't have my own transport. Can I still volunteer?**

Applications are usually completed during a visit to the applicant's home so you will require access to your own transport if you wish to volunteer for this particular role.

Volunteers will need to hold up to date insurance for the vehicle as well as an MOT (if required for the vehicle) and a valid driving licence. Volunteers should inform their insurance company that they are using the vehicle in the course of volunteering. This will not usually incur an additional premium. Further information is available from the Association of British Insurers at <https://www.abi.org.uk/products-and-issues/choosing-the-right-insurance/motor-insurance/volunteer-drivers/>

**Can I volunteer if I have a disability?**

We welcome applications from anyone who feels able to carry out the responsibilities of a Visiting Volunteer and will take all reasonable steps to accommodate any individual access requirements.

**Will volunteering affect my State benefits?**

If you are getting State benefits you can still be a volunteer and your benefits will not usually be affected as long as you keep to the rules for receiving the benefit. More detailed information is available at <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/benefits-introduction/how-volunteering-affects-your-benefits/>

**I don't have any experience of social work / benefits / working with older people / working with young people - will this hinder my chances of volunteering?**

No. Whilst it may be helpful to have experience of supporting people in need, it is not essential. A caring nature and a willingness to learn will qualify you equally.

**I am only free at the weekend. Can I volunteer for this period only?**

It is important that we can ensure applicants are visited without undue delay and at a time which suits them. If you would like to volunteer but would only be able to make visits at certain times then we suggest you contact your Provincial Grand Lodge to discuss it in more detail.

**Once I start as a Visiting Volunteer, can I claim travel expenses?**

All Visiting Volunteers are able to claim reimbursement for out of pocket expenses in accordance with the current expenses policy. We are keen to ensure that no-one is prevented from volunteering due to their financial circumstances.

## Recruitment

**Do all applicants get accepted?**

Unfortunately it is not possible to accept everyone who is interested in becoming a Visiting Volunteer. A limited number of roles are available and not all applicants will be suitable. If we are unable to accept you as a Visiting Volunteer you may still be able to get involved with supporting the Foundation and the Masonic community in other ways.

**Will I be able to volunteer immediately?**

No. All Visiting Volunteers must go through the necessary background checks and training before they can start. This can take some time to complete. It could be several months from the receipt of your application before you start making visits.

**Do you carry out background checks on volunteers?**

The safety of the people we support is paramount. We ask all Visiting Volunteers to complete a background verification declaration. We also take up references for all Visiting Volunteers before accepting them for training. However, we don't carry out a Disclosure and Barring Service check as the role does not qualify for one.

## Training

**Will I get any training?**

Yes. Before undertaking any visits you must successfully complete a detailed Visiting Volunteer induction course covering the key responsibilities of the role. This includes guidance on completing the application form, help to manage difficult



conversations, health and safety, data protection and safeguarding training and a general induction to the work of the Foundation.

We hope you will want to continue as a Visiting Volunteer for a number of years so we will also require you to attend refresher training to keep your skills up to date.

## How to apply

### **How do I apply to become a Visiting Volunteer?**

If you are interested in becoming a Visiting Volunteer then you should first contact your Provincial Grand Lodge for an informal chat.

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