



volunteer centre

Ionad d'Obair Dheonach Luimneach

LIMERICK

Limerick Volunteer Centre Equal Opportunities Policy

13th July 2012

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:--

- Limerick Volunteer Centre Policy for dealing with Volunteers.
- Limerick Volunteer Centre Policy for Working with Volunteer-Involving Organisations
- Limerick Volunteer Centre Policy for dealing with complaints.
- Limerick Volunteer Centre Policy on Non-registration or Non-placement of Volunteers and Non-registration of or Non-placement of Volunteers with Organisations

1: Purpose of Policy

1.1: Responsibility

Limerick Volunteer Centre steering committee, management and staff are responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented efficiently and effectively.

1.2: Measures

This document lists the procedures that must be taken in order to fulfil the above policy. The measures outlined in this document must be adhered to at all times. If they are breached, the appropriate complaints, grievance or disciplinary procedures will be used to

resolve the problem and to make improvements. Any person or organisation that chooses to take such an action will not be penalised by the organisation or treated less favourably as a result.

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
- 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 vacancies 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: Statement on Equal Opportunities

Limerick Volunteer Centre recognises that in our society certain individuals and groups of people are unfairly discriminated against, both directly and indirectly. They are denied equality of opportunity on the grounds of age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, caring status, caring responsibilities, mental or physical health/disability, race, colour, nationality, political or religious beliefs, economic status, criminal record, trade union activity or a combination of any of these. We strive to eliminate all such forms of discrimination and to create a climate in which equal opportunities are promoted as a means of developing the full potential of everyone who is involved with our organisation. We do this by fulfilling our legal obligation and by taking positive action which goes beyond the requirements of the law, but by avoiding stereotyping and tokenism.

4: Employment practice

4.1: General

Limerick Volunteer Centre has a public role and we recognise that the services we deliver should ideally be performed by workers who are representative of the diverse community in which we operate. In order to achieve this, Limerick Volunteer Centre aims to be an equal opportunities employer; optimising available human resources and ensuring fairness to potential and actual employees.

4.2: Recruitment

Limerick Volunteer Centre staff are recruited and selected on objective criteria that test the relevant skills, knowledge, experience, qualifications and personal qualities necessary for posts. No applicants are placed at a disadvantage by requirements which are not genuine occupational qualifications, as this would constitute indirect discrimination. This does not preclude the setting of certain legitimate limits and exclusions, however. Examples include a retirement age of 65, banning those with a criminal record of abuse from working with vulnerable groups of people, not employing immigrants without work permits, etc. Job vacancies are advertised as widely as possible and make reference to the operation of an equal opportunities policy to which staff are expected to adhere.

4.3: Training

We aim to provide training opportunities to all our staff to meet their training needs. If appropriate, this may include assertiveness training for those individuals who have little confidence as a result of belonging to a disadvantaged group. All members of staff receive suitable and relevant equal opportunities training and are provided with a copy of this document.

4.4: Other conditions of employment

Limerick Volunteer Centre is open to flexible working arrangements, such as job sharing, part-timing, flexi-timing, career development initiatives etc, which enable members of staff to juggle their competing time demands more efficiently. Limerick Volunteer Centre is sensitive to the time and other constraints under which people operate as a result of their socio-economic situation and cultural background. Meetings, events and the like are arranged as far as practicable in a way that takes into consideration the needs of current and potential staff members (in terms of timing of meetings, childcare arrangements, religious holidays etc). All service conditions are reviewed regularly to ensure that they do not discriminate against any particular group and instead provide for the varying needs of the staff team.

5: Volunteers working at Limerick Volunteer Centre

5.1: Overview

The positive and open attitude towards recruitment, selection and day to day treatment of Limerick Volunteer Centre staff is also extended to Limerick Volunteer Centre volunteers and other volunteers. Limerick Volunteer Centre expects its volunteers to share its commitment to equal opportunities and ensures that each volunteer receives a copy of this document.

5.2: Adapting to volunteers needs

We actively look for ways in which we can achieve adequate representation amongst our volunteers in terms of the community in which we operate. We will only be successful in attracting a wide range of people if we adapt to the needs of individual volunteers. Limerick Volunteer Centre is able to be much more flexible with volunteers than it can be with paid staff, for example by changing a role description to suit a volunteer's interests and abilities.

6: The work of Limerick Volunteer Centre

6.1: Our work with volunteers

Limerick Volunteer Centre believes that everyone has the right to volunteer and to have equal access to volunteering opportunities, without experiencing discrimination. We also wish the organisations with which we work to benefit from a true mix of available volunteers and we therefore closely monitor the potential volunteers who register with us. Our matching service will try to redress any apparent imbalances by using initiatives to

target volunteers from under-represented groups.

6.2: Our work with Volunteer-Involving Organisations

Limerick Volunteer Centre provides a variety of services to organisations that are run by, involve or which wish to involve volunteers. We will consider assisting and working with any such organisation, provided that its ethos and operations do not contravene Limerick Volunteer Centre's policies. In addition, we actively seek to work with a very broad range of organisations, so that potential volunteers for the matching service have as wide a range of volunteering options as possible.

6.3: Publicity

In order to bring our message to volunteers, organisations and the general public, we publicise Limerick Volunteer Centre as widely as resources will allow, using as many media as possible. We aim to be inclusive by using positive imagery of and making reference to, all types of people. The language in our publications is clear and non-discriminatory. We publicise our commitment to equal opportunities whenever appropriate. A copy of this document is available to anyone who requests it.

6.4: Premises, facilities and equipment

Limerick Volunteer Centre strives to make the physical environment in which we operate as attractive and user-friendly as possible for everyone; volunteers, staff and visitors. This mainly involves the Limerick Volunteer Centre office, but also premises elsewhere used for any Limerick Volunteer Centre events and meetings. Healthy and safe conditions for everyone are of paramount importance. Special provisions, such as wheelchair access and extended opening hours are made for people with special needs wherever viable.

7: Dealing with harassment

7.1: Our approach

Limerick Volunteer Centre is committed to social justice and equality, and believes that everyone involved with the organisation has the right to freedom from harassment, whether this is on the basis of gender, marital status, family status, age, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or membership of the Traveller community. Limerick Volunteer Centre does not condone any harassment whatsoever, whether it is verbal, written, physical, sexual, to person or property, intentional or not. Any such harassment, abuse or victimisation will be dealt with severely and quickly, using the appropriate disciplinary procedure in the case of a member of staff and any other appropriate form of action with anyone else.

8: Monitoring and Evaluation

8.1: Success of policy

Limerick Volunteer Centre monitors, reviews and evaluates the success of its

Policy for dealing with Formal Complaints 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 Coordinator, or any member of the steering committee.

8.3: Review

This document is reviewed by the management and steering committee on an annual basis, or more frequently if circumstances change.