

Listowel Family Resource Centre: Volunteer Policy

Mission Statement

“Listowel Family Resource Centre is a community based resource facility that provides a welcoming, inclusive resource, supporting the Social, Educational, Safety, Informative and Family Support needs of the community.

Policy Statement:

Listowel Family Resource Centre recognises the valuable and unique contribution volunteers make to the organization and how rich volunteers make the services and activities we deliver. Volunteers are an integral part of the team. Without the contribution of the efforts of volunteers, the diversity of skills and talents they bring, the project would be unable to offer the range and quality of service it does. We want to assure you of our appreciation of your services and indicate our commitment to do the very best we can to make your volunteer experience here a productive and rewarding one.

Volunteers with Listowel Family Resource Centre:

Listowel Family Resource centre will consider involving anyone as a volunteer. Individuals must, however, be able to demonstrate a commitment to the aims and mission statement of the Centre and may only be placed if their needs as a volunteer 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.

Listowel Family Resource Centre welcomes volunteers from a very wide and diverse source and backgrounds, the local community, interested individuals, volunteer referral programmes and corporate volunteer programmes.

Listowel Family Resource Centre supports volunteers within the organisation and also endeavours to encourage, support and compliment all voluntary activity within the community, as a key to building vibrant healthy communities and families.

What is a volunteer?

A volunteer is an individual who, without monetary payment, contributes time and service to the project or the community. Expenses can in some cases be reimbursed once agreed in advance with assigned supervisor and Manager and on occasion a small gift or token of appreciation may be given, but in no circumstances will a volunteer be paid for their efforts within the project or the community. It should always be assumed, if asked to do something or carry out a task, individuals are being requested to do so voluntarily.

Why get involved?

The benefits of volunteering with Listowel FRC include:

- ✓ **It is very fulfilling to support a worthy activity that helps others.** *You will be part of a welcoming, supportive and dynamic team.*

- ✓ **It is great craic and a personal learning experience.** *98% of people who volunteers say its makes them a happier person.*
- ✓ **You will get experience.** *This is helpful if you wish to get paid employment in social/childcare/community/family support areas. Also, prospective employers in other sectors like to see volunteering work on CVs.*
- ✓ **You get to make more friends.** *It's true!!! And the people you meet are normally like-minded.*
- ✓ **It will help to develop better social and interpersonal skills.** *Surveys of volunteers reported that volunteering helped them with skills such as understanding others, motivating people, dealing with difficult situations and better communication skills.*
- ✓ **You will often learn new skills and might even discover hidden talents!!!**

How to get Involved:

Listowel FRC often calls for volunteers for a specific project or task. This will happen through email, text, word of mouth, Facebook, website or Volunteer Bureau.

An individual can contact Listowel FRC directly and express his/her interest. The individual will then be supplied with the Volunteer Application Form. Then the below recruitment process begins.

Relationship with Paid Staff:

Volunteers are appointed to enhance the capacity of paid staff (including Community Employment, Rural Social Scheme, TUS and Internship workers), not as a substitute for them. Clear roles are established to differentiate between paid staff and volunteers to foster mutually beneficial and complementary relationships.

It may be the case that Voluntary Board of Directors members volunteer to support some initiatives and activities within the Centre from time to time. In these incidents the volunteer will operate as a 'volunteer worker' and will not be in a Director's/Employer's role and is directly responsible to a paid staff member.

Work Conditions:

Volunteers are treated as full members of our Team. They are treated as equally and fairly as paid staff and are included in the Organisations' planning, evaluation and decision making processes where practical and appropriate. Volunteers are provided with appropriate work sites, space, equipment and facilities necessary to volunteer comfortably, effectively and efficiently.

Working Times:

Working times can be negotiated, where appropriate, between the assigned Supervisor and volunteer and this can 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 Supervisor as soon as possible, so that alternative arrangements can be made.

Appropriate Behaviour:

Volunteers are expected to work within the policies and procedures of Listowel FRC and adhere to its ethos. As representatives of the Organisation, volunteers are responsible for presenting a positive image of Listowel FRC to the outside world and community.

Representation of Listowel FRC:

Volunteers must seek prior approval from the Manager of Listowel FRC before undertaking anything that might affect the Organisation. This includes, but is not limited to, statements to the press, joint initiatives with other bodies, agreements involving contractual or financial obligations.

Confidentiality:

Listowel FRC 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 our Organisation. Confidentiality extends beyond the life time of the volunteering position. **Refer to confidentiality Policy.**

Records:

A system of records is maintained on all volunteers, including application forms, references, dates and times of service, etc. Volunteer records are accorded the same confidentiality as staff records.

Service at the Discretion of Listowel FRC:

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

Recruitment:

Advertising & Applying for Volunteer Position:

Volunteers are recruited on a pro-active basis by Listowel FRC using avenues outlined above under 'How to get Involved'. Potential volunteers may also apply speculatively. Volunteers are recruited in accordance with our Equal Opportunities Policy.

Prospective volunteers are required to complete the Listowel FRC Application Form. The prospective volunteer will be asked to attend for an informal chat (informal interview) with the relevant senior member of staff. This is where the staff member will ascertain the prospective volunteers' interest in and suitability for the relevant role. Also, a clear outline of the task and its duties is outlined to the prospective volunteer. Written records of this informal interview are kept.

All unsuccessful candidates are thanked for applying and encouraged to reapply for other volunteering opportunities, internally or with other organisations, either current or in the future.

Checks for Suitability:

Following the informal chat/interview a prospective volunteer may be deemed suitable. Before the volunteering position can be offered the following checks are required:

- 2 references supplied and validated by phone by the Senior Staff member
- 2 forms of ID presented (1 of which must be photographic ID)
- Garda Vetting process completed **refer to Garda Vetting Policy**
- Health (mental & physical) check if the role requires it
- Confirmation of qualifications if the role requires it

Volunteers are always warned in advance of the intention to carry out some/all of the above checks. If they refuse permission and cannot provide an acceptable reason they will not be placed with Listowel FRC.

Once all the recruitment process is complete the volunteer is offer the placement and an assigned Supervisor is named. No placement will be made unless the requirements of the volunteer and the volunteers' Supervisor can be met.

Probation:

All placements are subject to an initial trial period of one month. At the end of this period the assigned Supervisor meets the volunteer to discuss the volunteers' suitability for their role. At this point, volunteers may continue in their current role, be re-assigned to a more suitable role or terminate the volunteer placement.

Training:

Induction:

All volunteers receive induction when they begin voluntary work with Listowel FRC. This consists of 2 inductions:

1. An Induction with your Supervisor specific to the purposes and requirements of the role. (approx. 45 minutes)
2. An Organisational Induction specific to overall Organisation (approx. 4 hours).

Attendance at both inductions is compulsory.

On-the-Job Training:

Volunteers receive initial and ongoing on-the-job training to provide them with information and skills necessary to perform their tasks well. The training will be appropriate for the demands of the position and capabilities of the volunteer.

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 and career development.

Some training may be compulsory, e.g. hand hygiene, food handling, Children's First, First Aid depending on the position. The Supervisor will advise on this and some training may need to be completed before the position can be taken up.

Training Information:

Any training that is to be undertaken must be applied for using the Training Request Form. Also, any training undertaken must be in line with the Organisation's policy. **Refer to Training, Education & Development Policy.**

Supervision:

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 relevant to their duties. Volunteers should be consulted on decisions that would substantially affect their volunteering conditions.

Supervisors:

Each volunteer will have a clearly identified Supervisor who is responsible for the day-to-day management of the volunteer. A member of Listowel FRC's senior staff normally takes on the Supervision role, but all staff members receive guidance on how to involve volunteers effectively in the work of the Organisation.

Support & Supervision:

Support and Supervision takes many forms for our volunteers. This includes:

- Regular informal debriefings & check –ins
- Formal meetings as required/requested by Supervisor and/or volunteer
- Group volunteer sessions (especially where a number of volunteers' tasks are in the same area)

Supervision is to ensure the volunteer is validated for their commitment to the Organisation, address any issues and/or concerns, suggest and changes in work styles, seek suggestions from volunteers on the area of work, and ascertain the continued interest of the volunteer.

Support is to ensure the necessary encouragement and empowerment is provided to volunteers to make a meaningful contribution and gain significant benefits from the voluntary work.

Corrective Action:

If appropriate, corrective action may be taken following any of the supervision formats outlined above. Examples include the organisation of training for an identified reason, the reassignment of a volunteer or the dismissal of a volunteer.

Dismissal:

Volunteers who do not adhere to the organisations' rules, policies and procedures or who fail to perform their volunteer duties satisfactorily may be subject to dismissal. No volunteers' involvement will be terminated 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 the influence of drugs (including

alcohol), theft, misuse of materials and equipment, abuse of clients and co-workers, breaches of confidentiality, failure to abide by Listowel FRC policies and procedures, failure to complete duties to a satisfactory standard.

Concerns and Grievances:

If volunteers have a concern and/or grievance relating to their volunteering and/or area of work, they are entitled to have their concerns heard by the assigned Supervisor. It is the intention of Listowel FRC to resolve all concerns/grievance informally, but in exceptional cases the formal process may have to be implemented. **Refer to Grievance Policy.**

Exit Interviews:

Where possible, informal exit interviews are held with volunteers who are leaving the Organisation, either because they have reached the end of their project or are leaving for some other reason. Interviews are usually conducted with the volunteers Supervisor and written records are kept. The interview should ascertain reason for leaving, how they found the volunteering experience and any suggestions they may have to offer to assist the organisation in its continuation to improve and strive for excellence. Where appropriate, the offer of a reference for future employment/volunteering etc. is made to each volunteer.

Insurance:

Listowel FRC's insurance covers volunteers working on behalf of and at the direction of the Organisation.

Recognition:

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

Volunteers under 18:

1. In addition to completing the volunteer application form a volunteer under 18 years must have the relevant Consent documentation completed and have parent(s) take responsibility for ensuring safe transport to and from Listowel Family Resource Centre.
2. Young people cannot volunteer for more than 4 hours per week.
3. No young volunteer will be unsupervised in the building.
4. **No-one under 14 years of age can be a regular volunteer in Listowel Family Resource Centre.** Exceptional circumstances will be made for a school-related project or a once-off community event. Separate school based information will be sought for such events.
5. **No-one under 15 years of age can volunteer during term time.** For work experience or during school holidays, the maximum a 14-year old can volunteer for is 6 hours per week. 15-year olds can only volunteer until 8pm at night.
6. **16 year olds and 17-year olds can volunteer 8 hours per week.** They cannot volunteer after 10pm during term time, and 11pm during holidays.

Monitoring & Evaluation:

Listowel FRC monitors and evaluates volunteer involvement in the Organisation on a regular basis and seeks to make ongoing improvements. Volunteer constructive feedback is always welcome in assisting in this process.

This Policy will be reviewed on a regular basis in line with best practise by the Leadership Team (Senior Staff).

This policy was discussed and ratified at a Board of Management meeting dated _____.

Signed: _____ (Chairperson)

Date: _____