

# **Volunteer Visitor Handbook 2025**

Thank you so much for giving up your time to become a Volunteer Visitor for QNIS, providing friendship and connection to retired Queen’s Nurses (rQNs).

Your support of the charity in this way is hugely appreciated and makes an enormous difference to those with whom you connect.

In addition to the wellbeing of those we visit, we are also committed to your wellbeing as a volunteer and this handbook is designed to give you the information you need to help you in your role as a Volunteer Visitor.



Sarah Doyle  
Chief Executive and Nurse Director



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## 1. The role of a Volunteer rQN Visitor

The role of a Volunteer Visitor is to offer friendship and connection with retired Queen’s Nurses (rQN) specifically those who trained before 1969.

Contact is either in person in the rQN’s home or care home or by telephone. Where possible, Volunteer Visitors will cover areas local to their own home visiting those rQNs who have expressed an interest in having such a connection. A Volunteer Visitor may also contact those further afield by telephone where there is no local visitor.

### The remit of the volunteer role is:

- To offer companionship and continued connection with QNIS
- To make contact 2-3 times a year (not necessarily face to face) with those who have requested contact and whose details have been provided
- To record and report such connections back to QNIS, enabling robust records to be maintained
- To be a link for QNIS through supporting occasional regional and local events
- To inform the Staying in Touch Co-ordinators of the death of an rQN and, if appropriate, to assist in the writing of obituaries for the QNIS Annual Review
- To highlight need and enable specific hardship grants for individuals to be made via the Staying in Touch Co-ordinators. Alternatively, to signpost to other forms of support
- To participate in regular meetings with the Staying in Touch Co-ordinators.

To achieve the best outcomes from such connections we ask that you:

- Visit the rQN at a mutually convenient time
- Offer occasional telephone contact between face to face visits.

## 2. Support for Volunteer Visitors

QNIS is committed to supporting you in your volunteer role. The first point of contact for all queries is the Staying in Touch Co-ordinators.

A handbook is available and is provided to all visitors. This document contains the key information that you will require to fulfil your volunteer role and refers to QNIS policies and procedures that you must adhere to.

We will provide you with a list of others who also carry out this role.

In some instances, e.g. large remote geographic area and/or where there are many rQNs, we will endeavour to “buddy up” new volunteers with a more experienced volunteer visitor. Regular (3-4 times a year) online volunteer meetings are held with the Staying in Touch Co-ordinators and a once-a-year face to face meeting prior to the Annual Gathering.

The Staying in Touch Co-ordinators are readily available by telephone or email.

## 3. The essentials

### 3.1 Expenses

During your volunteering duties, you may incur out of pocket expenses.

We will reimburse all reasonable out of pocket expenses namely:

- Travel costs, to the home of the person being visited i.e. mileage or public transport (preferred method)
- A small gift may be appropriate, if the individual you are visiting has been unwell or is in hospital. QNIS will always acknowledge a significant birthday by sending cards and flowers from the staff at Castle Terrace
- There may be occasions when you are required to use a taxi, and/or an overnight stay with associated costs.

Taxi and overnight costs must be agreed with the Staying in Touch Co-ordinators in advance.

Expense forms must be completed and submitted within 12 weeks of the volunteer activity. Payment is usually made directly into your bank account by BACS.

### 3.2 Insurance

QNIS provides Employers Liability and Public Liability insurance cover for all volunteers while volunteering with us.

### 3.3 Adult and child protection

QNIS is committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of the rQNs and its visitors. All Volunteer Visitors are required to be a member of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme and only once this application is complete and approved will they be permitted to undertake the visitor’s role on behalf of QNIS.

## 4. Benefits for Volunteer Visitors

Through being engaged with QNIS you will:

- Receive regular updates from QNIS thus keeping you in touch with the Institute and the wider community of nursing
- Be welcome to attend the Annual Gathering of the rQNs
- Be eligible to participate in the annual rQN holiday at a reduced rate.

### 4.1 Accidents and incidents

Volunteers must report to the Staying in Touch Co-ordinators any accidents or incidents occurring during a visit that affect either themselves or the rQN. See Appendix 2.

### 4.2 Safeguarding

QNIS expects that all visitors will abide by the Safeguarding Policy. You may be concerned that someone is at risk of harm because of something you have seen, heard, or information

you have been told by others while visiting or telephoning an rQN. It may be that someone has confidentially disclosed to you things that have happened or are happening to them. Confidentiality can never be guaranteed, however, obtaining consent before sharing information is preferable, though not always essential.

You must not keep these concerns to yourself. You must inform either the Staying in Touch Co-ordinators or the QNIS Safeguarding lead (Dr Sarah Doyle, Chief Executive and Nurse Director) as soon as possible.

In line with the Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020 all Volunteer Visitors must have membership of the PVG (Protection of Vulnerable Groups) scheme. The Staying in Touch Co-ordinators will help you apply for membership and support you through the process.

#### **4.3 Respecting individuals**

QNIS is committed to creating a positive and inclusive environment to maximise the potential of all staff and volunteers, providing equal opportunities in all aspects of contributing to the organisation. We will not tolerate discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment, bullying or intimidation. We will always strive to create an open and honest culture where the differences of others are respected and valued.

Every employee, member of Council, or volunteer of QNIS has a responsibility to treat all colleagues with dignity and respect, regardless of any personal characteristic. Under legislation there are certain characteristics protected from harassment. QNIS acknowledges these and extends this protection to all within QNIS and who undertake activities on behalf of the organisation.

#### **4.4 Expenses**

During your volunteering duties, you may incur out of pocket expenses. We cover travel costs, based on the shortest journey from your house to the person you are visiting. All volunteers' expense claims must be completed, signed and submitted with receipts to the Staying in Touch Co-ordinator within 3 months of the expense. If possible, public transport is the preferred method of travel. See Appendix 3.

If using your own vehicle, you should record your mileage using postcodes as a guide. There may be occasions when you are required to use a taxi, and/or stay overnight where additional costs will be incurred. These costs must be agreed with the Staying in Touch Co-ordinators in advance. Payment is made directly into your nominated bank account by BACS.

See Appendix 3 for the reporting and expenses claim form. Please note, this may be updated from time to time and we will notify visitors in advance.

In addition, there may be times when a small gift will be appropriate e.g. if the individual you are visiting has been bereaved, unwell or is in hospital. The gift should be no more than £10. In all other circumstances please contact the Staying in Touch Co-ordinators. QNIS will acknowledge significant birthdays (80, 90, 100) by sending cards and flowers from the staff at Castle Terrace.

Volunteers using their home or mobile telephones to make essential calls on behalf of the organisation will be reimbursed on production of the itemised bill clearly showing the cost of the calls, which should be highlighted. Home phone line rental or broadband costs will not be reimbursed.

Please note, expense claims must be supported by itemised receipts, and only for items previously cleared with the Staying in Touch Co-ordinators or mentioned as standard in the expenses policy.

#### **4.5 Insurance**

QNIS provides Employer and Public Liability insurance cover for all volunteers during volunteering activity with us.

#### **4.6 Photographs and multimedia**

If you take a photograph of the person you are visiting, or are in a photograph with them, that is shared for publication with QNIS, we ask that consent (written or verbal) is given before the photograph is taken.

#### **4.7 Smoking policy**

QNIS has a no smoking policy. Volunteers are not permitted to smoke when visiting rQNs.

#### **4.8 Offers of gifts**

A personal gift should only be accepted on a 'one-off basis' and must not exceed £10 in value. Frequent offers of such gifts must not be accepted. If the giver insists on giving any gift, s/he should be advised that you are unable to personally accept such gifts and that the gift would have to be given for the benefit of QNIS.

Cash should not be accepted however the rQN, members of their family or friends should be advised that if they wish they can donate to QNIS. Any donations offered to the charity will be acknowledged with a letter of thanks from the Chief Executive/Nurse Director. In all cases, volunteers must inform the Staying in Touch Co-ordinator of any such offers and gifts.

#### **4.9 Personal safety and ID cards**

QNIS takes the health, safety and welfare of its staff and volunteers seriously. At QNIS there are several policies that apply to ensure safe working conditions and aid in the reduction of risk to staff and volunteers. These can be obtained from the Staying in Touch Co-ordinators.

QNIS recognises that there is an element of lone working in the role, so it is important to follow good practice in systematically assessing risk, reducing that risk and seeking appropriate support.

Measures to reduce risk include the following:

- All volunteers must have a mobile number with which they can be contacted and via which they can make calls in the event of an emergency
- All volunteers must wear their QNIS ID badge when undertaking any QNIS associated activity
- Visits should, where possible, take place during daylight
- Any volunteer who is uncertain about any issue is advised to reschedule their visit for another time
- If a Volunteer Visitor feels unsafe when planning a particular visit, a phone call should be made rather than visiting in-person
- The Volunteer Visitor should consider any potential hazards at the place they will visit, e.g. confusional state of an elderly person (rQN or other), an aggressive dog, hazardous paths, isolated lifts. The volunteer may wish to check in with the Staying in Touch Co-ordinators for advice



- Volunteers should use a common sense approach to their visiting in terms of reporting their safe arrival at their intended destination and letting that person know when they are leaving, so that a return time can be anticipated. If no-one is available then the Staying in Touch Co-ordinators or the office team at QNIS can be asked to do this
- The Volunteer Visitor should discuss in advance what action should be taken if they do not return/call within an agreed margin from the expected time.

If you are using your car to undertake visits then before you set off on a visit you should consider the following points that QNIS has within its driving policy:

- Are you fit to drive?
- Do you feel well/unwell?
- Might you be affected by medication and or alcohol?
- Is your vehicle roadworthy?
- If you are driving some distance, are weather conditions suitable?
- Do you have a mobile phone? Is it charged? Remember that it is not legal to use a handheld phone whilst driving and that to ensure your safety and that of others you must park first before making a call.

Specific aspects to take account of when driving to fulfil your volunteer role.

- You must be insured to drive
- You must notify your insurance company that you are using your car for this purpose. Please note: some insurance companies consider this to be “business use” and will want you to have business insurance
- QNIS requires evidence that you have appropriate insurance, and the Staying in Touch Co-ordinators will keep copies of your documents on file at QNIS for the duration of the time that you volunteer
- You must be legally entitled to drive the vehicle you use for visiting purposes and the vehicle must be taxed and road legal
- We also remind you, that under the Road Traffic Act that you are responsible for your own actions whilst driving, this includes the correct and appropriate use of seat belts
- You must notify us of any incident/accident that occurs whilst driving while fulfilling your volunteer duties.

#### 4.10 Reporting and recording

There are a few things that QNIS requires that you report. You are required to complete a visit/connection form following each visit/telephone connection. Completion of these forms enables QNIS to have accurate and up to date records on the rQN’s wellbeing. QNIS requires you to submit these forms to the Staying in Touch Co-ordinators at Castle Terrace within three months of the contact. Other forms that may require completion will be any accident/incident form (see Appendix 2), your submission for expenses (sec 4.4) and any application for a rQN hardship grant (sec 7.1).

### 5. Data protection and privacy

QNIS is committed to protecting the privacy of its volunteers and rQNs who receive support from us. Any information held by QNIS or by staff and volunteers is subject to the 2018 General Data Protection Regulation.

The aim of this legislation is that the information held is:

- Fairly and lawfully processed
- Processed for limited purposes
- Accurate, adequate relevant and not excessive
- Not kept for longer than necessary
- Processed in line with the individuals’ rights
- Stored securely, and that
- Measures are taken to prevent unauthorised or unlawful processing or accidental loss, destruction of, or damage to, personal information.

### Visitor responsibility

To comply with this legislation all our visitors have responsibility to ensure that:

- Information and records relating to a visit or telephone connection are stored securely and are only accessible to authorised staff and other QNIS Volunteer Visitors
- Personal notes and records of visits are only kept for as long as required and are disposed of securely i.e. not put directly in domestic waste, all information should be shredded
- Any electronic records should only be held for the duration of time that the rQN is receiving visits
- If you are storing rQN data at home on an electronic device this information should be password protected, and steps taken to ensure no unauthorised person can access it
- Any information pertaining to a visit and no longer required after the visit should be securely disposed of, this might include addresses and telephone numbers
- Information that relates to an rQN such as an address, or a telephone number must not be shared, and any queries should be directed to the Staying in Touch Co-ordinators or a member of QNIS staff at Castle Terrace
- To ensure rQN confidentiality you should not become involved in conversation regarding visits except with appropriate others i.e. another visitor or QNIS staff, unless this is specifically required. See section 4.2.

If you are unsure of anything, please contact the Staying in Touch Co-ordinators.

### 6. Health and Safety

QNIS is committed to looking after the health, safety and wellbeing of everyone who works or volunteers with us, whether this is on our premises or when working in your own homes or in other locations. Any activities carried out on a voluntary basis are covered by the same health and safety legislative requirements as those carried out by our staff. It is therefore important that you understand and accept your personal responsibility towards promoting and maintaining health and safety standards to provide a safe working environment for all.

As a volunteer it is important that:

- You carry out your tasks in such a way as to not risk your own health and safety or that of rQNs
- You follow our health and safety policy and procedures and, where appropriate, lone worker policies and procedures.

## 7. Support for Retired Queen's Nurses who may be in need

Your visitor role is primarily about friendship and connection, and we do not encourage you to give specific advice.

### 7.1 QNIS Hardship grant

Where you feel that the rQN is in need and might benefit from a small monetary welfare/hardship grant you can support them to apply for a grant from QNIS. See Appendix 4.

Please note

- There is no means testing
- All rQNs living in Scotland who need financial support are eligible
- You can assist by supporting the rQN in the completion of the application and sending it to QNIS.

The final decision on whether to grant the award is made by the Staying in Touch Co-ordinators and the Chief Executive and Nurse Director.

Although the list of such assistance is not exhaustive, as there may be other specific needs, the following are the most commonly considered and supported grant applications for those in financial hardship:

- Telephone costs
- One-off gardening assistance
- Replacement of essential household appliances e.g. fridge, freezer
- Adaptive equipment/furniture
- Contribution to removal costs
- Holiday subsidy.

### 7.2 Other sources of funding for rQNs in need

As a visitor you can direct the rQN to other sources of information about grant funding and benefits.

Information can be found on the following websites:

- Age UK: <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/money-legal/benefits-entitlements/> (advice about statutory benefits available)
- The Nurses Memorial to King Edward VII in Scotland: <http://www.nursesmemorial.org.uk/> (regular grants and one-off grants)
- The Benevolent Fund for Nurses in Scotland: <http://www.bfns.org.uk/our-services/> (regular grants and one-off grants).

### 7.3 Support organisations for rQNs

Sometimes conversation will naturally drift to issues and challenges which older adults face and we recommend that specific queries are passed on to **Silver Line Scotland** which is operated by Age Scotland.

Lines are open from 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday. Calls to 0800 4 70 80 90 are FREE from a

Scottish landline. Calls will go through to Age Scotland's Information and Advice team. Their paid staff and volunteers specialise in answering enquiries from older people, their carers and families. Whether a question is about community care, tax, pensions, benefits or any other issue, they will find an answer. They are also there for those callers who are just looking for a chat.

Freephone: 0800 4 70 80 90

Online: <http://www.thesilverline.org.uk/silver-line-scotland/>

Textphone: 0845 226 5851 (Monday to Friday, 8am-8pm)

Free or local rate call from Mobile: 0300 4 70 80 90.

During the night (8pm to 8am) and at weekends, calls made within Scotland will be answered at The Silver Line's UK Headquarters. This means there is someone at the end of the line, ready to talk, 24 hours a day. And if at the end of the call it turns out that some information and advice from Age Scotland would also be useful, The Silver Line will pass this on, and the Information and Advice team will get in touch as soon as they can.

Another helpful organisation is **Hourglass** (previously Action on Elder Abuse)

The helpline 080 8808 8141. Hourglass is a specialist organisation that focuses exclusively on the issue of elder abuse. If you do call this number, it will not appear on your telephone bill

Hourglass Scotland  
PO Box 29244,  
Dunfermline,  
KY12 2EG

Website: [wearehourglass.scot](http://wearehourglass.scot)

Email: [scotland@wearehourglass.org](mailto:scotland@wearehourglass.org)

## 8. Contacting QNIS staff

It is likely that most of your day-to-day connection will be with the Staying in Touch Co-ordinators. They can be contacted by email at: [stayingintouch@qnis.org.uk](mailto:stayingintouch@qnis.org.uk).

Carol Crowther 0772 9045 119, or [carol.crowther@qnis.org.uk](mailto:carol.crowther@qnis.org.uk)

Alison Jarvis 0783 4571 020, or [alison.jarvis@qnis.org.uk](mailto:alison.jarvis@qnis.org.uk).

In relation to any safeguarding issues, contact: Dr Sarah Doyle at Castle Terrace or by email at [Sarah.Doyle@qnis.org.uk](mailto:Sarah.Doyle@qnis.org.uk).

Appendix 1: Volunteer agreement

Name of Volunteer Visitor:

Date:

This agreement should be read alongside the Volunteer Visitor’s Handbook which provides advice and guidance for those undertaking the role.

In line with the Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020, all Volunteer Visitors must have membership of the PVG (Protection of Vulnerable Groups) scheme. The Staying in Touch Co-ordinators will help you apply for membership and support you through the process.

**Please note that this is a voluntary agreement only and does not constitute a contract of employment.**

The following has been agreed between the Queen’s Nursing Institute Scotland (QNIS) and the volunteer named above. The volunteer agrees to carry out the role to the best of their ability and within the aims and values of the Queen’s Nursing Institute Scotland.

The role of the Volunteer Visitor is to offer friendship and connection with the wider nursing family and the QNIS. Where possible, Volunteer Visitors cover a local area and will visit retired Queen’s Nurses who have expressed interest in having contact.

The role of the Volunteer Visitor is:

- To offer companionship to retired Queen’s Nurses who have requested a visit or a phone call
- To offer at least an annual visit\* to these retired Queen’s Nurses whose details are passed on by the QNIS office
- To arrange a mutually suitable time for the visit by telephone and/or letter
- To offer occasional telephone contact
- To support individuals in need in applying for specific grants from QNIS or other funders
- To report back to the office once all visits have taken place, so that QNIS has a record of all visits undertaken
- To ensure that visits are undertaken safely and in accordance with QNIS policies, in particular Lone Worker policy, the safeguarding guidance in the Volunteer Visitor Handbook and the QNIS Driving policy
- To attend the Retired Queen’s Nurse Visitors Advisory Group meetings, which are held regularly throughout the year. These are usually online with one face to face meeting prior to the Annual Gathering
- To be a regional link for the Queen’s Nursing Institute Scotland supporting local gatherings and occasional national events
- To inform the Staying in Touch Co-ordinators of deaths and, where possible, support the writing of obituaries.

Confidentiality

The Volunteer Visitor agrees to maintain the confidentiality of all information acquired during their time with the Queen’s Nursing Institute Scotland, whilst recognising their responsibilities around vulnerable adults concerns. The Volunteer Visitor agrees not to disclose information to any person(s) without prior consent from the Queen’s Nursing Institute Scotland.

No Remuneration

The relationship is based on trust and does not involve the obligations associated with employment. No payment, other than the reimbursement of agreed expenses is made by the Queen’s Nursing Institute Scotland to those who give their time as a volunteer. The Volunteer Visitor acknowledges and agrees that providing support to the Queen’s Nursing Institute Scotland will be on a voluntary basis and they shall not be entitled to any compensation, benefits, or remuneration.

Responsibilities of the Queen’s Nursing Institute Scotland

QNIS agrees to fully support you. The first contact point for all queries is the Staying in Touch Co-ordinators on 0131 229 2333 or stayingintouch@qnis.org.uk.

I agree with the conditions and agree to volunteer within the guidelines set out above and detailed within the handbook.

Signed..... (Volunteer Visitor) Date.....

Signed..... (On behalf of QNIS) Date.....

Appendix 2: Volunteer incident reporting form

Date of incident

Time of incident

Particulars of Person Reporting Incident

Full Name

Role

Home Address and Telephone number

Nature of incident (including place/cause/circumstances)

What did you do immediately after the incident?

Signature(s) of person reporting incident

Actions taken (to be completed by Business Support Manager)

Signature

Date

Appendix 3: Volunteer reporting and expenses claim form

(to be completed & returned within four weeks of contact)

Visitor name	
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Name of person contacted				
Date of contact				
Contacted by	Phone		In person visit	
If visit in person:	Where was visit?		Was there anyone else present?	
Please note any loneliness, change from previous contact etc				
Have you signposted to any other form of support? If so, what?				
Is a hardship grant required? If so, please complete application				

Name of person contacted				
Date of contact				
Contacted by	Phone		In person visit	
If visit in person:	Where was visit?		Was there anyone else present?	
Please note any loneliness, change from previous contact etc				
Have you signposted to any other form of support? If so, what?				
Is a hardship grant required? If so, please complete application				



Your out of pocket expenses\*:

1. Phone call	Date	Start time	Finish time	Total time
2. Phone call	Date	Start time	Finish time	Total time
1. Mileage: please include post-codes for start & end destinations	Date	From	To	Total mileage
2. Mileage: please include post-codes for start & end destinations	Date	From	To	Total mileage
Other expense (including public transport costs)	Date	For what?	From where?	Amount
	Date			
	Date			

\*Please enclose receipts where possible.

Completed forms should either be:

Emailed to [stayingintouch@qnis.org.uk](mailto:stayingintouch@qnis.org.uk)

Or posted to  
31 Castle Terrace  
Edinburgh  
EH1 2EL

Please inform Staying in Touch co-ordinators if your bank details have been altered since your last claim.

Sent to BSM for reimbursement		Date	
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Appendix 4: Hardship grant request form

Date:		QNIS Ref No (if known):		D.O.B	
Title:	First Name:		Surname:		Known as:
Address					
Town				Postcode	
Comments in support of request (please continue on reverse if needed)					

Requested grant amount £\_\_\_\_\_

Payment options:

BACS		Cheque	
Sort Code:	- -	Account Number:	

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print name \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please return completed application to:  
Staying in Touch Co-ordinators  
31 Castle Terrace  
Edinburgh  
EH1 2EL

0131 229 2333  
[www.qnis.org.uk](http://www.qnis.org.uk)





The Queen's Nursing Institute Scotland  
31 Castle Terrace  
Edinburgh, EH1 1EL

Visit our website: [qnis.org.uk](https://qnis.org.uk)

A Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC005751

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