

THE BRITISH POLIO FELLOWSHIP

Guidance, Rules and Procedures for Branches and Regions (BR)

November 2023

Aim of this review dated November 2023

This aims to simplify the guidance and rules by producing a single document for BPF local and regional subgroups that are flexible enough for areas where there is difficulty filling traditional officer posts.

Key Points

- Branches and Regions are run by an elected committee of ideally 8, more may be co-opted as needed.
- Key officer posts are Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. Ideally no person should hold more than one post – for smaller branches, there is flexibility which must be approved by the CEO. A Welfare Officer is also recommended.
- Officers do **NOT** need to have had polio but **MUST** be members of the BPF – they can join if needed after election before taking up their officer role.
- The committee and especially the officers should be familiar with the BPF policies and procedures (list attached).
- An AGM should be held annually in March/April to report activities and accounts and to elect the committee.
- More than one person must authorise expenditure.
- Full financial records must be kept.

Purpose of various BPF subgroups

Branch – Local branches exist where there are sufficient members and volunteers to offer support and activities for polio members: they can vary in size and can cover a wide area.

Group - There will no longer be 'Groups' as a BPF local subgroup type and all will be known as 'Branches' as the distinction is not clear given that more branches are reducing in size and unable to fill all officer roles. This will be accommodated by agreeing flexibility in the committee size and officer roles with the CEO. There may be some limits on financial activities if some certain roles are not filled.

Circle – Branches can cover a very wide area. If there are small numbers of members in a certain particular area, a very local Circle can be formed to meet the needs of those few members. The Circle is still part of the Branch and, as such, its members also belong to the Branch. Circles run under the Branch formal organisation and do not require a full committee or formal AGMs, just a lead contact. Finances for a Circle will be held and managed through the Branch they are linked with.

Region – Branches can come together across a wider area to provide regional activities in addition to those arranged more locally by the Branches and may also put together a regional team for the National Games. A Regional council is made up of Branch representatives and every effort will be made to include representation from all members in the Region. Whilst Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are countries, and will be referred to as such, they will follow the same guidance as the Regions.

Crown Dependencies - If branches are set up in the Isle of Man, Jersey or Guernsey, they will follow the same guidance and rules as UK Branches.

Overview

As the Fellowship changes to meet the needs of its membership, so must its guidance in order to offer assistance to those supporting subgroups of members around the UK in whatever way they can. As not all subgroups have sufficient volunteers to maintain a full committee to carry out all the functions, there is a degree of flexibility in “rules” to allow volunteers to take on more than one role should the need arise, and the volunteer be willing. In all of this, the subgroups can be reassured of support from the wider Fellowship and Central Office.

With that in mind, the following rules and procedures are outlined: -

- The Branches and Regions will operate in accordance with the Articles of Association, policies and procedures of the BPF, including Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Any support and work carried out will have reference to the BPF Safeguarding Policy and the safeguarding of members is paramount.
- The **address** of the Branch or Region will be that of the Honorary Secretary or nominated person if less than 3 committee members.
- The **areas covered** by each Branch or Region should be agreed between that area and the BPF Board of Trustees. As membership changes, an element of flexibility should be used.
- **Membership** of each Branch or Region will be flexible. As people join the BPF in accordance with the Membership Policy, each Member will be initially assigned to their nearest Branch and Region, where appropriate, in order to receive information and communications from those areas. This will be in addition to that provided by Central Office. Central Office will advise the appropriate Secretaries, or leading person, of the new Member’s name and details. Should the Member prefer to join a different Branch, this is acceptable, but it should be noted that a member will not be entitled to formally join more than one Branch or Region, though they can attend events at more than one branch. A Circle is part of a Branch and, as such, will not have separate functions.
- The Branch or Region will have the power to recommend to the Board of Trustees the exclusion or expulsion from membership of the Fellowship of any person attached to it.

Functions of the Branch or Region

The Branch or Region will organise local social, cultural and recreational activities and generally promote group support. This will vary depending on the needs of the polio members involved.

Welfare work within the area should be a part of the role, providing such practical support and assistance as may be required is within the limits of the committee, or, if not, refer the member to Central Office for guidance and assistance.

The committee is encouraged to promote the work of, and distribute information about, The Fellowship within the Branch or Region and discuss and consider Fellowship Policy and submit any recommendations thereon to the Board of Trustees.

Grants:

The limit of expenditure which can be made by Branches for welfare to any UK polio survivor in any year (January to December) without prior approval of the Board of Trustees is increased to £500, of which not

more than £350 may be for a holiday grant. Such expenditure must comply with the BPF Grants Policy and Procedure.

Other expenditure

The limit of expenditure on any one object or project (other than welfare) that a Branch may incur in any one year (January to December) without prior approval of the Board of Trustees is set at £1500.

Management

Where possible, the Branches and Regions (not circles) will be controlled by a committee of not less than 3 and up to 8 members. However, where this is not possible, there will be flexibility and support. They will be selected by the Members of that Branch or Region at their Annual General Meeting. From that number the committee members will select necessary officers and ensure one person is in charge of and oversees finance. **All officers must be Members of the BPF at the date of their election - but they do not have to be polio survivors.**

The Branch or Region should hold an AGM on any convenient date in March or April and the business of that meeting should be to receive and approve the minutes of the previous AGM, receive a report on the year's activity and health of that Branch or Region, to approve the annual report from the Treasurer and to elect a committee if numbers allow. It is also possible, if desired, to appoint a President and Vice Presidents; this may be to acknowledge those who have given great service to the Branch or Region.

When the notice of the Branch or Region AGM is sent to the local members, this should include an invitation to apply to join the committee.

There should also be an opportunity to consider any business of which notice has been given. This can be an opportunity to discuss potential activities, ideas for the Fellowship and any recommendations for the Board of Trustees.

If the majority of members agree and it can be arranged, the local AGM can be held online.

Elections and Co-options to Committees

Where there are sufficient numbers, the Branch or Region Committee should be elected annually, with nominations for membership of the committee being forwarded in writing, or by email, to the Hon Secretary or lead person, so as to be received 14 days prior to the AGM.

Following the AGM, members will be elected to the committee and those members will choose the lead personnel.

Ideally no-one should hold more than one office. However, after attempts to fill the posts, if no-one comes forward, then, in order to keep a Branch or Region running for the benefit of its members, the BPF CEO can authorise the running with fewer than three.

At its first meeting, the Committee will elect:

- 1 or 2 representatives to the Regional Committee should there be sufficient numbers so to do.
- A representative to attend the National AGM, if appropriate at Branch or Region's expense

It should be noted that the Fellowship's Board of Trustees may remove, but not replace, a Branch or Region Officer when acting within its powers under the Articles of Association.

The Branch or Region committee may co-opt by vote not more than 3 BPF Members - a minimum of 3 people voting is recommended. These co-optees will have full voting rights and remain in office until the subsequent AGM. The co-options may serve to aid numbers on the committee or co-opt someone with specific expertise for a given purpose.

Meetings and Notice of Meetings

There should be 21 days' notice of an AGM and no fewer than four meetings per year. Where required, more can take place and the secretary or nominated person should give notice.

In the event of a specific concern a special Meeting of the Branch or Region can be called, either by the Chief Executive at the direction of the Board of Trustees, by resolution of the Branch or Region Committee or by written request to the Hon Secretary/ nominated person signed by not less than twenty five per cent or ten Members, whichever is smaller. The Hon Secretary/nominated person will then give seven days' notice of a Special Meeting at such place and on such date. Special meetings are to be held at such place that is convenient to Members.

Sub Committees

Where relevant and appropriate, the Branch or Region may appoint such ad hoc sub committees as it thinks fit. Each subcommittee shall elect its own Chairperson /lead person from amongst its members.

Succession Planning

Wherever possible thought should be given to planning for the future of the Branch or Region. This may include recruiting those without polio who would be willing to assist the work carried out to support polio members. They do need to become members of the BPF before assuming a key post.

Duties of Branch or Region Officers and Committee

Honorary Chairman

The Chairman will preside at all meetings he/she attends and will have the casting vote. The Chair will sign the Annual Accounts with the Hon Secretary and Hon Treasurer. Where just one or two people are effectively running the Branch or Region and taking on multiple roles in order to keep a Branch or Region running, he/she should use a member of that Branch or Region to check and confirm the accounts.

Honorary Vice Chair

The Vice Chair will deputise in the Chair's absence. If there is no Vice Chair, committee members will elect someone to lead the meeting.

Honorary Treasurer

The Hon Treasurer will be responsible to the Branch or Region and Committee for the financial control thereof and submit statements of the financial position at each meeting, necessary submissions to Central Office when required, keep an inventory of assets if applicable and notify the Chief Executive Officer when accounts are approved at an AGM. These accounts should be sent for approval no later than the end of May. Each Branch or Region will have funds audited annually.

Honorary Secretary

The Hon Secretary will be responsible for all the official business of the Branch or Region in relation to its members, the Board of Trustees and the general public, unless certain items are delegated to another

committee member, and will sign the annual accounts with the Chair and Treasurer. He/She will also advise the CEO of names and addresses of all officers and committee members elected at the AGM in a timely fashion.

Committee

The committee members of the Branch or Region will be responsible to the Board of Trustees for the proper running of the Branch or Region in accordance with the Articles of Association of the Fellowship. They will receive and approve accounts submitted at each meeting.

Unfilled posts

The Fellowship recognises that not all Branches or Regions will have sufficient volunteers to cover the above roles and is keen that the Branch or Region should continue with those available volunteers for the sake of its polio members. To enable this, they can seek support from Central Office.

Finance

The finances will be controlled in accordance with the Articles of Association of the Fellowship and in compliance with relevant Charity Commission guidance.

- a) The Branch or Region will operate **one banking account** opened on its behalf by the Board of Trustees at such bank as determined by the Board and **no other account should be opened**. Nor will the Branch or Region hold any investments other than those dealt with centrally on behalf of that Branch or Region.
- b) All moneys received by the Branch or Region will be paid to the Hon Treasurer/responsible person.
- c) True accounts and receipts will be kept of all moneys received and paid out.
- d) Immediately after the end of the year, the Hon Treasurer will prepare Income and Expenditure accounts to return to Central Office and to be copied to members for scrutiny at the AGM.
- e) Ideally, up to date accounts will be presented at each committee meeting.

No Branch or Region will be entitled to expend or incur expenditure in respect of welfare on any one UK polio survivor in any one year in excess of such sums as will be agreed by the Board of Trustees.

- f) No Branch or Region may acquire any interests in land, appoint paid officers, take action or make any publication on behalf of the Fellowship beyond that of reporting activities.
- g) The Branch or Region may not solicit conditional donations from individuals or organisations in any other Branch or Region area, not precluding accepting donations which arise from personal friendship.
- h) No appeals to the public will be made without prior approval of the Branch or Region, which will only be given within the requirements of the Charities Act 1993.
- i) The Branch or Region Committee will not create or maintain special funds without the approval of the Board of Trustees.
- j) **Duty to disclose financial interests in contracts:** If any member of the Branch or Region Committee or sub-committee has any pecuniary interest direct or indirect in any contract, proposed contract or other matter is present at any meeting where the proposed contract or other

matter is subject for consideration or vote, that member will withdraw from the meeting until the question is resolved and this will be recorded in the minutes.

- k) **Central financial support:** The Fellowship has established a Branch Support Fund which subgroups with significant funds can pay into in order to provide support to those with very limited funds. Branches wishing to obtain such support should initially contact Central Office. Requests will be considered by the Board in the context of the level of funding available and the nature of the spending proposed.
- l) **Grants:** As noted above, subgroups may make local grants in accordance with the BPF Grants Policy and Procedures
- m) **Investment Funds (formerly known as ‘Loan Units’):-** In accordance with our Investments Policy, the majority of funds designated for subgroups use are held in our investments portfolio in the interests of maximising returns over the medium to long term. Use of these funds is subject to the rules outlined in ‘Functions of the Branch or Region’ above.

Paid Officers

No Branch or Region may employ a paid officer. In time, as the Fellowship changes, there may be a case for doing this in order to provide the appropriate support for members in the area. However, this would require a request to Central Office and the approval of the Board of Trustees.

Stationery and Publicity Material

All documents bearing the name of the Branch or Region will be headed with the British Polio Fellowship logo and appropriate registered charity number.

Alteration of Branch and Region Rules

These rules may be altered from time to time as directed by the Board of Trustees. Proposals for alterations may only be considered at a Branch or Region AGM or a specially convened meeting and should be outlined in the notice of the meeting. No alteration will take effect without the approval of the Board and will not take effect until after the AGM.

This document to be reviewed in December 2024 in the first instance.

This document will be reviewed thereafter by the BPF Board of Trustees every two years.



Appendix - List of BPF policies and procedures relevant to the Branch or Region:

Policy	Date implemented/last reviewed	Date for review
Articles of Association	September 2022	N/a
Code of Conduct	March 2022	March 2025
Membership Policy	September 2021	Ongoing
Investment Policy	Feb 2021	Feb 2024
Safeguarding Policy	Oct 2019	Due for review
Diversity Policy	At least 2014	Due for review
Privacy Policy	Not dated	Needs review
Data Protection Policy	May 2018	Due for review
Confidentiality Agreement	Not dated	Needs review
Grants Policy and Procedure	In preparation	In preparation