



Volunteer Handbook

Brent Lodge Wildlife Hospital,
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VOLUNTEER INTRODUCTION

Thank you for considering to volunteer with us. We are so grateful for your support – without our volunteers we would not be able to continue our vital work. If you are passionate about wildlife conservation, love animals or simply have some free time and want to work with a group of friendly and like-minded people, we would love to have you join our hardworking volunteer team.

You do not need to be an expert or have any animal care skills to help: we will provide the training and support you need. We have volunteers of all ages, levels of experience and abilities. We are looking for individuals who share our love of wildlife and are able to give some time on a regular basis. While you are under no obligation to commit, it helps us if you are able to volunteer for regular hours on rotated days that suit you. This means our team can make the most effective use of your time and plan tasks around volunteers' hours more efficiently. This is especially important in the busy seasons at the hospital, when we can have hundreds of wildlife patients to care for every day.

This Volunteer Handbook will provide you with all the essential information you need to ensure you feel valued and supported – and to keep you safe – during your volunteering time with us. If there are any details you are unsure about, or if you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to ask a team member. We look forward to welcoming you to the team.





IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Always be quiet, calm and sensible when working in the hospital or on site, especially around the animals. Wild animals become stressed very easily.
- Wear practical, comfortable clothing and footwear – you may get dirty.
- Sign in when you arrive and sign out when you leave. If there is a fire we must be aware of how many people are on site.
- Please write your name on the rota to show your next volunteering date.
- If you are unable to help on your rotated day, please call or email to let us know, preferably with plenty of notice.
- We have a small staff room where we can provide tea, coffee and soft drinks during break periods. We have a fridge where you can store your own lunch or refreshments. A member of staff will show you the toilets.
- If you are pregnant, have any allergies or other support needs, please make the team leader aware so that any necessary arrangements can be put in place to support you.
- We pride ourselves on providing a safe and friendly environment for everyone, but sadly working with animals can bring distressing situations. If you are struggling with the nature of the work or feel overwhelmed please chat to a member of the team so we can address any concerns.

DAILY HOSPITAL TASKS

Animal care volunteers help both inside the hospital ward and outside in aviaries and enclosures. New volunteers will start off with level 1 tasks such as cleaning out patient accommodation and providing fresh bedding, food and water. Other tasks include keeping the hospital clean and tidy, washing and folding towels, and preparing newspapers for bedding. Experienced volunteers will be awarded level 2 responsibilities such as assisting with patient notes and weighing patients. Level 3 volunteers will also be able to assist with answering telephone enquiries, feeding baby animals and checking in new patients. There are also opportunities for all volunteers to help with outside grounds maintenance, projects and painting enclosures.

Here is a rough breakdown of the daily routine the team undertakes. Volunteers will be given instructions as to what food and cleaning products to use, including quantities and frequency. You will not be made to do anything you do not want to do or that you are uncomfortable with i.e. handling birds.

Please do not undertake a task if you have not been given permission or guidance on how to carry out the task.

- All animals must be cleaned and fed first thing. During the busy summer months, baby animals must be cleaned and fed frequently throughout the day (sometimes up to every 20 minutes). Some messy hedgehogs may need cleaning twice a day.
- All surfaces around the cages etc. must be wiped down with disinfectant spray and kept clean throughout the day.
- After all animals are clean and fed, the floor must be swept and mopped.
- All the holding cages must be maintained in a clean condition, with fresh paper in them. The holding cages must also be cleaned each time an animal has been placed in there, before another patient arrives.
- Any leftover food is to be dated and put away in the fridge.
- The washroom must be tidied and thoroughly cleaned during, and at the end of, the day. Bins must be emptied and refilled with fresh bin liners.
- The washing machine should be regularly emptied and refilled with any dirty towels or cloths. Wet washing is taken to the dryer to be dried.
- All clean towels should be folded and stacked neatly on the shelves.
- Newspapers are replenished, cut or shredded to be used the next day.
- At approximately 3pm, all of the cages in the hospital are checked to ensure all patients are comfortable and clean, with plenty of food and water to last overnight.
- Once all tasks are completed, items should then be set up ready for the next day.



YOUNG VOLUNTEERS & WORK EXPERIENCE

We are pleased to support young volunteers, and provide essential hands-on opportunities for students and other members of the community. Working with us can help nourish a passion for animals, and gives individuals interested in pursuing a future in wildlife care valuable practical experience and support. Work placement opportunities are open to students from schools, universities and colleges. Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme applicants are also accepted, in addition to staff from other wildlife charities or vet practices. The number of placements is limited, so it is important to book well in advance.

We are proud to offer opportunities to those of all abilities, and we are happy to support individuals who may have extra support requirements. If you are under 16 or considered vulnerable, you must ask your parent or guardian to sign the relevant section of the 'Volunteer Declaration Form' before you start volunteering with us. It is important that they understand the risks involved in working with wild animals. Some vulnerable volunteers and those who are under 14 must be accompanied by an adult.

All risk assessments, 'COSHH', insurance and safeguarding or Young Person policies are on display or available upon request.

To book a work experience placement or discuss a supported volunteer opportunity, please email Emma at enquiries@brentlodge.org or call **01243 641672**.



HEALTH & SAFETY

Handling wild animals and using equipment or chemicals can carry risks, so it is important that you follow these guidelines and consider the risks involved.

YOU MUST CHECK WITH YOUR GP THAT YOU ARE UP-TO-DATE WITH YOUR TETANUS VACCINATIONS!

- Please use the gloves, masks and any other PPE provided at all times. Wash your hands regularly, especially before and after handling each animal, cleaning cages or eating/drinking. This not only keeps you safe, but also helps to prevent cross-infection between the animals.
- Take care when handling any animal. These are wild animals who are not used to being handled. Some may bite, peck or scratch you. Keep your face away from them at all times (especially from claws/beaks).
- Volunteers are not permitted to handle certain species. These must be cared for by staff members only. These species will be identified during your induction by a member of the team. Volunteers **MUST NOT** handle bats unless trained and vaccinated against rabies.
- Please take note of all of the signs around site (i.e., 'Mange', 'I bite' and all other Health & Safety signs).
- In the event of a fire, shout 'Fire!' and report it to a member of staff if you can. Head towards the nearest fire exit by following the signs above the doors. The fire assembly point is located on the main driveway. A staff member will talk you through the fire procedure on your first day. **DO NOT** attempt to save any of the animals or re-enter the building to retrieve any personal belongings, including mobile phones, until you have been given permission to do so.
- There is no eating or drinking in the 'ward' area of the hospital. Food can only be consumed in the staff room or outside. Ensure you keep your bag, possessions and food in the staff room. Keep bags closed to prevent any 'escapee' animals getting inside them.
- There is no smoking in ANY of the buildings or near the gas cylinder. A member of staff will show you where the designated smoking area is, should you require it.
- A member of staff will show you where the first-aid box is located during your induction. If you have an accident you must report it to a member of staff. Any first aid needed will be administered, and the incident recorded in our accident book.
- The floors in the hospital can be extremely slippery, so please take extra care when the floors are being mopped. If any water is spilt on the floor, please ensure it is cleaned up immediately and notify a team member.
- Before using ANY machinery (i.e. the paper shredder), a member of staff must show you the correct way to use it. An 'Equipment Safety Declaration' form must also be filled in by both you and the staff member.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk assessments and Health & Safety documents are reviewed each year. Full and up-to-date Risk Assessments are displayed in the hospital.

RISK	LIMITING THE RISK
ANIMAL BITES OR SCRATCHES HIGH RISK	Volunteers are trained on how to handle animals in our care. Dangerous, stressed, or high-risk animals are handled by staff only. Volunteers under 16 or who are pregnant must NOT handle certain species. Pregnant volunteers must NOT treat patients on medication called IMAVEROL.
CONTRACTING DISEASES MEDIUM RISK	Volunteers are asked to wear PPE at all times and, when necessary, masks and aprons. Any high-risk animals are handled by staff only. Volunteers must wash hands regularly and before consuming food/drink.
REACTIONS TO CHEMICALS MEDIUM RISK	Some of the disinfectants we used can irritate skin. Volunteers are asked to wear gloves at all times when using ANY of the chemicals and to wash their hands after use. Volunteers under 16 or who are pregnant must NOT handle certain chemicals.
TRIPS, FALLS OR SLIPS LOW RISK	There can be trip hazards around the site and inside the hospital. We do our best to ensure items and equipment are put away after use to ensure walkways are kept clear. Our volunteers often use small steps or stepladders to reach some of our higher cages. These are inspected on a regular basis to check for any signs of damage, wear or tear, and we ensure the surfaces of all steps are anti-slip. The constant cleaning of cages causes a risk of slipping. Animals can often spill or tip their drinking water onto the floor, creating slip hazards. Water spillages are cleaned up immediately and team members are made aware of any hazards. Floors are towel dried after mopping, reducing the risk of slips.

Risk Assessment date April 2022

VOLUNTEER DECLARATION FORM

By signing below you agree that you have read the booklet, been inducted by a staff member and have read and understood the risk assessment. You also understand that any personal information you provide will be stored in accordance with our Data Protection Policy and not shared with any third party. Please visit our website for a copy of any of our data policies (www.brentlodge.org/data-policy). Thank you.

Full name: **Tel:**

Full address:
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Email:

Allergies/medical conditions:

Date of last Tetanus vaccination / / /

(This must be up to date. Please contact your GP if you are unsure.)

Signed by volunteer: **Age (If under 16):**

If you are considered vulnerable or under 16 a parent or guardian must sign.

Signed by parent/guardian: **Print name:**

(Parent/guardian must read the risk assessment before signing.)

EMERGENCY CONTACTS (Please ensure these numbers are up to date.)

Name of contact: **Tel:**

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VOLUNTEER AVAILABILITY (Please mark **X** below on the days and times you would like to volunteer regularly. Mark **O** for days you could be available)

	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
Morning							
Afternoon							

☐ Please tick if you are happy for us to contact you at **short notice** if we are low on volunteers on the days indicated above. You are under no obligation.

OFFICE USE (This section must be completed by a member of staff.)

Induction, health and safety date completed / /

Signed by staff member: **Print name:**