**Volunteer Policy**

**Braveheart**

**The Objects of the Association shall be to provide a framework of active support and encouragement for adults with any long term condition and those at risk of developing a long term condition and, to promote their current and future wellbeing.**

Braveheart’s model is innovative as all of our services are delivered by local community volunteers. Braveheart trains and supports volunteers to provide self management support to local people, delivering a range of services including self management groups, health walks and other activities promoting health and wellbeing.

In line with this mission, Braveheart seeks to involve volunteers directly within the organisation to:

* Contribute to the delivery of our services.
* Ensure that we are responsive to the needs of our users.
* Offer opportunities for participation by individuals who might otherwise be excluded.
* Provide different skills and perspectives.

We aim to achieve this by engaging our volunteers in:

* Mentoring participants during group sessions. This could be part of a programme of sessions, or in single introductory sessions.
* Researching and leading safe, health walks geared to the ability of participants.
* Liaising with staff in the achievement of these functions.
* Raising general awareness of the work of Braveheart.
* Assisting, wherever possible, in fundraising activities on behalf of Braveheart.

**Our Principles**

The Association

* Will ensure that volunteers are properly integrated within the organisational structure and that mechanisms are in place to enable them to contribute effectively to the work of the Association.
* Recognises that a high proportion of our service delivery is achieved through the medium of volunteers and that this unique contribution is made with limited, direct supervision.

This places a special responsibility on the Association to:

* Provide comprehensive training in relevant health subjects, and, in the facilitation of mentoring groups in a learning environment.
* Provide ongoing training to develop, update and refresh volunteers’ knowledge and skills.
* Provide full training for walk leaders in researching and organising safe walks; in health and safety matters and, in basic emergency life support.
* Ensure that, wherever possible, new mentors and walk leaders are paired with an experienced volunteer in their initial assignments.
* Identify and reimburse legitimate costs incurred in volunteering activities.
* Recognise that the management of volunteers requires designated responsibilities within specific posts.
* Expect staff at all levels to work positively with all volunteers and, if appropriate, seek to involve them in their work.
* Not engage volunteers for the purpose of replacing paid staff.
* Ensure that all volunteers are satisfied and supported in their role.

**Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers**

Recruitment of volunteers will, generally, be from all sections of the community and will be in accordance with the Braveheart Association’s Equal Opportunity Procedure. Positive action in recruitment may be used where appropriate.

Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer will be sent an information pack which includes specific information on the volunteer post in which they are interested. The pack will also contain an application form. They will then be invited to either an open meeting or to an informal talk with an appropriate person. All prospective volunteers will complete the application form and submit it along with the names and addresses of two referees who will be contacted for references.

Volunteers within Braveheart are likely to come into contact with vulnerable people and/or be in a position of trust. In consequence of that, they will be required to become a member of PVG (Protecting Vulnerable Groups) scheme, providing information about any criminal convictions. There is no cost to the volunteer and such information will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not necessarily affect the application.

**Volunteer Agreements and Voluntary Work Outlines**

Each volunteer will be given a copy of their role description. They will also receive a Volunteer Agreement containing full information about their chosen area of involvement, their responsibilities to the Association and, the Association’s expectations of them. As the Braveheart Association has no intention of creating contracts between themselves and volunteers, neither of these documents constitutes a contract. Every volunteer will also receive a Volunteer Handbook.

**Expenses**

All volunteers may claim reimbursement of their travel and other reasonable costs.

Volunteers engaged for a minimum of five hours in any day may claim expenses for an appropriate meal. Please refer to the Expenses Procedure included as part of this document. These should be claimed for at the end of each month.

**Induction and Training**

All volunteers will receive an induction into Braveheart. Training relevant to their specific role will be provided and, wherever possible, be supplemented by additional training.

**Support**

All volunteers will be allocated a ‘Named Person’ as their principal point of contact. Volunteers will be given regular support to enable them to feed back on progress, discuss future development, and air any problems.

**The Volunteer’s Voice**

Volunteers are encouraged to express their views on matters relating to the Braveheart Association and its work. This may be done through regular training and consultation in group and one-to-one meetings.

**Insurance**

All volunteers are covered by The Braveheart Association’s Insurance Procedure, whilst they are on premises occupied by Braveheart or, when engaged in any activities on behalf of the Braveheart Association, provided that these activities are being conducted within their role description.

**Equal Opportunities**

The Braveheart Association operates an Equal Opportunities Procedure (Appendix 2) which applies to both volunteers and paid staff. Volunteers will be expected to have an understanding of, and a commitment to, our Equal Opportunities Procedure.

**Confidentiality**

Volunteers will be bound by the confidentiality policy of the Braveheart Association, which requires that no personal information of any kind acquired in the course of their volunteering activities within Braveheart, will be disclosed outside of the organisation without the consent of the individual providing the information.

An exception is where there is a compulsion either in law, public interest or professional regulation to disclose such information. In such circumstances, personal information may be disclosed on a confidential basis, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 to appropriate third parties.

**Challenges**

The Braveheart Association aims to address any challenges or problems at the earliest possible stage within the framework of our grievances policy. In line with this approach, volunteers have the right to discuss any concerns they may have with their ‘Named Person’, or another appropriate person, at any time.

If the problem cannot be resolved at this stage, the matter will be referred to the Braveheart Manager, and, if necessary, to the Board with the permission of the volunteer.

A copy of the Association’s Procedure covering disciplinary issues involving a volunteer is included in the Volunteer’s Handbook.

**Endings**

On the basis of their voluntary work, volunteers will have the right to request a personal reference. Volunteers will be supported if they decide to move on to other options.

**Date agreed by the Braveheart Association**

Signed Date

Position