

## *Local Branch Guidelines*

### **Preface**

The Guillain-Barré Syndrome Support Group (hereafter referred to as 'Group') is a Registered Charity. As such, it is required to comply with the law, in particular those regulations in force under the Charity Commission.

Any person or body of persons acting under the name of the Group is deemed to be part of that Group and must likewise comply with such regulations.

The following Guidelines and Procedures have been drawn up to help anyone already operating or wishing to set up a Local Branch of the Group.

An attempt has been made to distinguish clearly between what is mandatory and where there is discretion, but if anyone is in doubt, reference should be made to the National Executive Committee (NEC) through the Chairman or other Officer or Committee member.

Second Edition 1997. Reset PDF January 2005.

### **Setting up a Local Branch**

In order to set up a Branch, a meeting should be called, open to all current and former patients and their families/supporters, plus any other persons who are, or might be, interested. Current members in the area, and lapsed members, also of patients or others who have contacted the Group may be contacted, in the first instance, through the Branch Development Officer.

A Branch may, with the consent of its members, levy a local subscription, but whilst GBS sufferers and recovered patients should be members of the Group, it is not a pre-condition to branch membership. It is required that local Branch Officers be and remain paid-up members of the Group.

The Group will supply printed letter heads on which the Branch will indicate its own address of origination and for reply. Any other formal stationery must contain the words Registered Charity 327314; this applies also to cheques.

It is requested that a brief note of the Branch activities be submitted from time to time to the Editor of *Reaching Out*. Such items are read with interest by other members, and will encourage the formation of Branches in other areas.

Any Branch activity which involves members of the General Public, for example Fund Raising events, will probably require insurance cover for Public Liability. The Group insures for this risk and 'normal' events will be covered; when in doubt, refer to the Group Treasurer for advice.

A local Branch may take one of two basic forms: formal and informal. The Group imposes no obligation on Branch to be formal in type.

### **The Informal Branch**

The informal Branch would, for instance, consist of a group of people who merely wish to meet, occasionally or regularly, for social purposes, and who do not wish to be bothered with Committee or other organisational questions. All that is needed here is for there to be a person or persons prepared to arrange and organise the meetings. This can be done by one person or group of persons on a regular basis, or by different person a rota basis. These informal Branches may not wish to be involved in Fund Raising as such, but must make arrangements to cover expenses; this is probably best carried out by each person attending making a small contribution.

Informal Branches will not be required to report on their activities to the NEC, but any voluntary report will be welcomed.

Typically, an informal Branch will not open its own local bank account. Where moneys are raised by way of local Fund Raising initiatives, the proceeds are sent with details, to the National Fund Raising Officer(s). An informal Branch is subject to the same regulations over the disposition of funds as the formal type of Branch.

### **The Formal Branch**

If it is decided to set up a formal type of Branch (or to formalise a previously informal Branch), a local Committee should be formed at the first meeting after this decision has been taken. The number of Officers and Committee members needed will depend on the number of members of the Branch, but the minimum number should be three; where more than three, the number should be odd.

It is recommended that the formal Branch Committee comprises: Chairman; Secretary; Treasurer; Publicity Officer (possibly) and/or Fund Raising Officer (possibly) plus such other Committee members as may be thought suitable.

It is not essential that the duties of each member are exhaustively defined, as long as everyone understands his/her responsibilities. Smaller branches may wish to combine the duties of more than one office or area of responsibility. A suggestion for defining these duties is given in Appendix A.

### **Operating the Formal Branch**

The Committee should give consideration to and publish to members of the Branch a

statement of the Policy of the Branch, setting out the Branch aims. An outline of the nature of matters to be included is given in Appendix B.

The Branch should determine the frequency and venue(s) of meetings. It is required to hold an Annual General Meeting for the purposes of adopting the Annual Report and Accounts and to elect the officers and other members of the Committee.

## **The Formal Branch - Financial Regulations**

A newly-formed Branch may, if necessary, call upon Group funds to assist with the setting-up process, but after this initial subsidy, the Local Branch must become self-financing.

A local banking account may be opened, subject to prior written approval of the National Treasurer. Any such account must be called “The Guillain-Barré Syndrome Support Group ..... Branch”.

Proper financial records of income and expenditure must be maintained. Where possible, all sums received should be banked intact and all expenses paid by cheque. Where a petty cash float is used, it should be maintained on the imprest system (ie replenishment equals the amount expended, restoring the float to its original amount. At any time, the petty cash balance plus the expenses not yet replenished should equal the float).

All moneys raised by the Branch through fund-raising or other activity are the property of the parent Group. If a local branch wishes to raise funds for a particular cause, local or national, rather than for general charitable purposes, prior approval of the NEC must be obtained.

Moneys held in the Branch bank account should, from time to time, be transferred to the Group bank account and at any time at the direction of the National Treasurer, who will have regard to the Branch needs for retention of funds to meet legitimate expenses and avoid bank charges.

Branches may disburse from local funds without reference to the National Treasurer expenses incurred in (a) raising funds and (b) administration (eg postage on mailing members, hire of hall for meetings) up to £50 for any one transaction. Branches may not disburse moneys from local funds for any other purpose without reference to the National Treasurer, for instance in making donations or gifts to hospitals, purchasing computers, software or any other equipment, reimbursing local contact expenses or giving financial assistance to patients or their families; these and similar matters must be referred to the NEC via the National Treasurer.

Where a local GBS-related need arises involving expenditure beyond the Branch means, the Branch may apply to the NEC for financial support.

In line with the Group, the Branch financial year must run to 31 December each year. Within the first two weeks of January, an Income and Expenditure Account for the previous year will be required in a form prescribed by the National Treasurer.

Unless advised to the contrary, it is not necessary for the Branch accounts to be audited;

however, the Branch Treasurer may wish to have his/her records subjected to scrutiny, in which case an auditor may be appointed from the Branch membership who is not a member of the Branch Committee, or an external auditor may be appointed.

## **Relationship Between Local Branch and Parent Group**

A list of active Branches will be published in the Group's newsletter and new contacts/members will be encouraged to join.

The NEC nominates one of its members to act as Branch liaison officer, whose duties include ensuring that existing and new members are invited to join the local branch.

The Group will consider any invitation for a member of the NEC to attend a Branch meeting to talk or advise on any aspect of the Group's work.

The Group maintains stocks of various goods for sale for fund raising purposes. It is recommended that the Branch purchases bulk supplies from the Group for its own fund raising activities.

The Branch is responsible for publicising locally the work of the Group, but national publicity is the responsibility of the NEC. The Group will assist where possible in the provision of standard Group publicity material.

In seeking local publicity, care must be exercised to avoid all references to medical matters unless prior approval has been obtained from the NEC, which will be given only where the proposal is within the Group's own policy.

## **Appendix A**

### **Duties of Local Branch Officers (Suggested)**

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| Chairman:             | The Chairman acts as leader of the Branch  |
| Secretary:            | The Secretary deals with correspondence, notices, and maintains minutes of all meetings, and prepares the Annual Report of Branch activities.  |
| Treasurer:            | The Treasurer is responsible for Branch funds and for maintaining detailed and accurate accounting records of the financial transactions of the Branch, for reporting as required to the National Treasurer and for preparing the Annual Accounts of the Branch. |
| Publicity Officer:    | The Publicity Officer should find and implement ways of publicising the existence and activities of both the Group and the local Branch.   |
| Fund Raising Officer: | The Fund Raising Officer proposes, adapts and implements (with assistance from members) ways of raising funds for GBS-related purposes. Fund raising activities may be delegated by the Fund Raising Officer to individual members.                              |

## Appendix B

### Policy of Local Branch (Suggested)

The general policy of the Group is defined by its Constitution and the decisions from time to time of the NEC. The following are therefore given as suggested local policies, which should be set out in a document available to all members of the Branch. They may be added to or amended from time to time, provided that they do not conflict with the policy of the Group nor exceed what is legally permitted.

The . . . . Branch of the Guillain-Barré Syndrome Support Group exists to further the aims of the Group as defined in its Constitution and in the guide: *Guillain-Barré Syndrome — a guide for the patient, relatives and friends*, by:

- ✿ Providing a basis for sufferers and recovered patients, families and friends to make and maintain local contact with one another.
- ✿ Promoting meetings of members to exchange experiences, drive emotional support, and to learn of the existence and work of the Group.
- ✿ Organising activities with a view to raising funds for the Group and/or for local Group causes.
- ✿ Organising social events to strengthen bonds between members.
- ✿ Providing a communication channel between members and the NEC.
- ✿ Raising public awareness of the illness and publicising locally the existence of the Group.

