

The Volunteer Charter



Welcoming All, Growing Together

The Volunteer Charter

This Volunteer Charter comes in two segments, one for Organisations and one for volunteers and can be used to clarify expectations from both sides when a volunteer takes up a role in your organisation. By implementing this Volunteer Charter you are creating a clear foundation of the relationship with volunteers and by ensuring the charter is followed, generating an increased quality in the volunteering experience.

This is not a contract, so there is no need to sign or fill in the name of the organisation.

What volunteers can expect from this organisation...



DIVERSITY

We will make sure everyone feels welcome and included.

I expect the Volunteer Involving Organisation to promote diversity and inclusion, respecting differences and fostering an environment that values everyone.



FLEXIBILITY IN VOLUNTEERING

We will think about your skills, abilities and interests when we ask you to volunteer.

I expect to be offered meaningful and accessible opportunities tailored to my skills, interests, and availability.

SUGGESTIONS

It is important to make everyone feels welcome and to treat everyone equally. In your recruitment process and onboarding, you should acknowledge that volunteers come from different backgrounds and have different experience. This lays a great foundation to making everyone feel seen and heard. For example, having an inclusion statement on your role description or application form, and asking if there are any additional supports that the volunteer might need whilst volunteering. On your volunteer's first day, explain to them how you expect them to treat everyone.

WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED

An inclusion statement on our role description or application form.

A question on our application form that asks about additional support needs.

The organisation has a clear way of showing how everyone is welcome.

SUGGESTIONS

It is important that organisations consider how accessible they are to all volunteers and remove barriers to volunteering wherever possible.

WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED

We offer a variety of roles and allow flexibility in the timing and location of these roles.



ROLE DESCRIPTION

We will clearly explain what we want you to do.

I expect clear and defined roles and responsibilities, allowing me to contribute effectively to the mission and objectives of the organisation.



TRAINING

We will give you training and any other information you need to be a volunteer.

I expect the Volunteer Involving Organisation to provide the training and resources, I need to enable me to acquire the skills and knowledge to carry out my role safely and to the best of my ability.



SUPPORT

We will give you any support you need and make sure you can meet with other volunteers.

I expect support from at least one clearly identified contact person and opportunities to meet and socialise with my fellow volunteers.

SUGGESTIONS

Before you think about involving volunteers in your organisation, you need to know exactly what you are going to ask your volunteers to do. This informs what sort of volunteer you are looking for (good with computers, knows how to cook, is available at weekends). Putting all the information you have on paper to send to your volunteer before you take them on or meet them for an interview, can help you be more efficient in your recruitment, and gives the volunteer the feeling of a professional environment.

WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED

Role descriptions for our volunteers that we discuss with our volunteers.

SUGGESTIONS

Different roles need varying levels of training. Regardless of the role, some training must be involved. This makes sure the volunteer knows exactly how to carry out their tasks and has the skills and knowledge to provide the service that you want them to.

WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED

Core training for our volunteers (this can be very short, or longer depending on the role).

An additional training for our volunteers which allows them to stay engaged in their volunteering and perhaps take on bigger/different roles in the team.

SUGGESTIONS

Volunteers need to feel supported in their role. Knowing who is their main contact is crucial to establish a clear relationship to your organisation, but being able to share experiences and knowledge with their fellow volunteers is equally important. Regular volunteer meetings or group check ins can be a great way to make this happen informally. A shared WhatsApp group is another example of peer support.

WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED

Our volunteers know who is their supervisor/who to contact.

We have a way for volunteers to meet up regularly.

One or more staff have attended supporting volunteers training (www.volunteer.ie/training)



COMMUNICATION

We will communicate with you in a way that you understand and can easily access.

I expect regular communication, with timely sharing of relevant information through a medium that I can (or am taught to) use and have access to.

SUGGESTIONS

Volunteers expect to hear from you regularly and to be kept up to date with any changes that relate to their roles. Be aware that people might prefer different ways to communicate – some prefer emails, others text. Make sure that your volunteers know how you get in touch with them, and how they can get in touch with you. When you communicate with them use plain simple language, avoid long sentences, acronyms and jargon.

WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED

Clear two-way communication with our volunteers that volunteers engage with.

Communication with our volunteers regularly.

Our volunteers know how we communicate with them, we know which types of communication our volunteers like.



REGULAR CHECK-INS

We will regularly check in to see how you are doing.

I expect regular check-ins, providing an opportunity to discuss progress, address concerns, and ensure a positive and collaborative working relationship.

SUGGESTIONS

A big part of supporting and supervising volunteers efficiently is establishing regular check ins. It is important that the volunteer knows this is a regular thing, and not a discipline measure. A meeting can be seen as very formal, so calling these catch ups, check ins or coffee chats can help keep them easy going and relaxed. Make sure you give the volunteer a chance to ask you questions and feed back to you.

WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED

We do regular check-ins with our volunteers.



WELLBEING

We will provide resources to ensure your wellbeing and regularly check-in.

I expect the organisation to have my best interest at heart at all times, keeping me safe and making sure I understand the boundaries of my role.

SUGGESTIONS

Depending on the volunteer's role, this can be a big or small part of the support the volunteer receives from you. A relaxed and happy volunteer is a good volunteer so it's important to put in place measures that help prevent burn out, for yourself, and the volunteer. Regular check-ins are great to informally check-in to see how the volunteer is getting on so you can decide if further training or support might be needed. Posters and flyers on mental health and wellbeing that are regularly distributed, or training on mindfulness, is a great way to encourage wellbeing conversations within the team.

WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED

We talk to our volunteers about their wellbeing.

We signpost resources on wellbeing to our volunteers.



RECOGNITION AND APPRECIATION

We will explain how the work you do makes a difference to the organisation and show appreciation for the time you give.

I expect acknowledgement and appreciation of my contributions, recognising the value I bring to the mission and goals of the organisation.



EXPENSES

We will tell you if we pay for your travel and food while volunteering.

It is important that it does not cost me financially when I volunteer. I expect the organisation to be transparent about all costs and reimburse travel expenses if possible.



FEEDBACK

We will tell you how you are doing and be ready to talk about any problems or suggestions you have.

I expect both the Organisation and myself to actively participate in a two-way feedback at least once a year, fostering continuous improvement and communication to enhance the volunteer experience.

SUGGESTIONS

Making a volunteer feel valued and appreciated is an absolute necessity if you would like your volunteers to stay with your organisation and become ambassadors of your work and cause. Having a mixture of ways you show your volunteers that their efforts are noticed and appreciated is a great way to ensure you are engaging different individuals – from big celebrations to mark National Volunteering Week and International Volunteering Day, to small thank you notes and biscuits at break times.

WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED

We regularly, and in different ways, show our volunteers that they are appreciated.

We highlight the good practice of volunteers at a variety of opportunities.

SUGGESTIONS

The cost of volunteering is a big barrier for many potential volunteers out there. If you can pay travel expenses for volunteers, you should do it. When you write your role description and design your recruitment process, keep in mind any hidden cost to the volunteer, such as postage, travel, uniform.

WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED

Processes to ensure volunteers are not out of pocket.

Supplies are provided for where needed and volunteers are not expected to provide these.

SUGGESTIONS

Your volunteers should know how they can give feedback on the work they are asked to do and the work of the organisation. Sending an anonymous survey or having a feedback box at reception is a great way to gather their insights.

WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED

A way for volunteers to give us feedback.

What this organisation expects from volunteers...



COMMITMENT

You will care about what we do and help other people care too.

We want volunteers who are passionate and committed to the organisation's mission.



UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE

You will complete your tasks and tell us if you don't understand something.



RELIABLE

You will be on time and carry out our instructions.

We expect volunteers to be reliable partners, maintaining consistent communication, and adhering to commitments.

SUGGESTIONS

In an interview or group recruitment session talk about what your organisations does, how they do it and where they volunteer fits into that. Ask the volunteers questions that engage them in this topic, for example, how do they relate to the cause? Do they have any experience in relation to it? Why do they want to volunteer with you? You can also include this in your role description or emails to them.

WE HAVE TOLD OUR VOLUNTEERS ABOUT

What the organisation does, how we do it and where volunteering fits in

We ask them about their motivation

WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED

A written role description for the volunteer.

A volunteer interview (if appropriate to the role).

SUGGESTIONS

Explain to the volunteer in text or chat exactly what you would like them to do. Be clear and concise. Perhaps include also what you would not like them to do. Tell them how their role is related to the overall work of the team or the organisations and how it is going to benefit your services users or cause. Don't forget to tell them how it will benefit them!

WE HAVE TOLD OUR VOLUNTEERS ABOUT

Our volunteers have seen and agreed to the role description.

Our volunteers know how to ask for guidance and help.

SUGGESTIONS

Make sure in either or both your role description and interview that the volunteer knows when they are volunteering, for how long, where to go and how to communicate with you if they are late or something changes last minute. Remember to explain to them why it is important that they are on time and respect the time commitments, so they understand how important their role is to your organisation.

WE HAVE TOLD OUR VOLUNTEERS ABOUT

The volunteer knows when they are volunteering, for how long and where to go.

The volunteer knows how to let us know if there are issues.



COMMUNICATION

You will read any information we send you and let us know as soon as possible if you can't volunteer or have any problems.

We expect volunteers to read and respond where appropriate to any communication from the organisation. We expect to be notified as soon as possible of any changes in a volunteer's circumstances that might change their ability to carry out their agreed volunteer role.



INCLUSIVITY

You will make everyone feel welcome and included.

We expect volunteers to promote inclusivity, fostering an environment where all participants feel welcome and valued, irrespective of background or identity.



FLEXIBLE

You will recognise that changes can happen and adapt accordingly.

We expect volunteers to demonstrate flexibility, adapting to changing circumstances and understanding the diverse needs and constraints of the volunteer community.

SUGGESTIONS

You might have different ways to communicate with your volunteers, for example, via text, WhatsApp, email or phone calls. Make sure to let your volunteer know how you communicate with them, how often, and if there are things you need them to communicate back to you. It is good practice to ask how the volunteer prefers to receive communication, so you know how best is to contact them.

WE HAVE TOLD OUR VOLUNTEERS ABOUT

Our volunteers know how we as an organisation communicate.

We have asked volunteers about the way they prefer to receive information.

WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED

A clear way to communicate with our volunteers regularly.

SUGGESTIONS

Everyone should feel heard and respected – volunteers, staff and service users. Know that as a leader of volunteers, you set the tone for how the volunteers understand that they should treat others. In interviews it might be a good idea to ask the volunteer how they would conduct themselves in a made up scenario, as a basis for talking about how your organisations would like to see people treated.

WE HAVE TOLD OUR VOLUNTEERS ABOUT

Our volunteers knows how we expect everyone to treat each other – staff, service users and other volunteers.

WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED

A fictional scenario in my volunteer interviews to discuss how volunteers should behave.

SUGGESTIONS

Talk to your volunteer about the changing nature of volunteering and what might cause things to change at the last minute – funding, staff capacity, the weather! How do you communicate last minute changes to your volunteers? What about big organisational changes that effect volunteers and their roles? Some volunteers have busy lives and might not be able to adapt as quickly, so it is important to acknowledge that and make sure they don't feel pressured.

WE HAVE TOLD OUR VOLUNTEERS ABOUT

Our volunteer understands what sort of changes might happen in relation to their volunteering.



EFFECTIVE

You will do your tasks well and to your greatest ability.

We expect volunteers to contribute effectively, utilising resources to maximize the impact of our programmes and initiatives.



INITIATIVE

You will share ideas and make suggestions so we can make things better.

We expect volunteers to take initiative in addressing challenges, identifying opportunities, and actively contributing to the continuous improvement of our programme.



POLICY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

You will respect everyone's privacy and make sure you follow any rules and guidelines that we have.

We expect our volunteers to familiarise themselves with relevant policies and procedures, and to treat all information given at the time of volunteering as confidential.

SUGGESTIONS

It is good to consider how the volunteer is going to complete their tasks. You might have more experience than them so you might prepare a step-by-step procedure document to give to them. But don't forget they might have experience doing similar things so ask them How would you go about this?

WE HAVE TOLD OUR VOLUNTEERS ABOUT

Ask the volunteer how they are going to go about the task/role?

WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED

A written procedure to give to the volunteer.

SUGGESTIONS

It is important that the volunteer feels empowered to take the initiative you want them to have, and learns what sort of decisions they are able to make. Tell them how you make your decisions, and make sure they understand what your role is, in relation to their role. Acknowledge that the volunteer might, with time, gain more knowledge about certain aspects of the volunteering than you have, and make sure that they know you welcome their suggestions to improving and changing the way things are done.

WE HAVE TOLD OUR VOLUNTEERS ABOUT

The volunteer understands what sort of decision they are expected to take.

WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED

A way for volunteers to give feedback about their work and volunteering (online survey, feedback box at reception).

SUGGESTIONS

Volunteers should know about any policies that relate to their role and have access to them. Different roles need different levels of policies, so make sure to cover only what the volunteer needs to know, and then refer to where they can access more information if they are interested. It is also important for them to know what they can share about their volunteering time with other people, and what is confidential. Note that confidentiality can refer to materials such as texts, emails and paper, as well as experiences with service users and other volunteers.

WE HAVE TOLD OUR VOLUNTEERS ABOUT

Our volunteers know about the policies we have in place that relate to their role.

Our volunteers understands what we see as confidential.

WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED

An expense policy.

A complaint policy.

At least one of our staff have attended volunteer policy training.



TIME AND EXIT

You will let us know if you can't volunteer with us anymore.

The volunteer should know their time commitment to their volunteering. If a volunteer decides the volunteer role no longer suits, we ask them to provide as much notice as possible and if appropriate complete a short exit interview/survey.

SUGGESTIONS

Depending on the role, you might want to let your volunteer know that if they just stop signing up for shifts or don't show up for shifts, how you will deal with that and how that affects your work. Remember to explain to them that it is perfectly acceptable that their circumstances change, or they realise the role isn't for them, but tell them how you would like them to notify you of this, and what happens when they do (e.g.: removed from database, exit survey sent, exit interview).

WE HAVE TOLD OUR VOLUNTEERS ABOUT

Our volunteers know how long they are volunteering.

Our volunteers know how to leave the volunteering role.

WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED

A clear way for volunteers to leave and gather their feedback when leaving (exit survey/interview).

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volunteer.ie