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**RTPI  
Volunteering**



# **RTPI Volunteer Handbook**

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**RTPI**  
Royal Town Planning Institute



# Welcome to the team!

Thank you for volunteering with the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI). We are delighted that you have chosen to volunteer with us.

We recognise the importance of our volunteers in helping the RTPI achieve its vision to advance the science and art of planning for the benefit of the public. Volunteering is a wonderful opportunity to share with you the work that we do. In return for your time and skills, we hope that you benefit from volunteering with us whether this is through fulfilling an interest, feeling that you have made a difference, or by expanding your horizons through gaining knowledge, skills or making new contacts.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide practical guidance and information to help you with your volunteering activities. Should you need anything else please get in touch with your Key Contact detailed in your Role Description.

We are committed to providing support and ensuring that all of our volunteers are equipped with the necessary tools to enable them to perform their role and contribute to achieving our important mission.

You may have just started volunteering or you may have been with us for some time. Either way we hope you will find your volunteering journey with us an enjoyable and rewarding one.

On behalf of all of us at the Royal Town Planning Institute, we would like to thank you for giving your time to us.

Best wishes,

**Victoria Hills MRTPI FICE**  
**Chief Executive**

**Graham Stallwood FRTPI**  
**Chair, Board of Trustees**



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# 1. The essentials

## 1.1 The volunteer agreement

This handbook provides practical guidance and information to help you with the volunteering activities that you are involved with. It also outlines some of the support that you can expect from the RTPI and the behaviours that are expected of every volunteer.

By volunteering for the RTPI you are agreeing to comply with the principles contained within this handbook. If you have any queries or concerns please get in touch with the Key Contact detailed in your Role Description.

## 1.2 About the RTPI

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is

- a charity registered in England and Scotland, whose purpose is to advance the science and art of planning (including town and country and spatial planning) for the benefit of the public. The UK's leading body for spatial, sustainable and inclusive planning.
- a membership organisation and a Chartered Institute, which is responsible for maintaining professional standards and accrediting world class planning courses nationally and internationally. It is the largest of the European and Commonwealth Institutes for the planning profession with 24,000 members in 80 countries worldwide.
- a learned society, we are a key influencer with national governments and stakeholders and fund a range of research to inform the profession and campaign for better planning.

We promote planning and provide support to our members through organised groups of volunteers whose involvement is supported by RTPI staff.

In England; a Regional Coordinator works with each of the Regions and all regional activities are overseen by the Head of English Regions.

In the Nations, our Director of Scotland and Ireland and our Director of Wales and Northern Ireland oversee the activities of volunteer groups, in their respective areas.

We have two main offices and approximately one third of our staff are home-based.

### London Office

41 Botolph Lane, London EC3R 8DL

Tel: 020 7929 9494

### Scotland Office

18 Atholl Crescent, Edinburgh EH3 8HQ

Tel: 0131 229 9628

## 1.3 Our governance structure

### The RTPI Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is our governing body and is responsible for the strategic direction of the RTPI and promoting its objects. The Board of Trustees is composed of the Honorary Officers of the RTPI, eight members elected by the General Assembly and one member elected from the Regions and Nations representatives on the General Assembly. Board members are also the charity trustees of the RTPI, which is a registered charity (with the exception of the Chief Executive, who is a member of the board but not a trustee). Trustees have overall control of a charity and are responsible for making sure it's doing what it was set up to do. Trustees have specific responsibilities in addition to other volunteer roles and these are outlined on the [Charity Commission's website](#).

### General Assembly

General Assembly provides a forum for debate about planning policy and practice. It consists of trustees and elected members representing a broad range of membership groups and locations. General Assembly is the electoral college of the six corporate members who sit on the Board of Trustees.

### Committees

The RTPI has a number of standing committees, some of which have delegated authority from the Board of Trustees, dealing with planning policy, membership, ethics, education and lifelong learning, and international affairs. Each English region has its own Regional Management Board, elected by local members. Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland all have their own Executive Committees, which have extensive delegated authority; Wales has a Management Board with similar delegated powers.

### RTPI Services Limited

RTPI Services Limited, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of RTPI and is a company registered in England, is primarily involved in the provision of conferences and publications. The taxable profits of the company are transferred annually to the RTPI under Gift Aid.

### Our Volunteers

The RTPI has over 2000 volunteers across the Institute in a variety of roles.

The RTPI is fully committed to volunteering being a positive and enriching experience for all those who chose to get involved. Volunteering is a worthwhile opportunity that is open to everyone and the Institute firmly believes that every member has something to offer. Our volunteers make a significant contribution to the work we do.



## 1.4 Why volunteer?

### Benefits for you

RTPI members who volunteer, have an opportunity to shape the work of the RTPI, widen the reach of planning, give their profession a voice, access professional networking and further their own career through Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is about keeping up to date with current practices within your working environment and beyond. It is about developing your existing skills and acquiring new ones along the way and volunteering with RTPI is one of the best ways to achieve this. There are also many other benefits to volunteering for the RTPI as our volunteers and some of the employers of those who volunteer recognise.

“

I have found volunteering to be hugely rewarding in allowing me to build understanding of and experience in areas related to my normal working world and to explore things way beyond this. Along the way it has helped me to build personal and professional networks and many genuine and long-lasting friendships.

”

*Committee Chair and Board Member*

### Benefits for your employer

As an employer, supporting employees to volunteer for the RTPI not only demonstrates a commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility but can also bring a number of other significant benefits such as:

- Skills development
- Increased staff morale and motivation
- Building links with customers and opportunities for growth
- Improved staff recruitment and retention
- Enhanced local reputation
- Improved customer loyalty

“

Volunteering for the RTPI has been of immense benefit to the young planners in my service. It has given them a broader perspective and helped to develop their professional and technical skills. It has also built their confidence and helped them to develop the softer, personal skills that are also essential for taking on more senior roles within the profession. I would recommend that all employers support the personal and professional development of their young planners and encourage them to take advantage of the opportunities available to them through the RTPI.

”

*Strategic Planning Manager at a County Council*

## 2. Get Involved

### 2.1. Volunteer opportunities

There are opportunities for everyone, regardless of your level of experience.

The RTPI is a complex organisation with many different committees, structures and policies. Members can undertake a range of roles, including mentoring new members, promoting town planning as a career choice, contributing to or chairing one of the National or Regional Committees, organising local events or getting involved in communities' engagement in planning.

For more information on the wide variety of volunteering opportunities available and how to apply for volunteering roles, please visit our website at [www.rtpi.org.uk/get-involved](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/get-involved). Here are some examples of some of the types of volunteering activities available:



General Assembly January 2016



RTPI volunteers at Skills London careers event. December 2016



RTPI Scotland Convenor leading a study tour in Paisley. October 2016



Planning Aid England volunteers providing advice on Leeds allocation consultation. October 2015

## 2.2. Induction and training

Your Key Contact is the RTPI staff member who will support you in your role, during your time volunteering with us. Your Key Contact is stated on your role description and their contact details can be found in the appendices section of this handbook.

Your Key Contact will arrange an induction for you and is there to provide support to you in your role, during your time volunteering with us. This handbook is intended to give further guidance and support to all volunteers, whatever role they are involved with at the RTPI.

As part of your induction, you will receive a copy of your role description, which details the types of activities that you will be involved with. Your Key Contact will also introduce you to our volunteering code, which details the support you can expect from the RTPI during the course of your volunteering, as well as what we expect from our volunteers. You will be introduced to other volunteers and RTPI staff whom you are likely to come into contact with in your role.

“ As a manager, I have sought to lead by example in volunteering and have been delighted to see the enrichment it has brought to my staff. ”

*Assistant Head of Planning and Transportation at a City Council*

As a volunteer, you will have access to a number of guidance and training resources to help you develop in your role. However, if there is anything that you need further guidance on, please do not hesitate to get in touch with your Key Contact.

## 2.3. Reimbursement of expenses

Reasonable out of pocket expenses incurred by volunteers whilst carrying out the duties of their role, will be reimbursed. Please submit receipts and an authorised RTPI Member Expenses Claim Form to your RTPI Key Contact in accordance with the Member Expenses Policy.

Volunteers should use the most cost effective means of transport and accommodation where these are necessary to carry out your volunteering role.

The RTPI has made a commitment to promote energy efficient ways of working. The Institute therefore does not encourage travel by car due to the effect of carbon emissions on the environment.

“ Volunteering on the General Assembly has been an enjoyable opportunity. Being able to gain first hand understanding of the many ways the RTPI support and engages its members and having an opportunity to guide the strategic direction of the organisation makes this a challenging and rewarding role. ”

*Town Planner, large built environment consultancy*



## 2.4. Stopping volunteering

If you are no longer able to carry out your volunteering role, please let your RTPI Key Contact know as soon as possible.

If RTPI wish you to stop acting on behalf of the RTPI at any time, then you will be notified by your RTPI Key Contact or RTPI Head of Service. Some of the reasons that may lead to this are:

- There is no longer a need for your role e.g. RTPI decides not to continue with the activity you have been helping with
- There is a conflict of interest with the activities that you are involved with outside of your volunteering role
- Conduct that is likely to bring the good name and reputation of RTPI into disrepute

# 3. Volunteering code

Thank you for taking your time to support RTPI in its charitable purpose. We appreciate and are grateful for the work all our volunteers do for us. As a volunteer you have a key role to play in representing and promoting the RTPI's mission and support its work to champion planning as a profession through engaging and supporting others. To achieve this, RTPI has put together a Volunteer Code, which outlines our commitment to you and defines the behaviours that we expect from our volunteers. Please take a short time to read this code, it is important to help us ensure that volunteering is coordinated in a way that gives benefit to all involved.

## 3.1. Our commitment to you

The RTPI will:

- Inform you of the range of available volunteering opportunities
- Provide you with details of your involvement, guidance set out in this handbook and other basic induction materials if appropriate, before you carry out any voluntary work
- Provide you with support and access to resources required for your volunteering
- Ensure the confidentiality of any personal information supplied to us
- Consult, involve and inform you on developments at the RTPI which affect the area you are volunteering in
- Apply our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Apply our Problem Solving Procedure if there is a problem.
- Provide a key RTPI staff contact to support you, and whom you can discuss any concerns with
- Respect your skills, dignity and individual wishes.

**In return, we ask that you always follow the Volunteering Code outlined below:**

## 3.2. General

The purpose of the Volunteering Code is to help ensure that all volunteers know what behaviour they have a right to expect from other volunteers and officers and also what behaviour is expected of volunteers.

All volunteers commit to:

- Making decisions in the best interests of the RTPI
- Supporting the RTPI's mission and values and taking the time to become familiar with policies and procedures that are in place relating to volunteering
- Respecting national, regional, ethnic and cultural differences and complying with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

The RTPI encourages all members to be active within the Institute and we are firmly committed to volunteering being a positive and enriching experience. All volunteers have a right to be treated with dignity and respect.

When requesting assistance or information, volunteers need to be mindful that RTPI staff have various work commitments and may not always be able to respond immediately. All requests should be submitted with reasonable notice, explaining why the information is being requested and its intended purpose.

The Institute does not tolerate bullying or harassment. Any complaint or grievance will be taken seriously and dealt with swiftly under the Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure. Complaints regarding the professional conduct of a volunteer providing planning advice will be addressed, if appropriate, by the RTPI [Complaints Procedure](#) and the [Code of Professional Conduct](#).

## 3.3. Brand and representation

Volunteers will protect and uphold the RTPI brand, using our logo or branded material in accordance with brand guidelines.

Volunteers often find themselves in the position of representing the RTPI to other members, RTPI staff and the general public. They may be involved in supporting opinions or views that contrast with their own opinions or views. When representing the RTPI, volunteers should make the RTPI aware of this and must continue to support the agreed RTPI view, stating that they are acting in the capacity of a volunteer.

Volunteers are encouraged to debate RTPI policy and decisions; however, this must be done in appropriate forums, such as committee meetings.

If a volunteer wishes to present a personal opinion and they are acting on behalf of the RTPI they need to clearly indicate that this is their own, and not the RTPI's opinion.

Any enquiries from the media should be referred to the Marketing and Communications team.

### 3.4. Legal obligations

All volunteers commit to:

- Comply with all applicable laws and regulations at all times.
- Abide by the Data Protection Guidance. The Institute is registered to hold and process data to enable it to carry out its business. The Data Protection Act sets legal standards of good practice for the use of personal information held manually and on computers, and provides protection for individuals about whom information is held.
- Never passing personal details onto a third party. Only members of staff should send out emails and information to RTPI contacts unless other arrangements have been authorised in advance.
- Abide by the Fraud and Anti-Bribery Policy.
- Not enter into legal or contractual relationships on behalf of the RTPI.

If you are in any doubt about any of the above points, please get in touch your RTPI key contact

### 3.5. Confidentiality

You may be responsible for confidential RTPI information and you need to protect and maintain confidentiality of the Institute, members and other stakeholders. You must not reveal any confidential information relating to the RTPI or RTPI Services Ltd or any other related body, except in cases where you are authorised or required by law.

If you are in doubt as to whether information is confidential or not, please get in touch with your RTPI key contact.

### 3.6. Conflicts of interest

The reputation of planning is based on public perceptions of fair and transparent conduct by planners who act with integrity, independence and probity.

A conflict of interest is any situation in which a volunteer's personal interests or loyalties could, or could be seen to, prevent the volunteer from making a decision only in the best interests of the RTPI.

Volunteers are expected to act at all times in the best interest of the Institute and not for personal or third-party gain

When encountering potential conflict of interest, volunteers should identify the conflict and report it to the Governance Manager and their RTPI key contact, who may ask them to remove themselves from all discussions and voting on the matter

Volunteers will not accept gifts or any other item of value from any person or entity as a direct or indirect inducement to provide special treatment to such donor with respect to matters pertaining to the RTPI without fully disclosing such items to the Governance Manager in advance.

Examples of conflicts of interest may include:

- volunteering on a project where the volunteer is already employed or has a commercial interest in the venture and this may or may not result in personal gain

- engaging in party political activity, supporting a specific campaign, influencing voters to vote for or against a particular party or particular election candidate
- a volunteer being involved in a selection process and a candidate is a friend or relative of the volunteer.

If you are in any doubt, please contact the Governance Manager.

## 4. Policies, procedures & insurance

### 4.1. Equality, diversity and inclusion

At the RTPI equality, diversity and inclusion is at the heart of our values and objectives. We are committed to creating and maintaining a diverse and inclusive environment and freedom from discrimination in our employment, volunteering and the services we provide.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy outlines the RTPI's commitment to these values further.



All of our members, volunteers and employees have a right to be treated with dignity and respect and the RTPI will not tolerate any behaviour that is contrary to this.

### 4.2. Health and Safety

We are committed to maintaining a safe working environment for everyone. Staff and active members are expected to take reasonable care to ensure their own safety and that of other people who may be affected by their actions.

If you are visiting an RTPI office, please ensure you familiarise yourself with the emergency evacuation procedure for the office.

All of our offices have qualified first aiders present. If you have an accident at one of our offices, please contact reception (at Botolph Lane) or the Office Manager (at RTPI Scotland) for assistance and to complete an accident report.

Volunteers should take reasonable care when travelling to and from volunteering duties, particularly if travelling in the early morning or late evening. Volunteers whose role involves aspects of "lone working" e.g. visiting sites to conduct surveys, should take reasonable care of their own personal safety, act in a professional manner at all times and ensure that site owners are given reasonable notice of their visit in advance.



If you have concerns regarding your safety when volunteering, please speak with your Key Contact who will review the risk assessment for your role and discuss with you any appropriate actions to mitigate or eliminate risks.

### 4.3. Insurance

Members are protected whilst actively volunteering for the RTPI, provided that they are acting as authorised by their RTPI Key Contact i.e. they are acting in accordance with their role description and the volunteer handbook. RTPI has 2 types of insurance:

- **Public Liability Insurance** provides cover to RTPI volunteers who are injured or involved in an accident whilst volunteering for the Institute. This insurance does not cover volunteer journeys from home to the volunteering venue or damage to the volunteers own vehicle so volunteers should check to ensure they have their own adequate insurance cover for this.
- **Professional Indemnity Insurance** provides cover to RTPI volunteers for claims arising from loss or injury caused by services provided negligently or without reasonable care by its employees or registered volunteers e.g. such loss might arise from a volunteer giving misleading or inaccurate advice.

The RTPI indemnifies Chartered and Legal Members for the professional advice they give to clients. Only Chartered Members volunteering for the RTPI are covered to give professional planning advice to RTPI clients.

Volunteers must adhere to the guidelines set out in this document and report any matter to us that may affect the Institute's Professional Indemnity Insurance. Failure to comply with guidelines or notify the Institute may render this insurance cover invalid.

### 4.4. Data Protection

It is unlikely that you will be holding personal information in your volunteering role but it is important that you are aware of what constitutes personal data and the legal requirements around this, should there be an occasion when you come into contact with handling personal data.

The RTPI is registered with the Information Commissioners Office to hold and process data to enable it to carry out its business. The Data Protection Act sets legal standards of good practice for the use of personal information held either electronically or manually and provides protection for individuals about whom information is held.

**“personal data”  
includes:**

names  
email addresses  
home addresses  
dates of birth

Personal data includes names, contact details, date of birth and any other information from which the individual can be identified, whether stored electronically or in paper based filing systems.

The RTPI has a responsibility to follow the principles as set out in the Data Protection Act, to ensure that all personal data is:

- **Processed fairly and lawfully:** In practice this means it must be clear the reasons why the RTPI or a representative of the RTPI is collecting personal data and what they intend to do with it.
- **Processed only for specified particular purposes:** Information about members, volunteers or staff or the RTPI, must never be passed on to other individuals or organisations without explicit consent being obtained. Normally a RTPI staff member should send out emails and information to RTPI contacts.
- **Adequate, relevant and not excessive:** Only data needed for a specific purpose should be asked for or recorded.
- **Accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date:** The RTPI maintains a central database of information about members and volunteers. Members and volunteers are expected to notify the RTPI of any change in their contact details and are asked to do so directly by **contacting the Membership department.**
- **Kept secure:** Personal data must be maintained and kept secure. A list of personal details saved in a personal email account or on a system that is not password protected is unlikely to be 'secure'.
- **Not transferred to countries outside the European Economic Area unless the information is adequately protected:** data published on the internet is automatically regarded as an overseas transfer.
- **Only processed with permission:** In order for data to be processed, the person who the information is about must give their permission, know who is using the information, know what they are using it for and know whom it is likely to be passed on to.

## 5. Keeping in Touch and Feedback

### 5.1. Feedback and problem solving

Your feedback is very welcome! If you have any feedback regarding volunteering with the RTPI please do let your Key Contact know.

If you have concerns about anything related to your volunteering and you do not feel that the issue has been resolved by raising it with your Key Contact, please refer to the Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure.

## 5.2. Key Contacts

Every volunteer has a Key Contact who is the first point of contact if you need to speak with a member of staff. Your Key Contact is listed on your role description. If you are not sure who this is, contact the relevant [Head of Service / Director](#) for your area of volunteering.

**The RTPI values its volunteers and hopes that those actively involved with the Institute will find it rewarding and challenging experience. Thank you once again for giving your time to help us improve the communities in which we live and work through planning.**



For more information please visit:  
[rtpi.org.uk/membership/get-involved](http://rtpi.org.uk/membership/get-involved)



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