



## **BvH Subsidised Membership Policy – Support with Financial Hardship**

As a Club we recognise that whilst our Membership Fees represent excellent value for money and are reasonable in comparison to other Clubs, there may be times when people find the fee unaffordable due to financial hardship.

It is important to our ethos of participation that the wide-ranging benefits to health and wellbeing that being a member of the Club community can bring are accessible to all.

Accordingly, the Club will consider applications for financial support from those who are otherwise unable to afford to pay for Club Membership.

This policy sets out the application process, eligibility, and examples of the financial support options available. We will be compassionate and reasonable when dealing with any application under this policy.

While the Club is keen to support those who most need it, resources are limited and the Club will need to balance requests for support with the interests of its paying members.

### **Financial Support Options**

The following are examples of the financial support which may be requested:

- Option 1 (Subsidised Membership) – The Club member pays the England Athletics part of the membership fee only, the Club agrees to waive the remainder of the subscription. (The current EA fee for 2023/24 is £17.00, which will increase to £19 for 2024/25).
- Option 2 (Subsidised Discounted Membership) – The Club member pays the England Athletics part of the membership fee and a discounted portion of the Club membership fee, the Club agrees to waive the remainder of the Club membership fee.
- Option 3 (Pay by Instalment) – The Club member's fees (including the England Athletics part of the fee) are paid by the Club at the start of the year with the full amount being repaid by the member in 5 instalments, payable in July, September, November, January and March.

### **Eligibility**

Applications will be considered from current or potential members who have a need for financial support.

For current members to be eligible, the member must have been a regular attendee at Club runs, sessions and/or competitions (e.g. Road Relays or Cross Country) in the preceding year and intend to continue being a regular participant.

Applications from potential new members will also be considered where the person commits to regularly participate in Club runs or sessions.

### **Application process**

Applications must be made in writing to the Club Chairperson by completing the contact form here - <http://bournvilleharriers.org.uk/contact-us-chairperson>. Applications from current members should be made as soon as possible following the annual renewal request in April and, ideally, no later than the end of May, in order to avoid membership lapsing. The application must state the type of financial support the member would like to be considered for and briefly explain the reason for requesting support.

Examples of the types of circumstances which might be considered include:

- Cost of living challenges / very low household income
- Material change in personal or household income (e.g. as a result of ill health, redundancy etc.)
- Change in other personal circumstances (e.g. new caring responsibilities, separation or divorce or escaping domestic violence)
- Other unexpected, unplanned, or exceptional circumstances (e.g. emergency household repairs, eviction, court action etc. resulting in a reduction in disposable income)

Any information provided must be accurate and the overall impression given by the applicant must not be misleading.

### **Confidentiality**

All applications will be considered in strictest confidence by a small panel consisting of the following Officers: Club Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Membership Secretary, and Treasurer. No other Club members, including other Committee members, will be made aware of the applications received, nor the outcome of the discussions.

It is not necessary to submit detailed evidence along with the application (e.g. copies of Bank Statements etc.) which might be considered intrusive. However, where the individual is able to share any documentation (e.g. evidence that they are in receipt of benefits) that might support their application, this will help the panel in making their decision whilst also discharging their duties to ensure that Club funds are used appropriately. Further information may be requested by the panel if it is deemed to be useful to them in coming to a decision whilst respecting the individual's right to privacy.

Any information shared by the applicant will be used for the sole purpose of determining the individual's application. Where an individual provides confidential information about any other person in connection with their application (e.g. where the application is due to a reduction in household income due to circumstances relating to the applicant's partner), they confirm that they have the other person's consent to share that information.

The number of applications received and approved will be published along with the Club accounts at the end of the year. All other records (e.g. applications, notes relating to the decision etc.) will be held securely before being destroyed at the end of the relevant athletics year.

### **Outcomes**

The panel will acknowledge the application within one week of receipt and may request further information where reasonably needed. In order to reach their decision, the panel will consider all of the relevant information provided by the applicant, as well as factors such as the applicant's membership history with the Club (where applicable) and the volume of applications received. Each decision will be communicated to the relevant applicant in writing as soon as possible and usually by the end of May.

Where an application is declined, the panel will provide their reasons for doing so.

The decision of the panel is entirely at their discretion and is final.

While the Club is keen to provide support where needed, approval of an application does not guarantee that future applications will be approved.

### **Other Support**

BvH is a supportive and inclusive Club; as well as providing this scheme there are other ways in which the Club can support those experiencing financial difficulties. For example, there are two Welfare Officers and other members who will provide a listening ear or perhaps even their expertise depending on the specific circumstances.

### **Changes to Policy**

This policy will be kept under review to ensure that it meets the stated aims. The scheme may be withdrawn, replaced, or amended at any time by a majority vote of the Committee.