

**Volunteering Policy**

**POLICY STATEMENT**

**The definition of volunteering is: The commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society and the community, the environment or individuals outside (or in addition to) one’s immediate family. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain.**

The Children’s Contact Centre (Antrim, Ballymena and Larne) endorses this definition and recognises the value of volunteers to the organisation and the important roles that they fulfil. Voluntary work is a fundamental part of the organisation's practice.

Volunteers work alongside paid staff in roles that are distinctive and complementary. They are not used as a substitute for paid employees. The contribution made by volunteers adds value to and enhances the existing service provision. The Children’s Contact Centre (Antrim, Ballymena and Larne) provides training, guidance and support to all volunteers to enable them to fulfil their roles within the organisation.

The Children’s Contact Centre (Antrim, Ballymena and Larne) offer a safe, friendly and neutral environment where children of separated families can spend time with one or both parents. It is a child centred environment that puts the needs of the children first. We expect our volunteers to adhere to our core aims and ethos in their working.

This document sets out the conditions under which volunteers are involved in the work of the Children’s Contact Centre (Antrim, Ballymena, Larne)

The Children’s Contact Centre (Antrim, Ballymena and Larne) is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity in respect of the recruitment, selection, training and placement of volunteers within the organisation. It is our policy to provide voluntary work opportunities to all irrespective of:

race or ethnic origin

marital or family status

sexual orientation

age

religious belief / political opinion

disability

nationality

We are opposed to all forms of unfair and unlawful discrimination.

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| IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY | | |
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| 1.0 | Recruitment | |
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|  | When considering the possible involvement of volunteers in Children’s Contact Centre, a decision will be made bearing in mind the following factors | |
|  | 1.1 | Volunteer Coordinator will organise volunteer training as identified, in consultation with the contact coordinator. |
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|  | 1.2 | It is the responsibility of Children’s Contact Centre to identify worthwhile and satisfying voluntary work opportunities which can complement the work of paid workers and which can be identified as pieces of work for which they will take responsibility. |
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|  | 1.3 | Voluntary work opportunities will be advertised in a variety of places taking into account the principles if our Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policies. |
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|  | 1.4 | All prospective volunteers will be required to complete an application form and will be asked to give two referees.  Children’s Contact Centre retains the right to turn down applicants for a volunteer role prior to, during or after volunteer training. Individuals will be offered an opportunity to discuss the outcome and identify possible alternative within or outside the Children’s Contact Centre |
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|  | 1.5 | All potential volunteers will be required to comply with Access NI which supports the framework for the care and protection of children and vulnerable adults. It requires that the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety maintain a list of individuals who are considered unsuitable to work (in a paid or voluntary) capacity with children and vulnerable adults. |
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|  |  | NB Child protection is of the utmost importance and the limitations to vetting procedures need to be acknowledged. (For further information see Child Protection Policy). |
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|  | 1.6 | All prospective volunteers will be required to attend mandatory volunteer training sessions. |
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| 2.0 | Induction Period – (following the training) | |
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|  | 2.1 | All volunteers will be given an agreement and role description setting out what Children’s Contact Centre is offering them and what is expected of them. |
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|  | 2.2 | Each voluntary worker will undergo a structured training and induction programme to familiarise them with the work of the Children’s Contact Centre and the ethos and values which underpin the work. |
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|  | 2.3 | All volunteers will be clearly briefed about the importance of keeping confidential, information gained in the course of their work |
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|  | 2.4 | During a trial period of 3 months, volunteers will be issued with a uniform, volunteer agreement and role/responsibility description. The volunteer and Volunteer Coordinator will meet half way through the trial period to assess performance, address any difficulties and make any changes if required. |
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|  | 2.5 | On successful completion of the trial period the voluntary worker, will be confirmed in the role. |
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|  | 2.6 | In the event of an unsatisfactory performance, the volunteer may be given the opportunity to consider other more appropriate voluntary work opportunities or training within the organisation or be asked to leave. |
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| 3.0 | Supervision and Support | |
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|  | 3.1 | Every volunteer will be made aware, that they may come to the Volunteer Coordinator for support and where queries/difficulties can be raised. Before and after every contact session there will be a de-briefing with the Volunteer co coordinator/Contact co-ordinator. Volunteers will receive support to discuss any issues they felt arose in contact. |
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|  | 3.2 | Volunteers will be given useful feedback on the performance of their tasks and formal space will be given for the discussion of areas of concern. |
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|  | 3.3 | Where appropriate, volunteers will be expected to attend supportive meetings, specifically to deal with volunteer related issues. |
| 4.0 | Contact sessions  4.1 All volunteers are required to give one week’s notice if they cannot cover their contact session. Where possible, it is the volunteer’s responsibility to get their contact session covered by another volunteer. If they are not able to get it covered themselves, they should then go back to the volunteer coordinator.  4.2 All Volunteers are required to be at the contact centre 30 mins before contact sessions begin, to set up the hall and receive a handover from the Coordinator.  4.3 All Volunteers are required to stay after contact to ensure the hall is tidied up, toys cleaned and put away and a debrief carried out by the Coordinator.  4.4 All volunteers are required to wear their uniform and name badge to every contact session. | |
| 5.0 | Expenses  We value our volunteers and want to ensure that there are no barriers to volunteer involvement. All out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed e.g. expenses for travel. In order to claim expenses, an expenses form must be completed and given to the Volunteer Coordinator.  This must be sent in every month. Claims sent in after 3 months have lapsed will not be honoured. | |
| 6.0 | Grievance & Disciplinary Procedure | |
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|  | 6.1 | The volunteer coordinator will be responsible for outlining the organisation's grievance and disciplinary procedures, how they relate to volunteers and who volunteers should contact if they have a grievance. Likewise, if there is a complaint about a volunteer’s conduct, Volunteer coordinator along with the Contact Coordinator will deal with the situation in accordance with the complaints procedure. |
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