**WAMES Volunteers’ information pack**

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Thank you for your interest in volunteering with WAMES. This pack will introduce you to WAMES, our volunteering opportunities and the process for applying to join us.

**Contents**

About WAMES

The role of volunteers

Volunteering Team Opportunities

Basic requirements for volunteers

The application process

FAQ

**About WAMES**

The Welsh Association of ME & CFS Support is a registered charity which gives a national voice to people with ME & CFS in Wales, their carers and families. We aim to help improve services, access to services, raise awareness and provide information and support.

ME (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis, sometimes called Chronic Fatigue Syndrome - CFS) is a potentially disabling and chronic neurological condition which affects the brain at a physical, mental and emotional level, leading to many distressing symptoms.

The major characteristic is that symptoms become worse following physical and mental activity and can fluctuate, leaving patients and families alike confused and frustrated. There is currently no cure and no treatment which helps all patients.

**Our Vision** is for a Wales where adults and children with ME and CFS, and their carers, are taken seriously and treated with respect, where diagnosis, treatment and services are accessible without a battle.

***For more information about WAMES visit www.wames.org.uk***

email helpline@wames.org.uk or ring 029 2051 5061

**The role of volunteers in WAMES**

Volunteers are vital to the work of WAMES. We have no paid staff so nothing gets done without us! There is a lot of work to be done in Wales campaigning, raising awareness and providing information and support, so WAMES needs people with a wide variety of skills and interests.

**Volunteer opportunities with WAMES Teams**

We are developing a Team-based approach to working so that many volunteers can contribute in a way that suits them. Team coordinators set priorities and ensure all the necessary work gets done while tailoring tasks to a volunteer’s skills, energy levels and available time.

**Trustees**

A trustee is part of the managing committee which sets the goals and priorities of the organisation and ensures good governance and financial practice. Part of this involves ensuring there are officers and policies to meet the Charity Commission’s requirements.

This need not be time consuming but is a significant responsibility. Involvement in decision making takes place through email, teleconferencing and at the AGM in the Cardiff area.

**Fundraising team**

Responsible for applying for funding & encouraging fundraising activities to cover running costs and carry out special projects e.g.

* encourage friends, family and co-workers to raise funds for WAMES by shopping online through charities like [Amazon smile or Easy fundraising](https://wames.org.uk/cms-english/get-involved/support-us/)
* organise a fundraising event or activity
* explore fundraising opportunities & involve others e.g. creating crafts, selling products
* find funders from your local community – businesses, fundraising groups etc.

**Campaigns & awareness team**

Responsible for finding and responding to opportunities to improve services used by people with ME & CFS: health; social care; education; welfare. e.g.

* represent ME and WAMES at local organisations, events and alliances
* take part in surveys and consultations

Also responsible for finding, creating and responding to opportunities to raise awareness of ME & CFS e.g.

* be prepared to tell your story in print or on camera
* distribute posters & leaflets
* find online publicity opportunities
* devise exhibitions
* man stalls/ exhibits at events, hospitals etc.
* plan publicity campaign for ME Awareness Week in May or Severe ME day in August

**Youth team**

Responsible for providing support and information to young people by;

* contributing effective posters, information sheets, magazine articles and online content
* help raise awareness amongst children and young people
* look for ways to involve young people

**Communications team**

Responsible for making information available through the magazine, website, news blog, twitter, FB, info sheets, posters and online e.g.

* write or edit copy for the magazine
* help with layout of magazine
* help design and develop information sheets for patients & carers
* help design and develop information sheets for health professionals, teachers, social workers, politicians
* create DVD and powerpoint presentations about ME and WAMES
* design posters
* print, collate and distribute magazine or posters
* help us to develop and maintain our bilingual online presence via our website, Facebook and twitter
* develop our activities through the medium of Welsh.

**Support team**

Responsible for encouraging ways for people with ME & CFS and carers to support each other e.g.

* train to be a Helpline contact
* set up or help local support groups

**Administration team**

Responsible for assisting the secretary with running the charity. e.g.

* maintain records & memberships,
* take minutes
* keeping policies and procedures up to date
* compiling and distributing documents

**Basic requirements for volunteering with us**

* You must be 16 or over
* You can live anywhere in Wales
* You will be interested in improving the quality of life of people with ME & CFS and their families and carers

**Applying to volunteer**

1. Fill out the WAMES Volunteering registration form and send it to us by post or email. Download from the website [http://wames.org.uk/cms-english/volunteering-resources](http://wames.org.uk/cms-english/?page_id=10788&preview=true) Or request a copy from the chair jan@wames.org.uk 01970 636515
2. We will arrange an informal chat to explain more about the volunteering opportunities that are available in WAMES, and discuss the one/s you are interested in.

For a **Team coordinator’s** post or a role requiring interaction with people with ME:

1. We will take up references and arrange an informal interview
2. If we offer you a role we will carry out a police check before you begin
3. There will be a trial period of a few months to reassure both you and WAMES that you are in the right post.

**FAQ**

**I’m not sure exactly which role I want to do**

We will try to give you the opportunity to get involved in a small way first so you can see how we operate before committing to a specific role.

**How much will it cost me?**

WAMES will ensure you are not out of pocket and will agree with you in advance which costs it can reimburse you for.

**Can I do anything useful if I only have a small amount of free time or energy?**

Yes, we have a number of one-off tasks & micro volunteering opportunities.

**What happens if I can’t do what I agreed to do?**

We understand that caring/ family commitments and poor health can interfere with plans. We will aim to offer you ‘job sharing’ roles or tasks without a deadline, if it may be difficult for you to keep deadlines.

**How long does it take to become a volunteer?**

It depends. Some contributions can be made whenever you wish. If you apply for a specific role we will aim to respond within a ‘month’.

**Do I have to have a lot of experience?**

Not necessarily. We are looking for enthusiasm, commitment and a willingness to learn. Where possible we will offer training.

**Does it matter that I don’t know anything about ME & CFS**

No, not all volunteering tasks require that knowledge, but we will provide opportunities to learn about ME & CFS and WAMES, when that is essential to the role/ task.

**Can I volunteer for less than a year**?

Some tasks take a short time to complete. Others require orientation and training. We ask that potential trustees and coordinators commit to a minimum of two years, to allow time to learn, train and make an effective contribution.

 **Can I volunteer if I have a criminal record?**

It would depend on the nature of the offence, how long ago it happened, and whether it was an isolated incident. We would normally expect a minimum of 3 years to have elapsed and would be most concerned about sexual or violent offences. You should note that an Enhanced DBS (police check) shows all convictions and cautions.

**I am really looking for paid employment**

Some roles with WAMES offer accreditation, which shows employers the experience and /or skills you have acquired. If your job search means you don’t know how long you can offer to volunteer, we have short term or one-off tasks that might suit you.

**Will volunteering affect my benefits?**

Maybe. You will have to inform the DWP and, if appropriate, be free to attend interviews. WAMES can give you more information and provide a letter clarifying your volunteering role.