

LOCAL GROUP RULES

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PARKINSON'S UK LOCAL GROUP RULES

Formerly **Branch Rules Revised 2009**
and **Support Group Rules 2000**

Approved by the Board October 2015
Effective January 2016

INTRODUCTION

We're the UK's Parkinson's support and research charity. Because we're here, no one has to face Parkinson's alone. Our vision – our ultimate ambition – is to find a cure and improve life for everyone affected by Parkinson's.

As one charity we share this vision. Together we can achieve it.

As part of our network of local groups, you're helping to make sure we're there for the people who need our support now. By working more effectively together, we can bring forward the day when no one fears Parkinson's – something that cannot happen soon enough.

There are many ways we're all bringing that day forward, from funding research and campaigning to improve care services through to providing advice and offering the friendship and support that makes such a difference to people's lives.

Local groups are an essential part of this. These rules are designed to help you carry out your important local work as effectively as possible and to ensure that we, as one charity, make the biggest difference we can to the people who need us most.

Who these rules are for

The rules cover the work of branches and support groups. To keep things simple, they are referred to as **local groups**.

An important note about governance

Local groups are an **integral** part of Parkinson's UK and share the organisation's charity number. Because we are all part of one

charity, local group finances are consolidated as part of Parkinson's UK annual accounts.

Our Board of Trustees (the Board) is legally responsible for all the finances and activities of Parkinson's UK including those of local groups. To help local groups operate in a clear, consistent and appropriate way, the Board has developed a framework for everyone to work in. This consists of:

- these [local group rules](#)
- the local group directory and Treasurer's guide
- the policies and procedures of Parkinson's UK

It's vital everyone works within this framework as this means the charity will meet its legal responsibilities. It will also safeguard the services we provide and help ensure people affected by Parkinson's receive the benefit of our support. Operating outside this framework may result in regulatory action from the Charity Commission and put Parkinson's UK's charitable status at risk.

If you have any feedback, please contact the team at **feedback@parkinsons.org.uk**

1. RUNNING YOUR LOCAL GROUP

1.1 LEAD VOLUNTEERS

To help realise our vision, the Board delegates the day-to-day management of local groups to the volunteers who run them, referred to collectively as **Lead Volunteers**.

For branches these are the members of the management committee which is made up of four to 12 people including the following specific roles: Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. For support groups these are the Support Group Coordinator and Support Group Finance Contact.

It is important to ensure that the right people are recruited to the right roles and that their skills and experience match those outlined in the respective volunteer role descriptions. This is to help ensure they are able to fulfil their role effectively and get the most out of their volunteering experience. More information on these roles is available in the individual volunteer role descriptions.

Ideally no individual should take on more than one Lead Volunteer role. However it is recognised that in practice this is not always possible. Only local group members are eligible to be elected as Lead Volunteers and, whilst other volunteers may be involved in the running of the group, the positions named above must be filled. Where these roles remain vacant for more than three months the local staff contact is able to offer support and advice to agree a way forward.

Employees of Parkinson's UK and those with whom the organisation has contracted services are not eligible to serve as Lead Volunteers.

1.1A ELECTING MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

(applicable to Branches only)

For branches, all members of the management committee must be elected according to the process set out below.

Each member of the management committee can stand for re-election annually for a maximum of six years continuously after which they must stand down for a minimum period of one year before standing for a further term. In exceptional circumstances a term of office may be extended for one year at a time with the approval of the local staff contact and the usual election process must be followed.

- All management committee members must be elected by their branch members at its AGM or at an EGM.
- This election will be overseen by an attending staff member.
- If there are more candidates than positions available then a ballot must be held using the 'first past the post' method with each branch member entitled to one vote per vacancy.
- In the event of a tie, the attending local staff member will carry out a revote amongst the members present at the meeting.
- If there is still a tie, it goes down to drawn lots.

The term of office for each elected management committee member is one year.

1.1B APPOINTING MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

(applicable to Branches only)

If a named management committee role becomes vacant during the year (eg in between AGMs), the remaining management committee members must fill the vacancy by **appointing** another

individual to act until the next AGM or EGM. At this meeting the individual must stand for annual election along with the other management committee members and is subject to the same eligibility criteria.

1.1C CO-OPTING MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

(applicable to Branches only)

When necessary the management committee may co-opt up to two additional individuals who have a required specialist knowledge or experience not otherwise available to the management committee.

Co-opted members serve in an advisory capacity for as long as that specialist knowledge or experience is required.

A co-opted member has no voting rights on decisions taken by the management committee.

The total number of appointed and co-opted members must not exceed the total number of elected members on the management committee.

1.1D RECRUITING LEAD VOLUNTEERS FOR SUPPORT GROUPS

There is no formal election process for **support group** Lead Volunteers who must be recruited according to the structured **volunteer recruitment process** which the local staff contact can support.

1.1E EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

Parkinson's UK is committed to promoting equality and valuing diversity throughout all its work and organisational culture. This commitment, and our *Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy*, is inclusive of volunteers. It is important to welcome a wide range of people, from diverse backgrounds, when recruiting volunteers and your local staff contact can provide support to ensure equal opportunities for all in accordance with the charity's *Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy*.

1.1F CEASING TO BE A LEAD VOLUNTEER

A Lead Volunteer automatically ceases to hold office if he/she:

- ceases to be a member of the Charity
- becomes an employee of Parkinson's UK
- resigns
- is absent from four consecutive management committee meetings without agreement of the management committee
- becomes unsound of mind
- has a bankruptcy or receiving order made against them or make any arrangements with their creditors

In rare circumstances it may also be necessary for the Charity to dismiss a Lead Volunteer in accordance with its *Volunteer Problem-Solving Policy*. Any individual removed from office will not be eligible for election, appointment or co-option unless authorised by the Head of Volunteering.

1.2 MEETINGS OF THE LEAD VOLUNTEERS

Lead Volunteers must meet as required and not less than once a quarter to effectively manage the day-to-day activities of the local group.

For branches, additional meetings may be held at the request of its Chair or if called by two or more members of the management committee. For support groups, additional meetings may be requested by the Support Group Coordinator or if called by two or more Lead Volunteers.

Additional meetings may also be requested by the local staff team.

1.2A NOTICE OF LEAD VOLUNTEER MEETINGS

At least seven days' notice must be given to all Lead Volunteers of every Lead Volunteer meeting called.

Notice of each Lead Volunteer meeting must include the date, time and place of the meeting, as well as an agenda of items for discussion. Additional items may be placed on the agenda with the chair's agreement.

The local staff contact must be notified of each Lead Volunteer meeting no later than the notice period detailed above.

1.2B PROCEEDINGS OF LEAD VOLUNTEER MEETINGS

For branches the quorum for Lead Volunteer meetings is one quarter of the management committee, with a minimum of three members and two Lead Volunteers for **support groups**.

Members of the local staff team may attend and participate in all Lead Volunteer meetings in person. The Board may also send its representatives to any meeting.

Matters arising at Lead Volunteer meetings are decided by a majority vote (either by a show of hands or a ballot) of those present in person and entitled to vote.

Each Lead Volunteer is entitled to one vote. If the voting is tied the chair has a second or casting vote.

If consensus cannot be reached on a matter, support must be sought from your local staff contact.

Written minutes of each Lead Volunteer meeting must be taken including details of decisions taken and those present.

These minutes must be kept for the **lifetime** of the local group and should be made available to local group members upon request. However, care must be taken to keep personal information or circumstances discussed at these meetings about individuals confidential.

Draft minutes of the meeting must be sent to all Lead Volunteers and the local staff contact no later than 14 days after the meeting.

The draft minutes of the previous meeting must then be approved by the Lead Volunteers at their next meeting.

Lead volunteers may claim expenses to attend Lead Volunteer meetings in accordance with the *Volunteer Expenses Policy*.

1.2C ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING- AGM

(applicable to Branches only)

In each calendar year a **branch** must hold a general meeting known as the annual general meeting (AGM).

An AGM must be held no later than the last day in March at a time and place decided by the management committee.

The AGM agenda must comprise:

- consideration and approval of minutes of any previous AGM or EGM
- consideration and approval of the annual financial return for the Branch for the year ending on the previous 31 December (independently examined, where required) and the report of the Treasurer
- consideration and adoption of the report of the Chair or the committee for the year ending the previous 31 December
- elections of volunteers on the management committee
- appointment of an independent examiner for the accounts if required under section 1.2 of the *Treasurer's guide*
- any other business of which notice has been given.

The member of the local staff team attending the meeting stands the previous management committee down and manages the election process of the new management committee.

Election of the management committee is decided by a majority vote (either by a show of hands or a ballot) of those present in person and entitled to vote. Each branch member is entitled to one vote per vacancy. More information on elections is available in [1.1A](#).

After the election is conducted, the local staff member hands the meeting back to the newly elected management committee. Whilst there is no formal requirement for **support groups** to hold an AGM the above process can be used as a guide to [best practice](#).

1.2D EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING - EGM

(applicable to Branches only)

All general meetings other than AGM are EGMs.

Local groups meet to provide friendship and support to everyone affected by Parkinson's. General meetings can be an effective way to gauge opinion from people affected by Parkinson's in the local area.

An EGM may be called by:

- the management committee at a time and place they decide
- the local staff team if the proper conduct and management of the group requires it, or in accordance with the Volunteer Problem-Solving Policy, at a time and place that staff decide

1.2E NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETINGS (AGM & EGM)

At least 21 days' notice must be given to all group members, in writing, of every general meeting called.

And at least 35 days' notice must be given to all branch members, in writing, of every AGM if nominations are required to fill vacant positions on the management committee.

Notice of each general meeting must include the date, time and place of the meeting, as well as an agenda of items for discussion. Additional items may be placed on the agenda with the Chair's agreement.

The local staff contact must be notified of each general meeting no later than notice period detailed above.

1.2F PROCEEDINGS OF GENERAL MEETINGS (AGM & EGM)

The quorum for general meetings is a quarter of the branch's active membership. Members of the management committee must not be included in the quorum for voting in elections.

If there is a concern that a quorum may not be achieved, the branch must contact the local staff team ahead of the AGM for guidance.

Members of the local staff team may attend and participate in all general meetings in person. The Board may also send its representatives to any meeting.

Matters arising at general meetings are decided by a majority of vote (either by a show of hands or a ballot) of those present in person and entitled to vote.

Each branch member is entitled to one vote per agenda item if the vote is tied then the ballot is rerun. If the vote is tied again, the Chair has the casting vote in all matters other than elections (see earlier section on "Electing management committee members").

On all matters, other than election of management committee members, the Chair's ruling is final unless a motion that: *'the Chair's ruling be not upheld'* is put.

If this is the case, or there is no Chair in post, then the Vice-Chair, or another management committee member as agreed by them, should take up the chair for the meeting. One speech for the motion and one against is allowed. A simple majority of those present in person and entitled to vote is sufficient to carry the motion.

If consensus cannot be reached on a matter, support must be sought from the local staff contact.

Written minutes of each general branch meeting must be taken including details of decisions taken and those present. These minutes must be kept for the **lifetime** of the branch and should be made available to branch members upon request.

Draft minutes of general meetings must be sent to all management committee members and the local staff contact no later than 14 days after the meeting.

Minutes of the previous meeting must be approved by the branch at their next general meeting.

2 SUB-COMMITTEES

(applicable to Branches only)

Sub-committees may be established as and when needed to manage specific functions or activities delivered by the local group. For example, a sub-committee may be established to manage the spending plan of a legacy left to the branch.

A branch may establish a sub-committee as required and dissolve it when its purpose is served or if it considers that the interests of the branch require it.

Sub-committees are not independent from the branch and may only exercise powers as delegated to it by the management committee. Sub-committees must not have their own bank accounts.

A member of the management committee must sit on each sub-committee. The management committee appoints the Chair of the sub-committee. Other volunteers joining the sub-committee need not be a member of the branch but must only be recruited if

their skills and experience match the needs of the respective sub-committee.

Sub-Committees are subject to these Rules and all minutes of meetings must be reported in full to the next meeting of the management committee.

3 SUB-GROUPS

Sub-groups may be established as and when needed, often in parts of the country where the population is sparse and distances make it difficult to develop mutual support or for people to travel to the main group's meetings. For example, to increase their reach some local groups host one or more sub-groups across a wide geographical area, or host a sub-group to meet a specific need such as support to working age people.

A local group may establish a sub-group as required and dissolve it when its purpose is served or if it considers that the interests of the group require it.

Sub-groups are not independent from the local group and may only exercise powers as delegated to it by the Lead Volunteers. Sub-groups must not have their own bank accounts.

The sub-group lead is appointed by the Lead Volunteers of the local group, and must be a member of the local group. Other volunteers joining the sub-group need not be a member of the local group but must only be recruited if their skills and experience match the needs of the respective sub-group.

Sub-groups are subject to these Rules and all minutes of meetings must be reported in full to the next meeting of the Lead Volunteers.

4 MEMBERSHIP OF THE LOCAL GROUP

4.1. ELIGIBILITY

Membership of a local group is only open to members of Parkinson's UK.

Members of the local group are eligible to become Lead Volunteers and receive notice of and vote at general meetings of the group. Non-members may attend general meetings but are not eligible to vote.

The local group is responsible for maintaining an up to date list of its members.

Local group members are members of the charity who have opted to become members of the local group so they may be eligible to be elected as Lead Volunteers and take part in the group's AGM.

Access to the support and activities provided by the group is open to everyone affected by Parkinson's and is not determined by membership.

A local group may charge a minimal subscription fee to become a member of the group and to cover the cost of group meetings, however this is not obligatory.

Charity Law does not permit the payment of the local group (or charity) membership subscription fees from local group funds. The subscription fee (if any) for membership of the local group is determined by the group's Lead Volunteers.

5 LOCAL GROUP ACTIVITIES

All the charity's activities, including those of local groups, must pursue our vision to find a cure and improve life for everyone affected by Parkinson's. Activities outside of this vision (known as acting ultra vires), however well-intentioned, must not be undertaken as this may result in regulatory action from the Charity Commission and put our charitable status at risk.

5.1 ACCESS TO SUPPORT AND ACTIVITIES

The activities and support provided by local groups must be available and accessible to anyone affected by Parkinson's whether or not they are a member of the group or Parkinson's UK.

5.2 DELIVERING ACTIVITIES

Local groups are covered by **Parkinson's UK Insurance** and must not take out separate insurance cover for the activities they deliver. To ensure that all activities are adequately insured, local groups must inform their local staff contact when planning activities which may present risks that the organisation has not previously considered.

Local groups represent the charity and must show care for and act with integrity towards the people we connect with. All local groups must be aware of the charity's **Safeguarding** practice and procedures for paid staff and volunteers and contribute to the safeguarding of adults at risk.

Local groups providing an ongoing activity involving another party must put a **local contract** in place, even if there is no cost involved.

All local groups must also complete **health and safety risk assessments** for activities they run and must report incidents/near misses or dangerous occurrences, whether resulting in injury or not.

A local group may decide to charge for attendance at meetings or activities. This charge is determined by the group's Lead Volunteers and must not exceed what is reasonable to cover cost.

5.3 REPORTING ON ACTIVITIES

All local groups must complete an **Annual Review** to report on the activities they undertook in the previous year which must be submitted to the UK Office by the date notified.

5.4 TALKING ABOUT PARKINSON'S UK

All letterheads, publications and documents used by the local group must promote Parkinson's UK and be in accordance with the Parkinson's UK **brand**.

In particular the following statutory particulars must be printed on everything produced by the local group:

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 (258197) and in Scotland (SC0.7554).

In order to ensure that the charity is consistent and up to date with its key messages, all requests to local groups from journalists to engage in **media** activity (press, radio, television and social media) must be discussed with the press office at the UK Office.

6 LOCAL GROUP FINANCES

6.1 MANAGING FUNDS

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 pursuit of our vision and therefore must be spent accordingly.

To support the Board in fulfilling its responsibilities to account for the finance and activities of the charity, Lead Volunteers must undertake an annual **budgeting and planning** exercise, completed and submitted by the date notified.

The local staff contact is able to offer support and advice to complete this process.

A local group may hold up to one year's worth of local expenditure in reserves. Any surplus funds (funds over and above that budgeted for planned activities and 12 months' reserves) must be forwarded to the UK Office to support centrally funded activities in accordance with the **Financial Framework**.

All **legacies** must be processed by UK Office, including those left to local groups. It is unusual for executors to pay legacy funds directly to a local group, however if this does happen, the local group must forward the funds to UK Office.

Funds will be released to the local group once a spending plan has been submitted and approved by the Legacy Review Panel in accordance with the *Local Networks Legacy Policy*.

6.2 APPROPRIATE USE OF FUNDS

We have a duty to our donors to ensure that the funds that they give us are used appropriately and in pursuit of the charity's vision. For example **making donations to other charities** is not permissible. However this is distinct from groups making payments to other charities in return for goods or services, such as paying to use a hall to hold a meeting.

Groups are not responsible for funding services that should be provided on a statutory basis. Therefore making **donations to the NHS or Parkinson's nurses** directly is not appropriate.

Parkinson's UK is committed to funding the best quality research so all research projects funded go through our rigorous review process under the terms of our membership to the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) before any funds are awarded. Local groups wishing to support research should do this via the UK Office and may not **commission their own research or donate directly to a research team**.

Local groups must not have **investments** of any kind.

Groups must not purchase **buildings, vehicles, caravans, holiday homes** etc.

No shop must be run and no permanent **trading** activities undertaken by or on behalf of a local group of Parkinson's UK.

Local groups must not enter into any contract of **employment** on behalf of Parkinson's UK. Volunteers may claim expenses in accordance with the *Volunteer Expenses Policy* and regular payments outside of this will be viewed as a taxable benefit by HMRC.

7 PROBLEM SOLVING, DISSOLUTION AND DISPUTES ON INTERPRETATION

7.1 PROBLEM SOLVING

Occasionally problems arise within local groups. These can often be solved informally within the group or with support from the local staff team. If the problem is more serious, or a volunteer is in a role that's not right for them, these issues must be resolved in accordance with the *Volunteer Problem-Solving Policy*.

7.2 DISSOLUTION

A local group may be dissolved

- at the request of the local group sent to the local staff contact
- at the request of the Area Manager or Country Director if the group fails to observe the Rules or if the interest of Parkinson's UK require it

In either event, the Charity will issue a notice to the people accessing the services and activities of the local group notifying them of a meeting at which the dissolution of the local group will be considered and inviting the opportunity to make representations in person or in writing at this meeting.

Notice must be issued no less than 21 days before the meeting.

The final decision to dissolve a group will be made by the Head of Local Networks and communicated in writing to all people accessing the services and activities of the local group by at the last notified address.

On dissolution of the local group, all records, monies and other assets associated with the local group must be transferred to the UK Office.

7.3 DISPUTES ON INTERPRETATION

Any ambiguity or difference of opinion regarding the intention or meaning of these Rules will be referred to the relevant Director whose decision will be final and binding.

8 APPROVAL COMMENCEMENT AND AMENDMENT

These Rules were prescribed by the Board under Section 12 of the Articles of Association and approved on 7 October 2015 to take effect in January 2016. They replace all previous Rules.

Only the Board can alter or amend these Rules. Any problems in practice with the Rules will be reviewed and considered by a member of the local staff team, who may refer the matter to the relevant Director. The relevant Director may convene a working group to review the Rules and in so far as considered reasonably practical consult with local groups before recommending any amendments to the Board for approval.

Every hour, someone in the UK is told they have Parkinson's – a brain condition that turns lives upside down, leaving a future full of uncertainty.

Parkinson's UK is here to make sure people have whatever they need to take back control – from information to inspiration.

We want everyone to get the best health and social care. So we bring professionals together to drive improvements that enable people to live life to the full.

Ultimately, we want to end Parkinson's. That's why we inspire and support the international research community to develop life-changing treatments, faster. And we won't stop until we find a cure.

**Together we can bring forward the day
when no one fears Parkinson's.**

Parkinson's UK
215 Vauxhall Bridge Road
London SW1V 1EJ

Free confidential helpline **0808 800 0303**
(Monday to Friday 9am–7pm,
Saturday 10am–2pm). Interpreting available.
Text Relay **18001 0808 800 0303**
(for textphone users only)

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