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# VOLUNTEER POLICY

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**DYSPRAXIA/DCD IRELAND**

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1. Responsibility for approval of policy	<i>Board of Directors</i>
2. Responsibility for implementation	<i>Chief Executive Officer</i>
3 .Responsibility for ensuring review	<i>Chief Executive Officer</i>

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## **1. Introduction**

Thank you for giving up your time to volunteer with Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland. The purpose of this volunteer policy is to provide guidance for both staff and volunteers with regards to volunteering within Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland. It is also to acknowledge the importance and value of our volunteers. It aims to provide clarity to the volunteer's role and to outline the organisation's procedures and good practices in relation to the involvement of volunteers. This policy is effective from **13 June 2016**, and is not retrospective.

### **1.1 Mission Statement of Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland**

To be the Irish Centre of Excellence, welcoming and positive, providing expert knowledge, offering support and promoting awareness of Dyspraxia/DCD to all aspects of Irish society.

### **1.2 Vision of Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland**

A society where Dyspraxia/DCD is widely recognised, clearly understood and valued.

## **2. Volunteering for Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland**

### **2.1 Definition of volunteering**

Volunteering is any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives. Central to this definition is the fact that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. This can include formal activity undertaken through voluntary organisations such as Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland as well as informal community participation. Volunteering benefits everyone; the individuals who do it, the organisations that they work with; and that organisation's user groups, as well as the wider community.

### **2.2 The Role of the Volunteer**

Volunteers are a valuable and vital resource without which Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland could not provide its services. Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland has always involved volunteers in service delivery and this involvement provides a unique aspect to our services along with a strong sense of community support. They also bring a broad range of experience and skills to the volunteering roles in the organisation. Volunteers are encouraged to get involved at all levels of the organisation. They make a unique and valuable contribution that enrich the services we offer. The role of the volunteer will be clearly defined. An agreed statement of tasks will be drawn up between volunteer and the CEO. The volunteer's role is subject to change and the volunteer may be asked to carry out other roles as required. Volunteers are encouraged to identify and develop roles which they perceive as needed, subject to discussion and agreement with the CEO.

### **2.3 Who can volunteer?**

Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland welcomes all volunteers regardless of their cultural and ethnic origin, religion, age, gender and physical, social or economic background. However, we do have some requirements that need to be fulfilled:

- To be committed to the mission statement of Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland.
- The skills and abilities of the volunteer must match the requirements of Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland.
- There cannot exist a conflict of interest between volunteers and any aspect of Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland.
- The applicant must be over 18 years of age.

## **2.4 The Rights of the Volunteer**

- To know, if and how, they are being selected.
- To be given an overview of the structure of Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland.
- To be given meaningful work to do.
- To receive induction training and literature and where appropriate training for the specific role being undertaken.
- To receive supervision and support where required.
- To know who to turn to with problems, to work with the knowledge that support is always available.
- To be appreciated and have their work valued.
- To be able to say no and not feel guilty.
- To have a safe working environment and to be covered by insurance.
- To be informed about and given the opportunity to play an active part in the organisation as a whole.
- To be free from discrimination.
- To raise grievances when appropriate.

## **2.5 The Responsibilities of the Volunteer**

- To respect the aims and objectives of Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland
- To carry out the agreed work to the best of one's ability
- To respect the confidentiality of the organisation, members and any individuals a volunteer comes in contact with in the course of their work for the organisation.
- To be reliable and responsible and honour commitments
- To attend training sessions as scheduled
- To ask for help and support when needed
- To be honest if there are problems.
- To agree with Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland's volunteer policy

## **2.6 Commitment**

Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland requires a commitment of service from all volunteers to ensure continuity of service for our members. The time commitment of a volunteer is to be agreed between the CEO and the volunteer and where possible will be as flexible as the tasks allow. This commitment is for the benefit of both the volunteer and Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland.

While voluntary time commitment is never expected to match that of fulltime staff members, unscheduled absences create organisational problems and may directly affect the standard of services provided. When expecting to be absent, volunteers undertake to look for cover among peers. If unsuccessful, they will inform the CEO as soon as possible, so that alternative arrangements can be made.

## **3. Recruitment and Training of Volunteers**

Recruitment of new volunteers will be based on an equal opportunities basis, where each person's application will be treated equally.

### **3.1 Application Procedure**

In order to protect the people use our Services and in seeking to maintain their welfare, all who apply to be volunteers, whether they are known to the organisation or not, will be thoroughly screened before being accepted as approved volunteers. Enquiries to become a

volunteer will be dealt with by the CEO. All potential volunteers will be required to complete an application form (which includes a section for listing referees) and, if the volunteer will be working with children and/or vulnerable adults, a Garda Clearance form. Potential volunteers may be called for interview. The purpose of the interview is to establish the volunteer's motivation and what specific skills they can contribute to Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland.

### **3.1.1 References**

All applicants are expected to give the names and addresses of two referees on their application form, one of which must be able to provide a character reference. The referees must not be related to the applicant and they must have known the applicant for at least two years. Where the applicant is currently employed, the character reference should be from the applicant's employer. A standard letter approved by the Board of Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland, will be sent (either by email or post) to each referee by the CEO. A copy of this letter is attached to the volunteer application form, for information. This letter stresses the need for volunteers to be honest, reliable and trustworthy. If there is no reply after a reasonable period of time, the referee may be contacted by telephone or, failing this, the applicant is asked to submit the name of another referee. Until both references are received, the application can go no further.

### **3.1.2 Garda Clearance Form**

Garda vetting is the process by which the Central Garda Vetting Unit (CGVU) discloses details regarding all prosecutions and/or convictions in respect of an individual. The CGVU is the unit within the Garda Síochána responsible for conducting Garda Vetting. Garda Vetting is not conducted by Gardaí at a local level.

Garda Vetting is a vital step in the safety and protection of children and vulnerable adults. In addition, it helps protect the organisation, other volunteers and staff. All applicants who will be working with children or vulnerable adults are provided with a Garda Vetting Form at the time of their application. This form must be submitted with the application to become a volunteer who will be working with children or vulnerable adults. Until the Garda Vetting Form has been received the application can go no further.

## **3.2 Training**

All volunteers receive induction training, this training program takes place twice a year. The training consists of a general introduction to the organisation, as well as a information on the purposes and requirements of all those who volunteer for the organisation. Volunteers must attend the induction training within 12 months of joining the organisation.

Volunteers may also receive specialised initial and ongoing training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their specific tasks effectively. The training will be appropriate for the demands of the position and the responsibilities of the volunteer.

### *Retraining after extended absence*

Where a volunteer has been absent for a period of six months or more, they will be required to undertake a period of refresher training and shadowing to help them readjust to volunteering. This will be organised with the individual volunteer.

### Helpline Volunteers

All helpline volunteers will receive an initial training course followed by a period of monitoring. New helpline volunteers are required to attend all training sessions. Ongoing

training sessions will be provided to all helpline volunteers. Volunteers are expected to attend as many training sessions as possible.

### **3.3 Data Protection**

Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland accepts full responsibility for the handling of all personal data disclosed to the organisation and has a duty to manage all such data, including all personal data, within the rules laid down by the Data Protection Acts 1998/2003. As a responsible data controller Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland will:

- Obtain and process information fairly.
- Keep information for only one or more specified and explicit lawful purpose.
- Use information and disclose it only in ways compatible with these purposes.
- Keep information safe and secure.
- Keep information accurate, complete and up-to-date.
- Ensure that information is adequate, relevant and not excessive.
- Retain the information for no longer than is necessary for the purpose or purposes for which it was originally obtained.
- Give a copy of his/her personal data to an individual on request.

### **3.4 Review**

Upon the completion of the recruitment procedure there will be an initial period of 8 weeks whereby the volunteer will be supervised by the CEO/team leader. Upon the conclusion of this period of 8 weeks the role of the volunteer will be reviewed by the CEO and a member of the board of directors and in circumstances where it becomes apparent that the volunteer is unsuitable for the role the individual may be asked to cease acting as a volunteer.

## **4. General Procedures**

### **4.1 Confidentiality**

Volunteers will not disclose any information regarding any member or person associated with the organisation. Volunteers will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement with the organisation.

### **4.2 Personal Safety**

Volunteers should not have to tolerate abuse of any kind. Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland endeavours to maintain the safety of volunteers at all times. If you are unhappy or feel awkward with an individual or situation, you should discuss it with a member of staff, another volunteer or the CEO.

### **4.3 Equal Opportunities**

Volunteers are recognised as important part of Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland team and will be volunteering in an organisation that is committed to equal opportunities and diversity. This commitment is reflected throughout the charity's policies and practices.

### **4.4 Appropriate Behaviour**

Volunteers are required to work within the policy and procedures of Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland. Volunteers should be aware that they are representatives of Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland and need to present a positive image to the public of Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland. It is against

Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland's ethos for a volunteer to use their position within the organisation to promote their personal, political or religious beliefs.

#### **4.5 Representing Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland**

Volunteers are not permitted to represent Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland publicly in any situation without having discussed it with and obtained prior approval from the CEO. This refers not only to when one is volunteering with Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland, but also when the work has finished.

### **5. Terms and Conditions**

#### **5.1 Working Hours**

Working times will be negotiated between the CEO and the volunteer prior to commencement of position. A regular commitment is required. When a volunteer is likely to be absent the CEO should be notified at the earliest possible time so alternative arrangements can be made.

#### **5.2 Expenses**

The cost of volunteering should never be allowed to discourage volunteering. Volunteers give their time and skills free of charge. If from time to time a volunteer incurs costs outside of their usual level of involvement, then Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland will reimburse any such out of pocket expenses incurred directly as a result of their volunteering activity provided they have been agreed in advance with the CEO.

*Procedures for claiming expenses:*

- Reimbursement of expenses agreed in advance with CEO.
- Agreed expenses can only be reimbursed for receipts submitted.
- Volunteers must submit an expenses form to the CEO.
- Agreed expenses must be submitted within one month of being accrued.
- Agreed expenses will be reimbursed within 10 working days of being submitted.

#### **5.3 Changes in Personal Circumstances**

Volunteers are requested to inform Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland of any changes in their personal circumstances such as change of address, phone/mobile etc. or any other issue/development which would be likely to impact the volunteer's ability or suitability to continue to act as a volunteer.

#### **5.4 Health & Safety**

Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland is committed to protecting the health and safety of all volunteers and visitors to our premises and accepts its duties under health and safety legislation. We are also committed to ensuring, where possible, that all risks and hazards are eliminated or controlled to an acceptable level. Under the health and safety legislation volunteers are also responsible for taking reasonable care of their own health and safety at work and that of any other person who may be affected by their actions or omissions while at work. A Safety Statement is in operation, and a copy is located in the main office. Volunteers should acquaint themselves with all safety procedures, and ensure that they do their utmost to maintain safe working practices in the organisation.

If any volunteer observes or is aware of any practice which may be unhealthy or unsafe, he/she should draw the matter to the attention of management immediately. Volunteers must comply with all rules and procedures that relate to matters of health and safety. Failure to do so will be treated as warranting disciplinary action. Any deliberate action by any volunteer which endangers the health or safety of any other person in the premises may be deemed to be gross misconduct, and may warrant dismissal. Volunteers must also comply with any new rules or procedures that may be introduced for the purpose of maintaining adequate health and safety precautions.

#### **5.4.1 Insurance**

Insurance is provided by Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland to cover all volunteers working on behalf and at the direction of the organisation. This cover applies to the place or premises where Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland's work is carried out. It does not extend to motor insurance or to travel to and from their voluntary work.

#### **5.4.2 Fire Safety**

All office and helpline volunteers must familiarise themselves with the location of fire extinguishers and fire exits. Every volunteer should know where the extinguishers are located and how to operate them effectively. Training will be provided as required. Well placed fire extinguishers may allow you to extinguish a small fire, but only if it is safe to do so. In the Carmichael Centre, fire alarms have been installed. These are checked regularly by security staff and independent contractors. Smoke detectors have also been installed and fire extinguishers most suitable to our needs are located through the building. If the fire alarm sounds, leave the building immediately by the nearest exit.

### **5.5 Dignity at Work Policy**

Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland is committed to implementing and promoting measures to protect the dignity of volunteers and to encourage respect for others at work. Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland values the creative and innovative potential that volunteers with diverse backgrounds, skills and abilities bring to the work environment. Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland aims to create a work environment which is free from harassment, bullying, racism and disrespectful behaviour, by dealing effectively with any complaints of such conduct, and by welcoming diversity and promoting equality.

Volunteering will not be influenced or affected by a volunteer's race, colour, religion, sex, marital status, nationality, family status, sexual orientation, disability, age or membership of the travelling community. All volunteers are required to take personal and individual responsibility to comply with this policy and to behave in a non-discriminatory way. Should you have questions or concerns about any type of discrimination in Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland, you are requested to bring these issues to the attention of the CEO. You are encouraged to raise concerns and make reports without fear of reprisal.

#### **5.5.1 Grievance / Complaints Procedure**

Volunteers are afforded protection under the Equal Status Acts 2000-2004 and have a right to make a complaint if they feel they have been discriminated against and/or treated in less favourable manner. Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland's policy and procedures are in place in order that complaints can be raised and dealt with effectively within the organisation.

### **5.6 Dismissal**

Volunteers who do not adhere to this volunteer policy or Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland's code of conduct or who fail to perform their work satisfactorily after support and guidance from the CEO/team leader may be asked to cease acting as a volunteer. No volunteer's involvement will be ended until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss with the CEO the reasons for being asked to cease acting as a volunteer. Grounds for being asked to cease acting as a volunteer include, but are not limited to, the following:

- gross misconduct;
- being under the influence of drugs (including alcohol);
- theft;
- misuse of equipment and/or materials;
- abuse of clients and/or co-workers;
- breach of confidentiality;
- failure to supply a satisfactory Garda vetting application form when required;
- failure to abide by Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland's policies and procedures;
- failure to complete duties to a satisfactory standard; or
- acting in a way that is detrimental to the interests of Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland.

Should a volunteer feel the basis for being asked to leave was unfair, they may appeal the decision to the Board of Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland. The appeal is to be made in writing within one month of the volunteer being asked to leave. The outcome of the appeal will be communicated to the individual within 28 days and will be final.

### **5.7 Termination & Exit Interviews**

Volunteers are requested to give notice of termination at the earliest opportunity to allow time to find a replacement. To help with the future development of the volunteer programme, volunteers leaving Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland may be asked to complete an exit interview questionnaire. This helps Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland to learn from volunteer's experiences and put into practice lessons learned.

## **6. Feedback**

Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland seeks to make ongoing improvements to the way it operates this policy. Constructive feedback on the policy is always welcomed and will be recorded. It should be given to the CEO who will ensure that it is given due consideration.

## **7. Review of Policy**

The policy will be reviewed on a regular basis. Any information gathered will be used to evaluate the policy and procedures at regular intervals to identify changes if necessary to improve the policy. All changes to this policy will be communicated to all volunteers.

For more information on volunteering please visit [www.dyspraxia.ie/Volunteering](http://www.dyspraxia.ie/Volunteering)