



Limerick Volunteer Centre Policy for Working with Volunteers

1st July 2017

Introduction

Limerick Volunteer Centre is a free matching service to encourage more people to become involved in volunteering across our city and county. Our role is to provide information and advice to people interested in volunteering and to organisations looking for volunteers. We work with Voluntary and Community Organisations to gather information about their volunteering needs, and in the process offer support and advice on good practice in volunteer management. Limerick Volunteer Centre is a member of Volunteer Ireland and the national network of Volunteer Centres. Further information and downloadable resources can be found on our web site: www.volunteerlimerick.ie

This document must be read in conjunction with the:--

1. Limerick Volunteer Centre Policy for Working with Volunteer-Involving Organisations
2. Limerick Volunteer Centre Policy for dealing with complaints.
3. Limerick Volunteer Centre Policy on Non-registration or Non-placement of Volunteers and Non-registration of or Non-placement of Volunteers with Organisations
4. Limerick Volunteer Centre Equal Opportunities Policy

1: Purpose of Policy

Limerick Volunteer Centre is committed to treating all volunteers and potential volunteers with the respect and dignity they deserve. We will, at all times, use our best efforts to help the volunteer to find a placement that suits their expressed needs.

Therefore, we are committed to:

- Promoting the value of volunteering to all sectors of the local community.
- Offering a service that will be inclusive, accessible and high quality.
- Serving as best we can every volunteer who accesses our service and ensuring that volunteers are the focus of our work.
- Resourcing and supporting volunteers to make informed choices about volunteering, maintaining relevant, up-to-date information on volunteering opportunities.
- Developing new opportunities and projects involving volunteers in their local community
- Referring volunteers to a wide range of community and voluntary projects across all sectors of the community.

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- Working with organisations so that they can achieve best practice principles in volunteer management.
- Ensuring that volunteers do not replace paid workers nor constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers.
- Promoting the principles of equality and participation within the volunteer sector.
- Raising the profile of volunteering in organisations, government and the community in general

We believe that:

- Volunteers should be treated with respect and dignity.
- Everyone should have an equal opportunity to volunteer.
- Volunteering should respect the rights, dignity and culture of others.
- Everyone should have a positive experience of volunteering.
- Volunteering should be a benefit to both volunteers and the organisations.

The purpose of this policy is to set out the process by which the management and staff of Limerick Volunteer Centre will engage with any potential volunteers that access the service.

2: Definitions

2.1: Volunteering

Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society, local communities, individuals outside the immediate family, the environment or other causes. Voluntary activities are undertaken of a person's own free will, without payment, except for the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses.

Our understanding of volunteering is that:

- 1: Volunteering is always a matter of choice and is done of the volunteers own free will and without coercion.
- 2: Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community.
- 3: Volunteering benefits both the community and the volunteer and gives people a sense of ownership of their local community.
- 4: Voluntary work is unpaid.
- 5: Volunteering is a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs.

2.2: Volunteers

Volunteers are people of all ages, religions, ethnic groups, abilities, races, sexes. Volunteers come from all walks of life and each volunteer has a unique set of skills and abilities.

2.3: Not-for-profit Organisation

For the purpose of this document a “not-for-profit organisation” will be defined as:-

- 1: Any organisation the objective of which is to act for the public benefit

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2: Any organisation the objective of which is not to return any profits to its owners but to actively contribute to the development of the community through the provision of service

3: Any organisation which actively involves volunteers in the provision of its services or intends to involve volunteers in the provisions of its services.

Such organisations may include registered charities, companies limited by guarantee, organisations, schools, associations and community groups and may be established for the purpose of providing:-

- 1: Support, information and training,
- 2: Sports and recreation facilities,
- 3: Social services including services to people with disabilities, or the social excluded,
- 4: Arts, culture and heritage, among others.

2.4: Organisation

For the purpose of this document the word “organisation” means a not-for-profit organisation as defined above.

2.5: Volunteering opportunities

These are volunteering opportunities created by a not-for-profit organisation which define the volunteering role, including the tasks involved, the skills and qualities required, the time commitment in terms of hours and duration, the screening requirements and the training, support and supervision available to the volunteer.

3: Procedures

Limerick Volunteer Centre operates an open door policy. The volunteer is welcome to drop into the centre or they can ring and make an appointment to talk to a member of the staff from Monday – Friday 9a.m.-5p.m. closed for lunch 1p.m.-2p.m.

3.1: Drop In

(i): When the volunteer arrives they are made welcome.

(ii): The Placement Officer completes their form online. Details on the form are explained and/or a sheet explaining each category is shown to the volunteer. We advise the volunteer to explain to the Placement officer the volunteer opportunities they are interested in, in order of preference e.g. 1.2.3. This procedure helps to find the volunteer’s main interest. For example if the volunteer’s first preference is health/disability, we give the volunteer the details of a voluntary organisation recruiting with that target group. At all times, the confidential nature of our service is explained to the volunteer.

(iii): We give the volunteer the name and address of the organisation, the name of the contact person and telephone number. If the volunteer requests we will telephone the contact person and make an appointment for them.

(iv): Limerick Volunteer Centre has a large number of people from other countries and cultures who drop into our centre. At times they have very poor English language skills. We try to place them in an environment, such as a charity shop where they are more comfortable with others until such time as they are better able to interact with clients using the service.

3.2: Online Registration

(I): Where volunteers register online with the Volunteer Centre, we allocate a unique identifier number to each one; we study the form to try to understand in what area the person is interested in volunteering, e.g. if their main interest is in working with children/youth and ensure that the form is free of spelling/typographical errors. We then use one of the standard emails saved in our system to contact the volunteer if they have not yet applied for an opportunity and the email is adjusted accordingly to reflect the volunteer who has just registered. The purpose of the standard emails is to encourage the volunteer to apply for opportunities online.

International Volunteers

Where we are contacted by potential volunteers based overseas, we email them stating that we cannot place them unless they are based in Ireland. We make clear that they are welcome to call to Limerick Volunteer Centre or to contact us on their arrival in Ireland if they wish to volunteer here.

Applying for opportunities online

The Placement Officer will contact the volunteer within 72 hours, excluding weekends. The email contains the name of the organisation, the name of the contact person and email address of voluntary organisations that the volunteer has applied for online. We advise them to contact Limerick Volunteer Centre if they need any further information and notify us if and when they start their volunteering work. We also set a reminder to contact the person again in 4 weeks.

3.3: Phone In

(i): Volunteers ring the centre to enquire how to go about volunteering. We advise them to register online or call into the centre. They may not be able to do this because they do not have access to the internet or cannot access the centre. The Placement Officer will chat to them, and post them a hard copy of the Volunteer Application form. If the volunteer has difficulty in getting to the Volunteer Centre we may arrange to meet them out in the county.

(ii): Volunteers who are not sure what area they wish to volunteer in and put (not sure) on their form, are normally contacted by telephone. At times, the volunteer may not have their voice mail set up or are unable to answer their telephone while at work, or may just have the telephone switched off. A message is left on voicemail. The person contacting the volunteer should use their discretion in respect of confidentiality; in particular where the volunteer has provided contact details (such as a landline) where there is a possible risk of confidentiality being breached.

3.4: De-registering

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If at any stage you wish to be removed from our database please let us know and we can de-activate your file immediately.

4: Choosing a volunteering opportunity

Once an opportunity has been chosen the following may happen:

1: Limerick Volunteer Centre will call the organisation(s) to clarify any questions the volunteer may have. It is at this point that Limerick Volunteer Centre can discover that the opportunity has been (a) recently filled or (b) the details have changed. If this happens, the volunteer is consulted and, if appropriate, helped to choose another opportunity.

2: Give the volunteer the contact name and email address of the organisation and recommend that the volunteer call the organisation as soon as possible.

5: Follow-up

Follow up depends on whether the placement is long-term or a once off / time-limited opportunity. The volunteer and the organisation are followed up at regular intervals. Please see how to guides on 'How to record a placement and ' How to deal with a newly registered volunteer.'

5.1: Once-off/time-limited opportunity

The volunteer and the organisation are followed as soon as practicable to ensure that contact has been made and that the individual and the organisation have agreed the time, place and details of the volunteering opportunity.

All volunteers are contacted at least once a year to ascertain their status.

5.2: Keeping Limerick Volunteer Centre updated

Volunteers are requested to keep Limerick Volunteer Centre updated, both during and after the placement process. This helps us to assist the volunteer better, it can help us identify problems and it also lets us know how successful or otherwise the service is being. It is also important that organisations approached by a volunteer are kept up to date, so that if a volunteer is no longer interested in a role or is unable to follow up with a role, either Limerick Volunteer Centre or the organisation can be informed and the role can be passed on.

6: Inappropriate Placement

Where Limerick Volunteer Centre is informed by the individual volunteer that an inappropriate/unsatisfactory placement has taken place, Limerick Volunteer Centre will:

- Spend time with the volunteer – this can either take place on the phone or in the office - to find out why the placement was considered inappropriate/unsatisfactory.
- Contact the organisation to talk to them about the issues raised.
- Work with the individual to find a more suitable placement
- Offer one to one support to the organisation in designing current and future volunteering roles

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- Document issue sensitively and the process on Salesforce.

7: Recording of Information

In addition to the information provided by volunteers on registration, our database allows us to record notes on the contact we have with volunteers. This will generally include the date of the conversation and any important information discussed. We will also record the opportunities volunteers are interested in, when they have started volunteering and the estimated number of hours they will be volunteering. Volunteers are free to request a copy of any information we hold on them. Volunteers may request to see our Data Protection policy and procedure for further information.

8: Monitoring and Evaluation

8.1: Success of policy

Limerick Volunteer Centre monitors, reviews and evaluates the success of its policy for working with volunteers on a regular basis and seeks to make ongoing improvements. It also monitors its other policies to ensure that they do not operate against this policy.

8.2: Feedback

Constructive feedback on this document is always welcome. It should be given to the Limerick Volunteer Centre Manager, or any member of the Steering Committee.

8.3: Review

This document is reviewed by the management and board on a regular basis, or if circumstances change.