



POLICY FOR VOLUNTEERS

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Policy Statement

Mohill Family Support Centre is committed to providing a professional and efficient service in supporting volunteerism.

We recognise that in order to achieve our goals we need to involve volunteers in our own work too. It is also essential that we present a model of good practice in volunteer management.

We regard volunteers as a valuable resource and encourage them to get involved at all levels of the Centre and within all appropriate activities. We aim to train, support and supervise our volunteers to the best of our abilities, and to act quickly and fairly if difficulties arise.

1. General Principles

1.1 Purpose of document

The purpose of this internal document is to provide guidance on all aspects of volunteering at the Centre. It does not constitute a binding contract. It supplements other policies and procedures of Mohill Family Support Centre, as well as our definition of volunteering, our mission statement and our value base.

These procedures apply to all non-elected volunteers who undertake tasks on behalf and at the direction of Mohill Family Support Centre.



1.2 Responsibility

The Centre Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that the policy and the procedures in this document are implemented efficiently and effectively. All other staff and volunteers (including Directors/Trustees) are expected to facilitate this process.

1.3 Eligibility

The Centre will consider involving anyone as a volunteer. Individuals must, however, be able to demonstrate a commitment to the aims of the Centre and may only be placed if their needs as volunteers match the needs of the Centre. No person who has a conflict of interest with any aspect of the Centre will be accepted as a volunteer.

1.4 Relationship with Paid Staff (where applicable)

Volunteers are appointed to enhance the capacity of paid staff (including Community Employment workers), not as a substitute for them. Conversely, the Centre does not accept the services of its paid staff as volunteers. Clear roles are established to differentiate between employees and volunteers to foster mutually beneficial and complementary relationships.

1.5 Working conditions

Volunteers are treated as full members of the Centre team. They are treated as equally and fairly as employees and are included in the Centres, functions and decision-making processes wherever practical. Volunteers are provided with appropriate work sites and have access to the space, equipment and facilities necessary to volunteer effectively and comfortably.



1.6 Working times

Working times are negotiated between the Centre Coordinator or designated staff member and the volunteer and are as flexible as the tasks allow. Voluntary time commitment is never expected to match that of full-time paid staff, but unscheduled absences can create organisational problems. When expecting to be absent, volunteers should inform their Line Manager as soon as possible, so that alternative arrangements can be made.

1.7 Appropriate behaviour

Volunteers are expected to work within the policies and procedures of the Centre and adhere to its ethos. As representatives of the Centre, they are responsible for presenting a positive image of the Centre to the outside world.

1.8 Representation of the Centre.

Volunteers must seek prior approval from the coordinator or their designated staff member before undertaking anything that might affect the Centre. This includes, but is not limited to, statements to the press, joint initiatives with other bodies, and agreements involving contractual or financial obligations.

1.9 Confidentiality

The Centre respects the volunteer's right to privacy and confidentiality. In turn, volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all privileged information, to which they are exposed, while volunteering with the Centre.



1.10 Records

A system of records is maintained on all volunteers, including dates and times of service, duties performed, evaluation of work, etc. Volunteer records are accorded the same confidentiality as staff personal files.

1.11 Service at the discretion of the Centre.

Any voluntary service is at the discretion of the Centre. The Centre may, at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate volunteer's relationships with the Centre. Similarly, volunteers may at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate their relationships with the Centre. Notice of such decisions should be communicated at the earliest opportunity, preferably in writing.

2. RECRUITMENT

2.1 Role descriptions and person specifications

Like employees, volunteers require a clear and accurate description of the tasks and responsibilities they are expected to undertake. Prior to any volunteer assignment or recruitment effort, a role description must be developed for each voluntary opportunity. See volunteer handbook.

This must include:

- A title of the volunteering role;
- Starting and finishing dates;
- Hours and place of work;
- Name of Line Manager;
- Tasks to be undertaken.



If appropriate, a brief person specification may also be drawn up. The role description may be amended in joint agreement with the volunteer and their Line Manager. A copy of the final version must be given to the volunteer before commencing voluntary work, as it will be used in supervision and evaluation sessions. Role descriptions must define a time limit (no longer than one year) for voluntary involvement, after which time they are reviewed, and updated if appropriate.

2.2 Applications

Volunteers are recruited on a pro-active basis by the Centre using publicity avenues that are suitable for the roles that need to be filled. Potential volunteers may also apply speculatively or come via the volunteer placement service provided by the Centre. Volunteers are recruited in accordance with the Centre's equal opportunities policy. All volunteers are required to complete an application form.

2.3 Interviews

If necessary, applications are short listed and suitable candidates are invited to attend an informal chat with the coordinator, to ascertain their interest in and suitability for the role. Written records of all interviews are kept. All unsuccessful candidates are thanked for applying and encouraged to reapply for other volunteering opportunities, either current or in the future.



2.4 Checks for suitability

References are always taken up. If the role requires it, health (mental and physical) is also undertaken. Other checks may also be completed (for example, ascertaining professional qualifications). Volunteers are always warned in advance of the intention to make these checks. If they refuse permission and cannot provide an acceptable reason, they will not be placed. All volunteers will have to undertake a Garda Vetting Process.

2.5 Appointment

Formal appointments are made only after the role description has been agreed and all necessary checks have proved acceptable. No placements are made unless the requirements of the volunteer and the volunteer's Line Manager can be met.

2.6 Probation

All placements are subject to an initial trial period of one month. At the end of this period, the coordinator or designated staff member meets with the volunteer to discuss the volunteer's suitability for their role. At this point, volunteers may continue in their current role, be reassigned to a more suitable role, or be asked to leave.



3. TRAINING

3.1 Induction

All volunteers receive induction when they begin voluntary work with the Centre. This consists of a general introduction to the Centre, as well as a specific orientation on the purposes and requirements of their volunteering role.

3.2 On-the-job training

Volunteers receive initial and ongoing on-the-job training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their tasks well. The training must be appropriate for the demands of the position and the capabilities of the volunteer. New volunteers will shadow existing volunteers to ensure consistency in the role.

3.3 Additional training

Volunteers are actively encouraged to identify training courses, seminars, conferences, and so on, which would help them to perform their roles better and which would aid their personal development. Approval to undertake such training free-of-charge must be given by the coordinator, designated staff member or other external body and this will only be done if sufficient funds and resources are available. Priority is given to long standing volunteers and those who have received little or no training in the past.

3.4 Training information

If additional training was paid for by the Centre, any course or other materials belong to the Centre and must be filed in the Centre. All volunteers are required to submit a short report outlining the content and usefulness of the course or meeting attended. Training information must be disseminated to relevant people within the Centre.



4. SUPERVISION

4.1 Lines of communication

Lines of communication should operate in both directions and should exist formally and informally. Volunteers must have access to all appropriate information, memos, materials and meetings relevant to their assignments. Volunteers must be consulted on all decisions that would substantially affect their volunteering conditions.

4.2 Line Managers

Each volunteer must have a clearly identified Line Manager who is responsible for the day-to-day management of that volunteer. Laura Mc Hugh takes on the role of coordinating and line managing volunteers and reports back to Centre Coordinator.

4.3 Supervision sessions

Volunteers receive regular appraisals of their work, based on their role descriptions. Evaluation sessions take place at least every 6 weeks between the volunteer and his or her Line Manager. These review the performance of the volunteer, suggest any changes in work style, seek suggestions from the volunteer on means of enhancing the volunteer's relationship with the Centre, convey appreciation to the volunteer and ascertain the continued interest of the volunteer in serving in his or her role. The sessions also serve as an opportunity to plan future tasks.

4.4 Corrective action

If appropriate, corrective action may be taken following evaluation sessions. Examples include the organisation of training for an identified training need, the reassignment of a volunteer, or the dismissal of a volunteer.



4.5 Dismissal

Volunteers who do not adhere to the Centre's rules or who fail to perform their volunteer assignments satisfactorily may be subject to dismissal. No volunteers' involvement will be terminated in writing until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with their Line Manager and Project Coordinator. Grounds for dismissal include, but are not limited to, the following: gross misconduct, being under the influence of drugs (including alcohol), theft, misuse of equipment and materials, abuse of clients and co-workers, breaches of confidentiality, failure to abide by the Centres policies and procedures and failure to complete duties to a satisfactory standard.

4.6 Concerns and grievances

If volunteers are not satisfied that issues relating to their volunteering are being handled appropriately, they are entitled to have their concerns reviewed by the Board of Directors/Trustees. The Board of Directors/Trustees will discuss the issue as soon as practical after receiving a written complaint, and take appropriate action. The Chairperson of the Board of Directors/Trustees makes the ultimate decision.

4.7 Exit interviews

Where possible, informal exit interviews are held with any volunteers who are leaving the Centre, either because they have reached the end of their project, or are leaving for some other reason. Interviews are usually conducted with the volunteer's Line Manager and written records are kept. The session should ascertain why the volunteer is leaving, how they found the volunteering experience and what suggestions they offer to improve the way the Centre operates. The offer of a personal reference for future employment etc. is made to each volunteer.



5. SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION

5.1 Support

The Centre endeavors to provide the support necessary to encourage and empower volunteers to make a meaningful contribution and gain significant benefits from their voluntary work. Support forms part of the regular supervision sessions and gives volunteers a safe setting in which to express themselves, let off steam and discuss how they feel about volunteering. The Centre Coordinator will always try to be available to volunteers who require support in other areas that are affecting their performance.

5.2 Recognition

Volunteers provide a unique service to the Centre, the benefits of which are difficult to quantify. It is essential that their efforts are recognised and rewarded. Centre staff is responsible for thanking all volunteers informally on a regular basis for the valuable contribution that they make to the Centre. The Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that more formalised recognition takes place at key times.

5.3 Expenses

Volunteers give their time and skills free of charge, so it is essential that the Centre offers to reimburse any out-of-pocket expenses they may incur in the course of undertaking voluntary work for the Centre. The costs of volunteering should never be allowed to discourage those on low incomes. Current rates and procedures for claiming expenses are agreed by the Board of Directors/Trustees and publicised to all volunteers.



5.4 Insurance

Insurance is provided by the Centre to cover all volunteers working on behalf and at the direction of the Centre.

5.5 Personal and vocational development

Volunteers are encouraged to develop their skills while involved with the Centre and are assisted into assuming additional and greater responsibilities over time, if they desire to do so.

6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

6.1 Centre Volunteer Involvement

The Centre monitors and evaluates volunteer involvement in the Centre on a regular basis and seeks to make ongoing improvements.

6.2 Feedback

Constructive feedback on this document is always welcome. It must be given to the Centre Coordinator who will ensure that it is considered fully.

Date:

Signed by Chairperson:



Sample Volunteer Application Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____

Previous voluntary experience:



Work I would be interested in helping out with:

REFEREE NO 1	REFEREE NO 2
<p>Name:</p> <p>Address:</p> <p>Tel No:</p> <p>Email:</p>	<p>Name:</p> <p>Address:</p> <p>Tel No:</p> <p>Email:</p>



Volunteers Signature: _____

Date: _____

Line Managers Signature: _____

Date: _____



SAMPLE CONTRACT FOR VOLUNTARY WORKER

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____

1. DESCRIPTION OF WORK AGREED:

- 1.1
- 1.2
- 1.3
- 1.4
- 1.5
- 1.6 etc.

2. Hours agreed per day / week: _____

3. Who Volunteer is accountable to: _____

I agree to :

- Abide by the Values and Ethos of the Centre;
- To maintain and keep guidelines in relation to confidentiality;
- To maintain theFRC's Health and Safety Guidelines;
- To ensure that I inform the Centre in good time when I cannot attend agreed hours of work;

Volunteers Signature: _____



Coordinators Signature: _____

Date: _____