Expenses Policy

Date last reviewed: 2nd June 2026

Date next review due: 2nd June 2027

1. Introduction & Purpose

Thread Ahead ("the charity") is committed to ensuring that staff and volunteers are not left out of pocket when carrying out work on behalf of the organisation. At the same time, we have a duty to our funders, beneficiaries, and regulators to spend charitable funds responsibly and transparently.

This policy sets out:

- who is eligible to claim expenses
- what types of expenditure can be reimbursed
- the limits and approval process that apply
- how to submit a claim and what evidence is required

This policy applies to all paid staff (full-time, part-time, and casual), trustees, and volunteers. Compliance with this policy is required for any expense to be reimbursed.

2. Key Principles

All expense claims must comply with the following principles:

- Expenses must be incurred solely for charitable purposes on behalf of Thread Ahead

- Expenditure should be necessary, reasonable, and represent good value for money
- Claimants must not profit from their expenses - claims are for reimbursement only
- All claims must be accompanied by original receipts or other acceptable evidence
- Claims should be submitted promptly and within the timescales set out in this policy
- Personal expenditure must never be included in an expense claim
- Where possible, lower-cost alternatives should always be considered

If you are unsure whether an expense is allowable, seek approval before incurring it rather than after.

3. Eligibility

3.1 Staff

All employed and contracted staff are eligible to claim reasonable expenses incurred in the course of their duties. Line manager approval is required before submitting a claim.

3.2 Volunteers

Volunteers are encouraged to claim genuine out-of-pocket expenses. Reimbursing volunteers' expenses does not affect their voluntary status or create an employment relationship.

Volunteers may claim:

- Travel to and from the place of volunteering
- Meals and refreshments while volunteering, where not provided by the charity, up to a maximum value of £10 per meal
- Any other reasonable costs agreed in advance with their manager

Volunteers are not obliged to claim expenses.

3.3 Trustees

Trustees may claim reasonable expenses in connection with their trustee duties (e.g. attending board meetings, visiting projects). Trustee expenses must be approved by the Chair or another trustee, and are reported in the annual accounts in accordance with Charity Commission requirements.

4. Travel Expenses

4.1 General

Travel should be by the most economical means appropriate to the journey. Where possible, public transport should be used. Oyster/contactless cards should be used within London. Receipts or journey history (available via TfL) must be provided.

4.2 Rail and Coach Travel

- Standard class rail tickets should be used. First class is not reimbursable.
- Advance tickets should be purchased wherever practical.
- Season tickets are not reimbursable unless agreed in writing in advance.

4.3 Private Vehicle Use

Where use of a personal vehicle is the most practical or economical option, mileage will be reimbursed at the HMRC Approved Mileage Rate:

Vehicle Type	First 10,000 miles	Over 10,000 miles
Car / Van	55p per mile	25p per mile

Vehicle Type	First 10,000 miles	Over 10,000 miles
Motorcycle	24p per mile	24p per mile
Bicycle	20p per mile	20p per mile

Rates are subject to change in line with HMRC guidance. Claimants must hold a valid driving licence and adequate insurance (including business use) when using a personal vehicle on charity business.

Parking charges and road tolls incurred during charity travel may be reimbursed with receipts. Parking fines and penalties are not reimbursable.

4.4 Taxis

Taxis services may be used where public transport is unavailable, impractical, or where safety requires it (e.g. late evenings or carrying equipment). Prior approval should always be sought, receipts are required, and the reason for use should be noted on the claim form.

5. Subsistence Claims

Subsistence claims are only allowed when an employee or volunteer is away from their normal place of work or volunteering and the absence prevents them from eating as they normally would. The following daily limits apply:

Meal	Maximum Daily Reimbursement
Breakfast (if starting before 7am)	£8.00
Lunch	£10.00
Evening meal (if finishing after 8pm)	£15.00

- Alcohol is not reimbursable under any circumstances.
- Meals for guests or clients require prior authorisation and must state who attended and the purpose.
- Where the charity provides food at an event or meeting, no additional meal claim may be made.

These limits are guidelines. Claims should reflect actual reasonable costs. Where local prices make a claim above the limit unavoidable, please note the reason on your claim form.

6. Accommodation

Where an overnight stay is necessary, accommodation should be booked in advance wherever possible. The charity will reimburse reasonable hotel costs up to:

- London: £130 per night (room only)
- Other UK locations: £95 per night (room only)

Booking should be made through the charity's preferred booking process, where one exists. Personal loyalty points accrued during charity travel are not reimbursable and belong to the claimant.

7. Other Allowable Expenses

7.1 Telephone and Postage

Reasonable costs for phone calls, data usage, or postage incurred on charity business are reimbursable. An itemised bill or equivalent evidence is required.

7.2 Stationery and Small Purchases

Small purchases of stationery or consumables needed urgently for a project may be reimbursed with a receipt. Where possible, items should be purchased directly by the charity rather than by individuals.

7.3 Equipment

Purchases of equipment (e.g. a phone or laptop) must be approved in advance by the CEO and will ordinarily be purchased by the charity directly rather than by individuals. Equipment purchased on behalf of the charity remains the property of the charity.

7.4 Training and Events

Registration fees for training, conferences, or events relevant to the claimant's role may be reimbursed with prior approval. Where the charity can pay directly, individuals should not pay and claim back.

8. Non-Reimbursable Expenses

The following are examples of costs that will not be reimbursed:

- Alcohol
- Fines, penalties, or legal costs arising from personal conduct
- Personal toiletries, clothing, or grooming
- Gifts or personal entertainment
- Home broadband or phone line rental (except where a specific home-working agreement is in place)
- First class travel or hotel upgrades
- Travel between home and normal place of work (regular commuting costs)
- Expenses incurred by family members or guests unless specifically pre-approved
- Any expense not supported by a receipt or adequate evidence

This list is not exhaustive. Any doubt about whether an expense is reimbursable should be raised with the Finance Manager before the cost is incurred.

9. Submitting a Claim

9.1 Claim Form

All claims must be submitted on the charity's standard Expense Claim Form, which will be provided to staff and volunteers by their line manager. All required fields on the form must be filled in and sufficient evidence (original receipts or equivalent) must be provided.

9.2 Receipts and Evidence

Original, itemised receipts are required for all claims. Where an original receipt has been lost, a written explanation must be provided. Repeated claims without receipts may result in claims being declined.

For mileage claims, a log showing dates, start and end points, purpose, and miles travelled must be submitted.

9.3 Timescales

Claims should be submitted within one month of the expense being incurred. Claims submitted more than three months after the date of expenditure may not be reimbursed without exceptional justification approved by the Finance Manager..

9.5 Payment

Approved claims will be paid within 10 working days, directly to the claimant's bank account. Volunteers without a UK bank account should speak to the Finance Manager about alternative arrangements.

10. Expense Advances

Where a member of staff or volunteer would face significant personal financial hardship in funding expenditure before reimbursement, an advance may be requested. Advances must be:

- Requested in writing before the expenditure is incurred

- Approved by the Finance Manager
- Reconciled against actual expenditure within two weeks of return, with any unspent amount returned promptly

Advances are at the charity's discretion and are not a right.

11. Fraud, Misuse & Consequences

Submitting false, inflated, or duplicate expense claims constitutes fraud and a serious breach of the charity's code of conduct. This applies to both staff and volunteers.

Where a claim is found to be fraudulent or deliberately misleading:

- Staff may face disciplinary action up to and including dismissal
- Volunteers may be asked to stop volunteering with the charity
- The matter may be reported to the relevant authorities
- Repayment of funds will be sought

Managers who approve claims they know to be false will also face disciplinary action.

12. HMRC & Tax Considerations

Expenses reimbursed in line with this policy should not be treated as taxable income for staff, provided they are wholly, exclusively, and necessarily incurred in the performance of duties. The charity will:

- Maintain records of all expense payments in line with HMRC requirements
- Report any taxable benefits in kind via P11D or payroll as appropriate
- Review HMRC mileage and subsistence rates regularly and update this policy accordingly

Staff with questions about the tax treatment of specific expenses should contact the Finance Manager.

13. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there are relevant changes to legislation, HMRC guidance, or the charity's circumstances.

Queries about this policy should be directed to the CEO:

Saskia Borchardt-Hume (saskia@threadahead.org)