

Arboricultural Association

MEMBERSHIP

ADVERSITY POLICY

February 2023

1. Policy statement

1.1 The vision of the Arboricultural Association (the Association) is to inspire, support and promote the tree care community. In times of adversity, particularly relating to financial hardship or physical/mental ill health, some of our members may require an additional level of support. The Association is committed to doing whatever it can to help our members, and the wider arboricultural profession, in times of need. Any of our members, and those in the wider tree care community, are invited to get in touch with us to discuss their needs.

2. Background

2.1 The UK is expected to face a period of prolonged financial difficulty and a deepening cost of living crisis in the coming years. It is inevitable that this will have a detrimental impact on some of our members, who may find themselves out of work or struggling to pay bills. The Association believes that in such times it is particularly important for those in the tree care community to look after each other, and not to simply abandon people who are unable to afford membership subscriptions.

2.2 This policy sets out our approach to dealing with times of adversity for our members. If you find yourself in difficulty then please do not hesitate to contact us to discuss options. We will not ask for evidence of adversity or hardship, and ask that members treat this policy in the spirit in which it is intended. Decisions relating to membership subscriptions will be made at the discretion of the Association's management team, with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Membership Manager having the final say.

2.3 As well as struggling to pay subscriptions, in times of financial difficulty or ill health it can be difficult to maintain the normal levels of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) required to maintain your membership. The Association is able to make allowances for reduced access to CPD under certain circumstances, although we would ask that you make use of all available free online member resources during this time.

3. Potential kinds of adversity and support

3.1 It is not possible to comprehensively list all of the different kinds of adversity that members might find themselves in. However, some of the most common types situations include long-term sickness, unemployment and homelessness.

3.2 In the event of unemployment, long-term sickness or homelessness we are able to offer twelve months of free e-membership at your current grade (please note that this does not apply to Corporate members or Accreditations). At the end of the twelve month period the free e-membership will revert back to a paying membership unless you contact us in order to extend the support. If your circumstances mean that you require us to use an alternative mailing or email address for correspondence then please let us know.

3.3 In some cases, membership fees will already have been paid prior to the onset of adversity. In these situations we would not be able to refund the cost of membership other than in the most exceptional circumstances. However, during your period of adversity we can reduce (or waive) the amount of CPD which would ordinarily be required to maintain your membership level.

3.4 We hope that by offering e-membership you will be able to continue your personal and professional development and demonstrate to potential employers the level of membership achieved and your commitment to the profession.

4. Parental leave or acting as a carer

4.1 We acknowledge that parental and family leave – including maternity, paternity and adoption leave (over three months in duration) – can have a significant effect on your income and on the amount of time you can devote to obtaining CPD.

4.2 Members who take time out to have a family should not be penalised for doing so, and we can work together to find an appropriate solution. Depending on timing and circumstances this might be free e-membership for the duration of your parental leave. Alternatively, we can put your membership on hold during your period of leave. During this time you would not be expected to complete the usual amount of CPD required for your membership grade, and this period will not count as a break in membership in the event of you applying for a higher membership grade in the future.

4.3 We understand that some of our members may at some point find themselves in a position where they are providing either formal or informal care for loved ones and relatives who may be living with serious illness, disability, or frailty. This can impact your working hours and free time and reduce both income and your ability to carry out CPD. We can offer tailored support specific to your situation,

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with options similar to those outlined in 4.2 but suited to a longer term situation.

- 4.4 If possible, please contact us in advance to allow us to make the necessary arrangements for you (such as changing renewal dates, cancelling Direct Debits etc.).

5. Other situations

- 5.1 We can work with you to support you through a range of other situations or changes in your personal circumstances that might affect your ability to maintain your membership, either financially or through the completion of CPD. When life is difficult, the last thing you need to worry about is your membership. Please contact us and we will work with you to come up with a plan that delivers the benefits and support you need.

6. Further support

- 6.1 You do not have to face times of adversity alone. If you are in need of additional support then please contact our partners at Perennial, who are there to assist those working in arboriculture and horticulture. They have a huge range of resources to help you and your family and will be able to point you in the right direction for anything else you might need. Visit <https://perennial.org.uk/>.

7. Review

- 7.1 This Policy was adopted by the Board of Trustees on February 5th, 2023. It will be reviewed and ratified by the Board of Trustees no later than two years after this date.

8. Document control

Written by: John Parker, CEO and Jess Palfreyman, Membership and Systems Manager.

Reviewed by: Board of Trustees.

Approved by Board: **February 5th, 2023**

Next review date: **February 2024**

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The home of tree care