



# Mental Health Ireland

## VOLUNTEER POLICY

### 1.0 Purpose of Policy

It is the policy of Mental Health Ireland (MHI) and its affiliate Mental Health Associations (MHA) to engage volunteers in their activities. Volunteers are the backbone of communities and play a vital role in mental health and well-being initiatives at local and national level.

This Policy has been developed to ensure all volunteer contacts / applications or engagements uphold the current vision and mission of Mental Health Ireland. The policy also provides best practice guidelines for volunteering with Mental Health Ireland and its affiliate Mental Health Associations

### 2.0 Definition

Volunteering is:

The voluntary commitment by people of their time, of their knowledge, expertise, skills, and abilities for the benefit of the activities and achievements of local Mental Health Associations and Mental Health Ireland in line with Mental Health Irelands Strategy.

(Mental Health Ireland National Volunteer Strategy 2023 – 2026)

### 3.0 All involved parties

Mental Health Ireland work with various stakeholders in order to ensure the volunteering experience reflects the mission and vision of the organisation. Each stakeholder is listed and described below.

#### 3.1 Affiliate Organisations and Mental Health Associations

##### 3.1.1 Affiliates:

Mental Health Ireland collaborates and supports affiliated organisations nationally through documented Service Level Arrangements. These

affiliations operate with the financial and staffing support of Mental Health Ireland.

#### 3.1.2 Mental Health Associations:

Mental Health Associations are independent charities operating as members of Mental Health Ireland. An agreed Memorandum of Understanding is in place for all association memberships.

### 3.2 Staff

The term Staff refers to all paid employees working with Mental Health Ireland, their affiliated organisations, and any Mental Health Association.

### 3.3 Board of Directors

Mental Health Ireland operate under the governance of a voluntary Board of Directors. The trustees on the board occupy up to 2 x 3-year terms and ensure that the organisation complies and adheres to the Charities Code.

### 3.4 Fundraising, Volunteer and Engagement Manager

The Mental Health Ireland Fundraising, Volunteer and Engagement Manager has the responsibility for recruitment, retention, engagement, and experience of all volunteers in active roles with Mental Health Ireland only. Volunteers performing roles for affiliate organisations or Mental Health Associations Volunteers will report directly to a nominated local person.

### 3.5 The Organisation

This refers to Mental Health Ireland.

### 3.6 Coproduction panels

Mental Health Ireland uses a process called Coproduction to achieve strategic goals. Coproduction is a strengths-based inclusive process that looks to incorporate the experience and expertise of people as equal participants from the very beginning and throughout the process, planning, development, delivery and evaluation of projects and services. A Coproduction panel is the team of participants working together on the project.

## 4.0 Supporting Policies & Procedures

The following Mental Health Ireland Policies are referenced or support the contents of this document.

Confidentiality Policy, Child Protection Policy & Safeguarding statement, Complaints Compliments & Comments Policy, GDPR, Equality & Diversity Policy, Health & Safety Policy, Fundraising Policy, Volunteer Recruitment Procedures & Volunteer Agreement.

## 5.0 Responsibility

Mental Health Ireland's Fundraising, Volunteer and Engagement Manager is responsible for

ensuring that the policy and the procedures in this document are implemented fairly, efficiently, and effectively. All staff and volunteers, including the Board of Directors, are expected to facilitate this process.

## 6.0 Volunteer & Organisational Relationships

Mental Health Ireland understands that being treated with equality and nurturing a sense of belonging while volunteering is integral to successful volunteer management. All staff and volunteers should have a meaningful role to play within the organisation. Mental Health Ireland is committed to ensuring that this relationship is developed and cultivated throughout the volunteer experience.

## 7.0 Volunteers as part of the team

Volunteers are treated as equal members of the Mental Health Ireland team. Co-Production is imbedded into the work that Mental Health Ireland provides, and volunteer voices are a welcome party to co-production teams. Additional to Coproduction, specific volunteer roles are regularly recruited, and all roles contribute to the organisation's functions and volunteer feedback is welcome for all decision-making processes. For specific roles requiring a workspace, Mental health Ireland will provide a safe workspace with access to equipment and facilities necessary to volunteer effectively and comfortably.

## 8.0 Volunteering times

Depending on the volunteering role, duration and frequency of volunteering will vary. Some volunteer roles will be campaign based and as such, time limited, others will be ambassadorial and may result in weekly / monthly tasks for an undetermined time.

Volunteering times are agreed between the volunteer manager and the volunteer directly. While every effort is made to accommodate volunteer needs, Mental Health Ireland may be limited in terms of flexibility, depending on the tasks required. Commitment is vital for the success of the Volunteer Programme, and volunteers giving their time are asked to give notice of absence as a courtesy and to enable the volunteer manager to make alternative arrangements in order to deliver on the task.

## 9.0 Representing the Organisation

When performing a volunteer role for Mental Health Ireland, its affiliations or Mental Health Associations, volunteers are representing the organisation. With this in mind we ask all volunteers to adhere to codes of conduct which are outlined in the Volunteer Agreement signed by the volunteer.

Appropriate behaviour by all volunteers is expected and this includes giving or sharing personal details with members of the public while engaged in the volunteering role, as well as operating within the boundaries of the role.

As representatives of the organisation, volunteers are responsible for echoing the Mental Health promotion and wellbeing ethos of Mental Health Ireland. From time to time a volunteer may be asked by a third party to comment or give interview / statement. Mental Health Ireland operates within clear communication guidelines and as such it is vital that prior approval is sought via the Volunteer Manager before undertaking any activity on behalf of the organisation that has not be sanctioned by 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.

## 10.0 Confidentiality

Everyone has a right for their data to be treated with confidence and Mental Health Ireland respects volunteers right to privacy and confidentiality. There are limits to confidentiality and these limits extend to all staff and volunteers working within the organisation.

Limits to confidentiality are detailed in the Confidentiality policy and all volunteers are expected to familiarise themselves with the policy and procedures in relation to confidentiality, child, and vulnerable adult safeguarding.

## 11.0 Records & Data

Mental Health Ireland utilise a CRM (Client Relationship Management) database to maintain accurate volunteer records. A volunteer record includes personal contact details, references, Training records and certifications. Garda Vetting documents are held in hard copy location in Mental Health Ireland head office. All volunteer records are maintained according to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). CRM details are regularly reviewed and updated by members of the staff team in compliance with GDPR.

## 12.0 GDPR

Mental Health Ireland accepts full responsibility for the handling of all personal data disclosed to the organisation. As the receiver and handler of data, Mental Health Ireland are the “data controller” and as such, are obliged and committed to comply fully with GDPR legislation when handling such data.

Mental Health Ireland adhere to the following key GDPR rules when handling personal data:

- Fair process of obtaining data, to include only asking relevant information.
- Data kept and used only for the purpose it was gathered.
- Ensure data record is up to date and accurate.
- Purge records once retention period has expired.
- Are able to satisfy data subject access requests.

## 13.0 Recruitment, training, and delivery of role:

Mental Health Ireland commits to a full and transparent recruitment and training process to ensure that volunteers can deliver their volunteering role with confidence, ease and in a way that gives a sense of achievement and servitude.

### 13.1 Recruitment

The Fundraising, Volunteer and Engagement Manager is responsible for Volunteer Recruitment. The process involves the below stages. It is important to note that until all stages are completed by each individual applicant to satisfaction the recruitment process cannot conclude.

#### 13.1.1 Application Form

Volunteers seeking to perform volunteer role(s) with Mental Health Ireland are asked to complete an online application form. A hardcopy form is available on request.

#### 13.1.2 Role Description

Potential Volunteers have a number of roles to select from. Not all roles will be available at the same time, some will have specific recruitment drives, some will have recurring availability. Role descriptions have been developed for each volunteer role. The role description will clearly describe the tasks and responsibilities of the role, benefits, hours, and details of eligibility criteria.

#### 13.1.3 Initial screening

Based on the information supplied within the application form, the volunteer recruitment team will perform initial screening to each application and assess for eligibility criteria as detailed in the role descriptions.

#### 13.1.4 Interviews

Applicants who meet the eligibility criteria will be invited to attend an interview.

#### 13.1.5 Suitable references

Applicants are asked to submit details of 2 referees. Mental Health Ireland will seek references from each of the nominated persons.

#### 13.1.6 Garda vetting

Applicants in relevant roles are required to complete Garda Vetting clearance checks, which are administered by the Mental Health Ireland Garda Vetting Liaison person. Garda Vetting disclosures will be held on file for the duration of volunteering. In the event of a disclosure citing a criminal conviction, the Garda Vetting Liaison Manager and Fundraising, Volunteer and Engagement Manager will review the application. A decision on the candidate's suitability will be made by them on a case-by-case basis.

#### 13.1.7 Children First & Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Abuse Training

HSEland access is provided to potential volunteers who have met the eligibility criteria and successfully completed an interview. Mental Health Ireland require applicants to complete Children's First and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Abuse training within this e-learning portal. Certificate of completion for each is required and will be held on file for the duration of volunteering.

#### 13.1.8 Signed Volunteer Agreement & Code of Conduct Agreement

Volunteers are asked to read and sign a Volunteer Agreement and a Code of Conduct Agreement. While neither document forms a legally binding contract, they do outline the rules of engagement, expectations and general guidelines required by volunteers in their roles. The documents also serve as protection to volunteers by providing clear details and how to address issues if they arise.

#### 13.1.9 Conflict of Interest

Mental Health Ireland will review all conflicts of interest that are declared prior to volunteer application or during the period of active volunteering. The level and impact of any conflicts will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Should a conflict of interest develop during a period of active volunteering, the volunteer may be asked to step down.

### 13.2 Training

All Volunteers are required to complete mandatory training in advance of their role commencement. Training consists of general overview and information on Mental Health Ireland and continues into role specific training. Volunteers cannot progress to role commencement without fully completing all aspects of training.

Volunteers are also provided with ongoing training and information throughout their role with Mental Health Ireland and are expected to utilise the ongoing training opportunities to aid their role development.

### 13.3 Delivery of Role

On completion of training, Mental Health Ireland will welcome volunteers and onboard them into their role. Mental Health Ireland reserves the right to terminate the role at any time, should the volunteer role or relationship with the organisation no longer meets the objectives of the organisation. Similarly, volunteers may decide to discontinue their service with the organisation. Notice of discontinuation should be communicated at the earliest opportunity, preferably in writing.

## 14.0 Ongoing requirements

In addition to ongoing training, certain compliance certificates require renewal every 3 years.

These are Garda re-vetting, Children First Training Renewal and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Abuse Training Renewal. All compliance training and certification will be relevant to the role.

## 15.0 Recognising Volunteer contributions

Volunteers, through their work, make meaningful contributions to Mental Health Ireland which can benefit campaign success, promotion awareness, financial inputs, and overall organisational reputation. It is vital that their work is supported and recognised. The Fundraising, Volunteer and Engagement Manager will hold regular volunteer team meetings. This offers a supportive function to allow volunteers discuss their role and any concerns they might have; this also supports co-volunteer connection and experience and encourages an ethos of community within the volunteer population. Additional supports for role development are available where requested and this can take the form of 1-1 meetings, on task assistance, additional training and coaching through Mental Health Irelands coaching network.

Recognition is given to volunteers by way of completion certificate, at the end of their volunteering experience. At certain times throughout a volunteer's journey with the organisation, recognition of service will be celebrated.

## 16.0 Expenses

Mental Health Ireland will ensure that volunteers are re-imbursed for out pocket expenses provided that they are agreed in advance via the Fundraising, Volunteer and Engagement Manager. Out of pocket expenses are costs that have been incurred outside normal level of involvement. The role of every volunteer is unpaid, being that volunteers give their time and skills free of charge. Time cannot be invoiced or expensed back to the organisation.

## 17.0 References / Statements of Volunteering.

Depending on roles, durations, and involvement with the organisation it may not always be possible to provide written references for volunteers. To ensure fairness, Mental Health Ireland adopts a volunteer statement policy. On leaving the organisation, (and in the event every volunteer will be provided with a statement of volunteering that can act as a written reference for the volunteer. Due to GDPR data retention procedures, Mental Health Ireland staff will have no access to volunteer details 12 months after a person exits the volunteer programme, so references requested after this timeline cannot be provided.

## 18.0 Grievances

Mental Health Ireland operates an open and clear Complaints, Compliments and Comments policy, which extends to volunteer feedback while engaged in their volunteering role. If a volunteer has a concern or grievance, it is important that they feel their concerns have been being handled appropriately. We ask that in the first instance discuss, grievances are brought to the Fundraising, Volunteer and Engagement Manager, who will try to resolve the situation

satisfactorily. In the event of a complaint arising against a volunteer, a meeting with the volunteer will often lead to resolution. Further procedures in relating to complaint escalation are available within the Mental Health Ireland Complaints Policy.

## 18.0 Taking extended time off.

We understand that maintaining a healthy work/ life / volunteering balance is crucial to general wellbeing. For that reason, we focus on time commitment at recruitment stage, as Volunteers are expected to meet the commitment made in their Volunteer Agreement. However, we understand that due to life changes, from time-to-time volunteers may become unable to continue volunteering with Mental Health Ireland. Mental Health Ireland will do its best to accommodate such instances, however, where absence is frequent and extensive, the long-term commitment or volunteering hours may need to be reviewed. If a volunteer has been absent for an extended period, they will need to undertake training prior to recommencement of their role.

## 19.0 Withdrawing a volunteer.

At times it may be necessary for the organisation to withdraw a volunteer from their role. This may be due to breach of code of conduct, or that the volunteer is not able to perform their work satisfactorily. The volunteer will be given fair process and the right to reply prior to termination. Grounds for stepping down include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Gross misconduct
- Being under the influence of drugs (including alcohol) while performing the volunteer role.
- Theft of Mental Health Ireland merchandise or equipment
- Misuse of Mental Health Ireland equipment and/or materials
- Abusive behaviour toward a member of the public /or co-volunteer/ staff
- Breach of confidentiality
- Failure to supply a satisfactory Garda vetting application form and documentation
- Failure to undertake and supply Children First Certificate
- Failure to undertake and supply Safeguarding Adults at Risk of Abuse Certificate.
- Failure to abide by Mental Health Ireland policies and procedures
- Failure to complete duties to a satisfactory standard
- Acting in a way that is detrimental to the interests of Mental Health Ireland.

### 19.1 Appeal Process

Should a volunteer feel they have been treated unfairly and withdrawn without due cause, they may appeal the decision.

- The appeal is to be made in writing within one month of the being asked to step down addressed to the Volunteer Manager.
- The volunteer manager will engage with and respond to the appellant



directly.

- If the volunteer is not satisfied with the response, they have the right to escalate their appeal in writing, addressed to the CEO.
- The CEO will engage with and respond to the appellant directly.
- If the volunteer remains dissatisfied with the response, they have the right to escalate their appeal to the Board of Management in writing, addressed to the Chairperson of the Board.

#### 19.2 Right to complain.

Volunteers / Appellants dissatisfied with any decision may also make a complaint under Mental Health Ireland Complaints Policy.

<https://www.mentalhealthireland.ie/governance/?external=1>

### 20.0 Leaving a Volunteering role.

Volunteers leave for various reasons and where possible, Mental Health Ireland will informally communicate with volunteers leaving the organisation. Upon leaving each volunteer is sent a thank you letter, a Volunteer Statement, and an anonymous feedback form to complete. The feedback form asks the volunteer to indicate why the volunteer is leaving, their overall volunteering experience and any suggestions they may have to offer to Mental Health Ireland to further enhance and develop the volunteering experience.

### 21.0 Health & Safety

All volunteers are required to familiarise themselves with the Health & Safety policy of Mental Health Ireland and adhere to procedures. Health and Safety protocols in place are for working on and off site and for all engagements undertaken on behalf of the organisation.

### 22.0 Insurance

Insurance is provided by Mental Health Ireland which covers all volunteers working on behalf the organisation. This cover applies to the place or premises where Mental Health Ireland 's work is carried out. It does not extend to motor insurance or to travel to and from their voluntary work.

## 23.0 Training

Mental Health Ireland staff / students and volunteers will be offered training in relation to this policy as required, at onboarding stage and at regular intervals determined by the content herein, with the minimum being annual, and if any changes have been made.

## 24.0 Monitoring

Mental Health Ireland Documentation Control includes the monitoring of policy access, review and understanding and a formal record is held by the Operations, Governance and Compliance Manager. The implementation of and adherence to this policy will be monitored by the relevant workstream manager detailed below in section 16. Formal records of compliance / non-compliance will be kept by the Operations, Governance and Compliance Manager, and may be referred to the CEO for further action where non adherence is repetitive.

## 25.0 Important Contacts

To find out more about any of the above, please contact the head office who will direct your query to the appropriate channel.

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