



Volunteer Policy

07.02.2019

Statement of Policy

We firmly believe in the ethos and value of volunteering and believe that volunteers make a vital contribution to society as a whole and to the aims and mission of the Gay Project. We regard volunteers as a valuable resource and encourage them to get involved at all levels of the organisation and within all appropriate activities.

Definition of Volunteering

'Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society, local communities, and individuals outside the immediate family, the environment or other causes. Voluntary activities are undertaken of a person's own free will, without payment' (The White Paper Supporting Voluntary Activity, 2000).

Volunteer Policy Agreement

The primary aim of the Gay Project is to ensure that gay, bisexual, men who have sex with men (MSM), queer and trans men are enabled to participate fully in Ireland's social, economic, cultural, political and artistic life. This organisation recognises that in order to achieve this aim we need to involve volunteers in our work. We aim to support and supervise our volunteers to the best of our ability, 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 Gay Project. It does not constitute a binding contract. It supplements other policies and procedures, as well as our definition of volunteering, our mission statement and our value base. These procedures apply to all volunteers who undertake tasks on behalf and at the direction of the Gay Project.

1.2 Responsibility

The Volunteer Coordinator (Michael O'Donnell) is in the first instance responsible for ensuring that the policy and the procedures in this document are implemented efficiently and effectively. All other staff and volunteers are expected to facilitate this process.

1.3 Eligibility

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

1.4 Working Conditions

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

1.5 Volunteering Times

Volunteering times are negotiated between the Volunteer Co-Ordinator and the volunteer and are as flexible as the tasks allow. Voluntary time commitment is never expected to match that of a full-time paid staff, but unscheduled absences can create organisational problems. When expecting to be absent, volunteers should inform their supervisor as soon as possible, so that alternative arrangements can be made.

1.6 Appropriate Behaviour

Volunteers are expected to work within the policies and procedures of the organisation and adhere to its ethos. They are responsible for presenting a positive image of the organisation to the outside world.

1.7 Representation of our Organisation

Volunteers must seek prior approval from the organisation's Volunteer Co-ordinator before undertaking anything that might affect the organisation. This includes, but is not limited to, statements to the press, joint initiatives with other bodies, and agreements involving contractual or financial obligations.

1.8 Confidentiality

The organisation 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 organisation.

1.9 Records

A system of minimal records is maintained on all volunteers, including dates and times of service, tasks performed, evaluation of volunteering work, etc. Volunteer records are considered confidential.

1.10 Service at the Discretion of the Organisation

Any voluntary service is at the discretion of the organisation. The organisation may at any time decide to terminate a volunteer's relationship with the organisation with a valid reason. Likewise a volunteer may at any time decide to terminate their relationship with the organisation. It is good practice for a volunteer to give a reason for leaving. Notice of such decisions should be communicated at the earliest opportunity.

2. Recruitment

2.1 Role Descriptions and Person Specifications

All volunteers will be provided with a role description including a title of the volunteering role, starting and finishing dates, hours and place of work, name of supervisor and 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 the Volunteer Co-ordinator. A copy of the final version will be given to the volunteer before commencing voluntary work, as it will be used in supervision and evaluation sessions.

2.2 Applications

Volunteers are recruited on a pro-active basis by the organisation using publicity avenues that are suitable for the roles that need to be filled. Potential volunteers may also apply speculatively. Volunteers are recruited in accordance with the organisation'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 Volunteer Co-ordinator, 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. 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.

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 supervisor can be met. We suggest that volunteers disclose to their volunteer manager any chronic illness such as epilepsy, asthma, bipolar, cardiac problems, bleeding disorders, food allergies, insect allergies and/or medical allergies in order to receive appropriate support from the manager.

3. Training

Volunteers are invited to participate in the in-house training provided by the organisation. The Volunteer Co-ordinator should ensure that this training will be supportive to the volunteer in undertaking tasks within the organisation.

3.1 Induction

All volunteers will receive induction when they begin voluntary work with the organisation. This consists of a general introduction to the organisation, 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 should be appropriate for the demands of the position and the capabilities of the volunteer.

4. Supervision

4.1 Lines of Communication

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

4.2 Supervisors

Each volunteer should have a clearly identified supervisor who is responsible for the day-to-day management of that volunteer.

4.3 Supervision Sessions

Volunteers receive regular appraisals of their work, based on their role descriptions. Evaluation sessions may take place every two months between the volunteer and his or her supervisor. These sessions 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 organisation, convey appreciation to the volunteer and ascertain the continued interest of the volunteer in serving in his or her role. These sessions also serve as an opportunity to plan future tasks.

4.4 Corrective Action

If appropriate, corrective action may be taken following changes in the volunteer work style. Examples include the organisation providing training for an identified need, the reassignment of a volunteer, or the dismissal of a volunteer.

4.5 Dismissal

Volunteers who do not adhere to the organisation's rules or who fail to perform their volunteer assignments satisfactorily may be subject to dismissal. No volunteer's involvement will be terminated in writing until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with their supervisor. Grounds for dismissal include, but are not limited to: 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 organisation's 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 make a complaint in line with the complaints policy.

4.7 Exit Interviews

Where possible, an informal exit interview is held with any volunteer who is leaving the organisation, either because they have reached the end of their project, or are leaving for some other reason. 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 organisation operates. The offer of a personal reference for future employment etc. is made to each volunteer.

5. Support and Recognition

5.1 Support

The organisation endeavours to provide the support necessary to encourage and empower volunteers to make a meaningful contribution and gain significant benefits from their voluntary work. The organisation's Volunteer Co-ordinator 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 organisation, the benefits of which are difficult to quantify. It is essential that their efforts are recognised and rewarded.

5.3 Expenses

It is entirely the decision of the organisation to offer to reimburse any receipted out-of-pocket expenses.

5.4 Insurance

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

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

6.1 Volunteer Involvement

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

6.2 Feedback

Constructive feedback on this policy is always welcome. It should be given to the organisations' Volunteer Co-ordinator who will ensure that it is considered fully.

Signed: (On behalf of organisation) _____

Signed: (Volunteer): _____

Date:): _____