

Recognition and Reward Policy for Public Contributors

Purpose of this policy

The Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) recognises the importance of involving people with lived experience, their families, carers and communities in our work and we want to be able to support people to do this. Public contributors help shape our work by working in partnership with us and participating in our activities.

We provide compensation to our public contributors. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that you are properly reimbursed for your contribution and expenses while supporting our activities. We also want to ensure that these expenses are treated appropriately for tax purposes. We will work with you to overcome barriers to your involvement and will take into consideration meeting reasonable expenses to help you to do so.

This policy covers compensation for time spent supporting our activities such as meetings, reviewing draft publications and other expenses including travel, meals, accommodation, personal assistance/support workers and mobile phone calls.

Contact our Director of People, Finance and Governance, Satvinder Reyatt, if you have any questions about this policy: satvinder.reyatt@rcot.co.uk.

Appreciation and recognition

We recognise the importance of the experience and skills that public contributors bring to help us improve our work and we will express our gratitude for your time and effort. We will make sure that you feel welcome, valued, and part of the group/activity you are involved in. We will also recognise your skills and contributions in such ways as: publishing your name on reports and papers, attendance at celebration events, and providing certificates of achievement.

General procedure

We will compensate you for your time and refund reasonable expenses for activities undertaken on our behalf or with us. We will advise you of the nature of the task, the type of compensation involved, and send you an expense claim form. Angie Thompson, RCOT Research and Development Officer, will oversee this process and any queries should be raised with this person first.

Please make every effort possible to keep your expenses to a minimum. If you are not sure whether your expenses will be covered, please contact Angie Thompson: angie.thompson@rcot.co.uk.

You will need to fill out the 'Expense Claim Form for Public Contributors' to make a claim and list details of your expenses. The form will be sent to you by email or post (please let us know your preference).

If you require your support worker or personal assistant to support your involvement in an activity, please let us know. They will be compensated at the same rate as you and they must submit their own claim form.

If you are a carer and need to organise a replacement carer or need to pay childcare costs to support your involvement in an activity, we will cover your 'usual' costs up to £15/hour. If the cost is higher, compensation must be agreed with Angie Thompson and will be paid separately when the invoice has been received.

Where possible receipts must be submitted with the form, either by email or post. We understand that this isn't always possible, for example with Oyster cards. Receipts can be photocopied, photographed or scanned. Any other expenses need to be agreed with us in advance, otherwise they might not be covered. The proof of agreement, such as an email, should be attached with the expense form.

Once completed, please return the form and any receipts to Angie Thompson:
angie.thompson@rcot.co.uk.

Expenses must be submitted within three months of the date of the meeting/activity, where possible. Expenses submitted after this time may not be paid.

Payment

We will pay directly into your bank account using a bank transfer (BACS). You will need to provide the details of your bank account on a separate form which we will send to you by email or post (please let us know which you'd prefer).

We will store your bank details securely, in line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), and they will only be used for the project or activity you are involved with.

Once the claim form is submitted, we aim to make payment within four weeks.

Compensation for time

Normally, we offer compensation to our public contributors based on guidance from the [National Institute for Research \(NIHR\) Centre for Engagement and Dissemination](#) at the following rates:

| | Time spent | Type of activity - example |
|-------------|--|--|
| £50 | Approximately two hours of activity. | Face to face or online meeting with related papers to read or review a few short documents. |
| £75 | Approximately half a day of activity. | Participating in a meeting or panel, participating in a focus group, or delivering training, writing. |
| £150 | All day meetings/activities. | Taking part in a committee or panel meeting as an active member. Other activities such as writing or delivering training. |
| £300 | All-day meetings that require substantial preparation. | Chairing or co-chairing a meeting. Carrying out other discretionary work, which requires additional responsibilities. |

The amount of compensation offered will be reviewed regularly following any changes to NIHR recommended rates.

Tax and National Insurance

Any payment we make is compensation for your time and reasonable expenses in relation to your role as a public contributor with us. These payments don't provide any employment rights to you. It is our understanding that as an organisation we can make this payment to you in full without deducting tax or national insurance.

If the payment made exceeds reasonable expenses, then the excess may be chargeable for tax as Miscellaneous Income. You are personally responsible for any income tax or National Insurance contribution liability, and you will need to notify the HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) under Self-Assessment.

Public contributors who receive state benefits

If you are receiving state benefits, we need to let you know that any compensation and expenses you receive from us may affect your benefit claim.

Benefit conditions are complex, and limits on payments that can be received without affecting benefits vary widely. We are not able to offer expert advice about this issue.

Please contact the [Citizens Advice Service](#) to find out more about how volunteering can affect your benefits.

Travel

If travel is required, the main part of the journey should be carried out on public transport with standard class tickets, where possible. Transport to and from stations can be made by car or taxi where public transport is limited or not convenient.

We can arrange and pay for your travel and will contact you about what you need.

If you make the arrangements yourself, we will only refund standard class tickets for public transport, unless there is an access requirement that means first class travel is required or where it is cheaper than standard class.

Travel should be booked as far in advance as possible to get the best value.

Taxis - you can claim for a taxi fare if:

- you have difficulty using public transport.
- where public transport is limited or not convenient.
- you are carrying bulky papers or equipment.
- the journey time is much shorter than using public transport.

A receipt of the journey will be required for expense claims. The receipt must detail the date, place of departure and destination of the taxi journey.

Cars - it may be easier and cost-effective to use a car if:

- you have difficulty using public transport
- where public transport is limited or not convenient
- using your car is cheaper, including parking costs, than using public transport
- the journey time is much shorter than using public transport
- you are carrying bulky papers or equipment.

To claim for mileage when using your own car, you must give the start and finish points of the journey, and the distance of the journey undertaken. We will use the current mileage allowance rate shown below. Toll charges and car parking costs can be included.

Using your own car means that you must have:

- a full UK driving licence
- a car that is roadworthy and fully registered
- comprehensive motor insurance.

We accept no responsibility for any accident, loss, damage, or claim from any journey that you make in your car and won't pay for the cost of any insurance policy on your own car or any fines.

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Mileage rates per mile |
| Current rate October 2023 | 45p per mile |

Meals

If your work with us takes you away from home, a claim for meals can be made at the rates provided below. Receipts must be provided.

- Breakfast – a claim can be made if you leave home before 8am.
- Lunch – a claim can be made if it is an all-day activity and lunch isn't provided as part of the activity/meeting.
- Dinner – a claim can be made if you are staying away from home overnight or if you return home after 7pm.

| | Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner |
|----------------------------|------------------|---|---------------|
| Current rates October 2023 | £9.00 | £7.00 (or £12 if restricted options at venue) | £22.50 |

Accommodation

We can arrange and pay for your accommodation, if necessary, in advance so that you are not out of pocket. If you need to book accommodation yourself, we will need to approve the cost before you make a booking.

We recognise that you might have access needs that require accommodation with appropriate facilities or will need to travel with a personal assistant or carer and that this may mean additional costs.

If a booking is no longer needed, it is your responsibility to ensure that any reservations are cancelled within the cancellation period.

A claim for telephone calls home can be made. The claim can be for up to 15 minutes for each night spent away.

If you stay with family/friends instead of in paid accommodation, you can claim compensation for your hosts up to a maximum of £25 per visit. A receipt is not required, but you must give the location of the accommodation on your claim form.

Mobile phone calls

We will refund calls made from a personal mobile phone related to the meeting or activity you are supporting, if this is an additional cost over and above your usual personal contract limit. A copy of your bill is required to confirm this.

Overseas travel

If you need to travel overseas to contribute to an activity, we will discuss and agree how we can best support your needs.

Expenses that you will not be reimbursed for:

- the cost of any travel undertaken for personal reasons.
- the cost of any travel for your partner or spouse, unless they are also your carer/personal assistant and are providing support to enable you to be involved in the activity. Carers/personal assistants that support you can submit their own expense claim form (where approved) to us.
- any fines or penalties while supporting activities. This includes penalties for not paying for a rail ticket in advance of boarding the train, and penalties or fines associated with motoring offences, such as speeding, parking fines, clamping or vehicle recovery charges.

Payment might not be made if you have not provided supporting documents/receipts. If any expenses claimed are believed to be incorrect or false, you may be asked for more details. If a payment has been made to you and then it is found the claim was false or incorrect, we will ask for repayment of the amount. Payments will be held on future claims until it is repaid. If required, we may report the matter to the police for investigation and prosecution.

Finally...

We really appreciate the expertise public contributors, bring to our work and want to make sure that you are compensated appropriately for your time. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

