

Parkinson's UK

Operating Framework

Formerly Local Group Rules effective January 2016

Approved by the Board October 2020

Effective January 2022

Introduction

As the UK's leading Parkinson's support and research charity, our ultimate ambition is that, together, we will find a cure and improve life for everyone affected by the condition. The Parkinson's community is at the centre of everything we do.

Local groups are an integral part of Parkinson's UK. Established under Article 12 of the [Articles of Association](#), they include branches, support groups, activity groups and any additional groups developed to support and deliver local plans and priorities.

Run by lead volunteers, who have the authority to manage and spend charity funds, local groups deliver valuable activities and support for people with Parkinson's, and their carers, families and friends in their local area.

This document sets out the framework for lead volunteers to follow in running Parkinson's UK local groups.

1. Governance

The Board of Trustees (the Board) is legally responsible for ensuring that all the finances and activities of Parkinson's UK, including local groups, are carried out in support of the charity's objectives.

The Board delegates the responsibility for running local groups to lead volunteers, who must do so in a way that meets the charity's legal and financial responsibilities. These are outlined in:

- this local group operating framework – it defines the requirements for leading local groups
- [the local group directory](#) – it details the procedures on how to practically run and manage groups, and guidance on how best to do that.

Key requirements:

1.1 Lead volunteers are required to follow Parkinson's UK policies and procedures, including this operating framework, in order to meet our legal and financial obligations.

1.2 All activities and support that we provide should aim to improve life for people affected by Parkinson's in line with the charity's objectives. Activities outside of this could result in regulatory actions from the Charity Commission or Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator and put our charitable status at risk.

1.3 All of our support and activities should be available to anyone affected by Parkinson's, whether or not they are a member of the charity.

1.4 Parkinson's UK is an inclusive organisation with a diverse team of staff, volunteers and supporters. Local group activities and support should be available to all sections of the Parkinson's community, and we will work together to reach underrepresented communities in each local area.

2. Running local groups

Each local group is run by [lead volunteers](#) who oversee the day-to-day organisation of the group and its activities. Every local group is required to have at least two lead volunteer roles:

- A volunteer to oversee the running of the group.
- A volunteer responsible for the group's finances.

Lead volunteers may be supported by additional volunteers in a range of ways, for example organising and giving practical help at meetings and activities. Additional volunteers are not responsible for ensuring that their group is operating within the framework as delegated by the Board.

Support group, Activity group and other local group lead volunteers

There is no election process for lead volunteers of groups that are not branches. Local staff contacts will work with group lead volunteers to find and recruit the right person for a volunteer role.

Branch lead volunteers

Branch members [elect lead volunteers](#) from within the group membership to form a committee. Each committee needs to have at least two additional people, a minimum of four in total, to support decision making.

Branch committee members

Branch committee members are elected by members of the group at a branch Annual General Meeting (AGM) each year or at an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM). The procedures for calling and conducting general meetings of branch members are set out in the AGM guidance in the [local group directory](#) and a member of staff will join the AGM to oversee the election of the new committee. Each elected branch committee member serves a term of one year, after which they may stand for re-election.

A lead volunteer can be appointed by the other committee members to be part of the committee at any point in the year (either to fill a vacancy or as an addition to the committee). If so, they will serve until the next AGM or EGM when they can stand for election.

Branch sub-committees/working groups

From time to time branches may set up working groups, or sub-committees, for a specific task or project – for example managing the spending plan of a legacy left to a branch. Each working group should have at least one member who is also on the branch committee.

Advisers

Branch committees may occasionally seek advice from individuals with specialist knowledge. However, as advisers they do not have decision making authority within the committee.

2.1 All lead volunteers need to be members of the charity so that they can have the delegated responsibility to run groups and make decisions about charity activities and expenditure. This is required by the Board to ensure accountability and assurance.

2.2 All new volunteers should complete the volunteer induction to help them understand their role and responsibilities. The induction also provides guidance and support to volunteers who do not have personal experience of the condition.

2.3 Ideally, lead volunteers should not have more than one lead volunteer role and should not be in their role for more than eight years, but this may not always be possible. In exceptional circumstances a lead volunteer may continue in role for a further one or two years while a succession plan is put in place.

2.4 Parkinson's UK employees and those with whom the organisation has contracted services aren't eligible to serve as lead volunteers. This keeps the distinction between paid and voluntary commitments clear and avoids any conflict of interest.

2.5 There are some circumstances when a lead volunteer may not continue in their role and will automatically cease to hold office. This would happen if he/she/they:

- is no longer a member of the charity – Team Parkinson's
- becomes an employee of Parkinson's UK (whether full or part time)
- resigns from their role
- is not available to be involved in making decisions on four consecutive occasions, without the agreement of the other lead volunteers
- becomes unsound of mind
- has a bankruptcy or receiving order made against them or makes any arrangements with their creditors.

3. Support for lead volunteers

Local Parkinson's UK staff contacts provide support and guidance for all lead volunteers and this support is a priority for those staff colleagues. They share information and resources and can provide access to [training](#) to enable lead volunteers to run the group in the best way to support the local community.

3.1 If a local group has a problem attracting volunteers, local staff will work together with lead volunteers to attract potential volunteers with the skills and experience required, or who have a passion for improving life for people living with Parkinson's.

3.2 Local staff will also work with lead volunteers to develop a succession plan, to sustain the longer term future for the group and prepare new volunteers to take on these important roles.

3.3 Where the required lead volunteer roles are vacant for more than three months, local staff will work with the group to agree a way forward. There are a number of different options, including merging with another group or becoming a support group, to make sure we continue to provide the right support to the Parkinson's community in the local area.

3.4 If there are concerns about whether an individual can continue to fulfil their role, lead volunteers should discuss this with local staff. They can help put a plan in place to support that volunteer, and the group, and also support lead volunteers to handle potentially sensitive discussions.

4. Local group decision making

As lead volunteers are responsible for [making decisions](#) about how charity money is spent, and providing support and activities in the name of the charity, it's important that no individual lead volunteer makes decisions on their own.

4.1 Lead volunteers should agree how and when they will make decisions about the running of the local group,

4.2 At least two volunteers should be involved in making decisions for the group, and it is best practice for all lead volunteers to be involved where possible.

4.3 [Always keep a record](#) of the key points of the discussion, the decision made and the names of the lead volunteers involved. This record, paper or digital, needs to be kept for six years plus the current year, to provide an audit trail and complete financial records. Records can be destroyed or deleted after this seven year period.

5. Local group membership

Parkinson's UK is a membership organisation and members are eligible to be involved in charity decision making, including the election of trustees and voting at the charity's AGM. We refer to this membership as being part of Team Parkinson's. Membership of Team Parkinson's offers people the option of also becoming a member of a local group.

5.1 People need to be a member of Team Parkinson's to become a member of a local group. However, all activities should be available to anyone affected by Parkinson's, even if they are not a member.

5.2 Members of Team Parkinson's are eligible to be local group lead volunteers.

5.3 Members of Team Parkinson's are eligible to vote in elections for lead volunteers at a branch AGM. People who are not members of Team Parkinson's are not entitled to vote to elect lead volunteers.

5.4 To support [contact with group members and activity attendees](#), each local group should maintain a local contact list in line with our [data handling guidance](#).

5.5 Lead volunteers may decide to charge a minimal subscription fee to become a member of the group and to cover the cost of subsidising activities. However, as group activities are open to everyone affected by Parkinson's, this should not restrict access to members only.

5.6 Charity law does not permit the payment of the local group membership subscription fees from local group funds.

6. Local group activities

Parkinson's UK offers a range of support and activities to everyone in each local area, based on what people have told us they need and what they say is important. We aim to provide that support by working together with local groups and other partners and volunteers.

Each local group should aim to offer a range of [activities](#). However, there is no expectation for every group to do everything. What each group can provide will be based on the time and energy that lead volunteers have, and the money available – and this may change over time.

6.1 All local group activities should be available to anyone affected by Parkinson's, regardless of whether they are a member of Team Parkinson's.

6.2 All activities need to comply with the charity's legal responsibilities:

- Local groups are covered by Parkinson's UK [insurance](#) but our insurance will only cover activities that are carried out in line with the operating framework and procedures.
- A [risk assessment](#) needs to be completed for any formal activity organised by a local group.
- All [incidents and near misses](#) need to be reported so that we can learn from them and take any action required to prevent them from happening again.
- A [local contract](#) is required for any activity that involves another party or provider.
- Volunteers who have concerns about the safety and wellbeing of people attending local group activities should raise concerns in line with our [Safeguarding practice and procedures](#).

6.3 All local group activities which involve holding or handling personal data must be managed in line with our [policies and guidance on data handling](#).

6.4 Lead volunteers are required to complete an [annual review](#) of the group's activities, with support from local staff contacts. This is to enable the Chief Executive to provide a report to the Board giving assurance that local groups are being run in a way that meets our legal and financial obligations and are providing support in line with the charity's objectives.

7. Local group finances

All funds raised, whether locally or centrally, are done so on behalf of Parkinson's UK and belong to Parkinson's UK. These funds have been accepted on the understanding that they will be used to support people affected by Parkinson's in line with the charity's objectives.

7.1 Local group finances are consolidated as part of the charity's annual accounts and all groups are required to follow the finance procedures in the [local group directory](#).

7.2 These procedures include an annual [budgeting](#) and planning process, where reporting is required by set deadlines. This enables the charity to complete its annual accounting and audit processes as required by law.

7.3 Local groups may hold up to one year's worth of local expenditure in [reserves](#). Transferring surplus funds (funds over and above the amount budgeted for planned activities and 12 months' reserves) helps to support centrally funded activities, like our helpline and local adviser services.

7.4 Where a local group is unable to raise the funds to deliver planned activities locally, we'll work together to ensure that the right activities and support can continue.

7.5 The Board has requested that all local groups move bank accounts to one cash pooling platform. This approach is seen as good practice for the charity sector. By combining all the cash into one pooled account, the charity has a larger pool of available cash through which to keep the charity's activities, both local and national, appropriately funded.

Where cash pooling applies:

7.5.1 Lead volunteers continue to make decisions about spending funds locally and local group funds remain under local group control. Lead volunteers have access to the full balance shown in the group's sub-account.

7.5.2 The Finance Director may assume control of a local group sub-account under extreme circumstances, for example where the solvency of the charity is threatened, where fraud has been discovered or where there are no lead volunteers able to run the group for an extended period of time. Under any of these exceptional circumstances, the charity will be clear and transparent about any action taken and the reasons why.

7.5.3 Local group sub-accounts will earn interest paid at a rate based on the Bank of England interest rate plus 0.1%.

7.6 There are certain things that it is [not permissible for local groups to spend charity money on](#). These are:

- donations to other charities (this does not include payment for goods or services)
- funding statutory services (for example donations to the NHS or Parkinson's nurses)
- commissioning research or donating directly to a research team
- investments of any kind
- purchase of buildings, vehicles, caravans, holiday homes etc
- contracts of employment (this does not include contracts for services provided).

7.7 Parkinson's UK's charitable status means that its [trading](#) activities, including at a local group level, are restricted. Therefore local groups must not run shops or permanent trading activities.

7.8 All legacies and large donations need to be managed in accordance with our legacies and large donations policy. There are legal considerations specific to legacies which require the expertise and support of specialist staff colleagues. All legacies need to be processed by this specialist team and any legacies sent directly to a local group should be forwarded to the UK office.

8. Working together

8.1 Using the Parkinson's UK [brand](#) shows that we are all one organisation and helps maximise the impact of publications and activities. Local groups share the organisation's charity number and are required to include the following wording on anything written that is produced:

Parkinson's UK is the operating name of the Parkinson's Disease Society of the United Kingdom. A company limited by guarantee. Registered in England and Wales (00948776). Registered office: 215 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 1EJ. A charity registered in England and Wales (2518197) and in Scotland (SC037554).

8.2 Our media team can support you to promote your group and Parkinson's UK through any media activity and will support you to ensure that all the messaging about the charity and what we do is consistent and up to date.

9. When things aren't working

Occasionally, despite all our best intentions, things don't work out. We're all aiming to support the Parkinson's community in the best way possible, but sometimes there will be challenges and problems that need resolving.

We're committed to maintaining a culture where volunteers and staff colleagues can voice their concerns without any fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage.

9.1 Often problems within the group can be solved informally with support from the local staff team, so lead volunteers should speak with them in the first instance.

9.2 If speaking with local staff isn't appropriate, then lead volunteers can also send any feedback or complaints to our [Feedback team](#), who will ensure that it is directed to the right person to respond or find a solution. It is important to address concerns, and put things right if they've gone wrong.

9.3 If there are serious concerns about the activities of the charity, our assets or reputation, it may be appropriate to alert the Company Secretary by [whistleblowing](#).

9.4 If the problem is more serious, if a volunteer is in a role that's not right for them or the charity's assets or reputation are at risk, then these issues will be resolved in accordance with the relevant problem solving procedures.

10. Local group closure

There may be occasions when a local group needs to close. This might be:

- at the request of the lead volunteers in discussion with the local staff contact
- at the request of the Country Director if the group fails to observe the operating framework and procedures
- if the interests of Parkinson's UK require it.

Where any group does close, we'll work together to ensure that we continue to provide the right support to the Parkinson's community in the area.

11. Queries and feedback

Any queries about the meaning, intention or application of this operating framework, and the supporting procedures, should be raised with local staff or the Local Networks team. Please email localnetworks@parkinsons.org.uk or call 020 7963 3929.

Queries which remain unresolved will be referred to the relevant Director who will respond within 28 days and whose decision will be final and binding.

12. Approval and commencement

In accordance with Regulations made under Article 12 of the Articles of Association, the Board agreed and approved this Local Group Operating Framework on 5 August 2021 to take effect in January 2022. It replaces all previous Rules.

Any problems with the operating framework in practice should be referred to the Local Networks team by email at localnetworks@parkinsons.org.uk or by phoning 020 7963 3929 .

The Local Networks team will work collaboratively to identify whether changes are needed so that together we may make recommendations to the Board.

Under normal circumstances, the Board may review and make changes to the operating framework, in collaboration with lead volunteers.

There may be exceptional circumstances which mean that the Board is required to approve changes to the operating framework without consultation and collaboration. In these situations, any required changes will be widely communicated.