



Volunteer Policy

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HR Manager

POLICY & PROCEDURE

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RELATED / RELEVANT POLICIES AND KEY DOCUMENTS

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- **Recruitment & Selection**
- **Confidentiality**

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1 INTRODUCTION

Autism Initiatives understands that volunteering is an enjoyable activity meeting the individual's, as well as the organisations, needs committed to making volunteering worthwhile and sees volunteers as complementing, not replacing paid staff and adding significant value to our activities.

Autism Initiatives invests volunteers, as far as possible, with the same rights as other members of the organisation and in return asks you to recognise your responsibility towards A.I. We aim to train, support and supervise volunteers to the best of our abilities.

2 SCOPE

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on all aspects of volunteering with Autism initiatives. This does not constitute a binding contract and all volunteering agreements are binding in honour only. This supplements other Autism Initiatives policies and procedures, as well as our mission statement and value base.

These procedures apply to all volunteers who undertake tasks on behalf of and at the discretion of Autism Initiatives.

3 SERVICE USER OUTCOME

Through the implementation of this policy service users will be assured that in the event of any complaint or dispute involving employees, fair and even handed processes will be applied.

4 POLICY & PROCEDURES

4.1 Relationship

The Volunteer coordinator is responsible for ensuring that the policy and procedures in this document are implemented efficiently and effectively. All other staff and volunteers are expected to facilitate this process.

4.2 Eligibility

Autism Initiatives will consider involving anyone as a volunteer. Individuals must, however, be able to demonstrate a commitment to the aims of the organisation and will only be placed if their needs as volunteers match the needs of the organisation. No person who has a conflict of interest with other aspects of the organisation will be accepted as a volunteer.

4.3 Relationship

Volunteers are seen as complementing, not replacing paid staff and adding significant value to our activities. Autism Initiatives invest volunteers, as far as possible, with the same rights as other members of the organisation and in return asks volunteers to recognise their responsibilities toward Autism Initiatives.

4.4 Working Conditions

Volunteers are treated as full members of the staff team. They are treated as equally and fairly as paid staff and are included in the organisation's functions and decision-making process where practical. Volunteers are provided with appropriate work place and have access to space, equipment and facilities necessary to volunteer effectively and comfortably.

4.5 Working Times

Times of volunteering are negotiated between the service and the volunteer and are as flexible as the task allows. Volunteer time commitment is never expected to match that of full time paid staff, and volunteers have the responsibility to not commit themselves to an unmanageable workload and to only work to specified job description. Unscheduled absences can create organisation difficulties so when expecting to be absent, volunteers should inform their volunteer co-ordinator as soon as possible, so alternative arrangements can be made.

4.6 Appropriate Behaviour

Volunteers are expected to abide by the policies and procedures of Autism Initiatives Group and adhere to its ethos. As representatives of the organisation, they are responsible for presenting a positive image of the organisation to the outside world and be reliable, honest and mindful of Autism Initiative's good name.

4.7 Representation and Confidentiality

Volunteers must seek prior approval from Autism Initiatives before undertaking anything that might affect the organisation. This includes, but is not limited to, statements to the press, joint initiatives with other bodies, and agreements involving contractual or financial obligations. The organisation 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 with the organisation. Volunteer records are accorded the same confidentiality as staff records.

4.8 Service at the Discretion of Autism Initiatives Group

Any voluntary service is at the discretion of the Autism Initiatives Group. Autism Initiatives may, at any time, and for what ever reason, decide to terminate a volunteer's relationship with the organisation. Similarly, volunteers may at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate their relationship. Notices of such decisions should be communicated at the earliest opportunity, preferably in writing.

5 RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Autism Initiatives uses a variety of methods to recruit volunteer's dependant upon task and location. Recruitment is solely based on merit. Individuals less than 18 years of age will not be recruited due to the nature of the service we provide. This is a requirement based on a Genuine Occupational Requirement.

5.1 Applications

Volunteers are recruited on a pro-active basis by the organisation using publicity avenues that are suitable for the roles that need to be filled. Potential volunteers may also apply speculatively or come via the volunteer service provide by the local volunteer service. Recruitment is in accordance with the equal opportunities policy. Autism Initiatives asks all volunteers to complete a volunteer enrolment form.

5.2 Interviews

All applicants are invited to attend an informal chat with a member of Autism Initiatives staff. This is to ascertain their interests in and suitability for the role. Written records may

be taken during the interview or applicants may be asked to fill in a meeting form. The aims of the meeting process are to;

- Provide potential volunteers with sufficient information on both ASDI and specific opportunities for them to make an informed decision on whether or not to pursue their application.
- Allow applicants and Autism Initiatives to assess whether or not the applicant has requisite skills, or potential skills after training to fill the volunteer requirements
- To agree upon a probationary period acceptable to both applicant and Autism Initiatives.

5.3 Checks for Suitability

Autism Initiatives asks all volunteers for references to be provided. Other checks may also be completed (for example, ascertaining professional qualifications, Garda vetting). Volunteers will always be told in advanced of the intention to make these checks. These checks are necessary to provide the volunteer with a degree of credibility and to act as a basis of trust for volunteer and their colleagues.

5.4 Garda Clearance

In line with most major charitable organisations, any volunteer who will be working with young people or people who are vulnerable within a service, or who has access to Autism Initiatives' funds, will have to undergo Garda clearance checks.

6 INDUCTION AND TRAINING

6.1 Induction

All volunteers receive induction training when they begin volunteering with Autism Initiatives. This consists of a general introduction to the organisation, as well as specific orientation on the purpose and requirements of their role. As well as this volunteers should be provided with an induction pack, job specific guidelines and any necessary resources.

6.2 Training

Training is geared to specific roles. Volunteers will receive an induction and may receive training to provide them with the information and necessary skills to perform tasks. This

training will be appropriate to the demands of the position and the capabilities of the volunteer

Additional training where necessary will be given to ensure volunteers have the skills and information they need to enjoy and carry out tasks.

7 SUPPORT

Autism Initiatives endeavours to provide support necessary to encourage and empower volunteers to make a meaningful contribution and gain significant benefits from the volunteering. Support will be provide in regular supervision sessions and gives volunteers a safe setting in which to express themselves, let off steam and give feedback on how they feel about volunteering.

7.1 Communication

Lines of communication should operate in both directions and should exist formally and informally. Volunteers must be consulted on all decisions that would substantially affect them.

7.2 Supervisors

All volunteers will be given an identified supervisor who is responsible for the day to day management of that volunteer. Autism Initiatives' team leaders will normally take this role, but certain staff members receive guidance and training on how to involve volunteers effectively in the organisation.

7.3 Corrective Action

Supervisors will always deal sympathetically and fairly with problems relating to volunteer conduct or complaints. Efforts are always made to reach a mutually acceptable solution. Volunteers who do not adhere to the organisations rules or who fail to perform their volunteer assignments may be subject to dismissal but this is always a last resort.

7.4 Recognition

Volunteers provide a unique service, the benefits of which are difficult to quantify. Autism Initiatives recognises the importance of acknowledging the valuable contribution of our volunteers and does so in a variety of ways appropriate to each individual.

7.5 Expenses

It is AI's policy to reimburse reasonable out of pocket expenses incurred whilst undertaking voluntary tasks, subject to the production of receipts. This can include travelling expenses, refreshments telephone calls, postage etc, which must be previously agreed.

7.6 Insurance

AI's public and employer's liability insurance policies cover the activities of volunteers. Insures will not however cover the personal belongings of volunteers against loss or theft. Volunteers who use their own cars for the Autism Initiatives business are responsible for making sure they are adequately insured for the tasks they are undertaking.

7.7 Exit Interviews

Whenever possible, informal exit interviews are held with any volunteers who are leaving the organisation, either because they have reached the end of their project, or are leaving for some other reason. Interviews will are usually conducted by the volunteer's supervisor and a written record may be kept. The session should ascertain why the volunteer is leaving, how they found the volunteering experience and what suggestion they may have to improve the way the organisation operates with volunteers and as a whole. As well as this Autism Initiatives would always like to establish as to whether volunteers would like to be kept informed of Autism Initiatives activities and plans and if volunteers may wish to support us again in the future.

The offer of a personal reference for future employment is made to all volunteers. Character references are also available on request.

8 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This policy does not discriminate against any person or group within the organisation

Revision Status

Rev Date	Details of Changes	Sections Changed	Author	Date