



VOLUNTEER PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

There is a long history of volunteer involvement in the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service HSC Trust (the Trust) and volunteers contribute in a variety of ways. The Trust recognises the important role which voluntary activity plays in complementing the work of its staff and therefore supports and encourages the efforts of the voluntary sector.

This document gives guidance and protection for both volunteers and patients in accordance with current Trust policies and Departmental guidance. This particularly relates to engagement, health and safety, confidentiality, privacy and dignity. Voluntary work enables members of the local community to participate in the work of the Trust thereby enriching and extending the benefits of patients, relatives and carers.

This procedure is intended to provide a consistent framework for the use of volunteers with the Trust.

The procedure should be used in conjunction with the Trust's current policies and procedures.

In issuing this Volunteering Procedure, the Trust wishes to:

- Formally acknowledge and support the role of volunteers in its work
- Set out the principles governing the use of volunteers and provide a set of guidelines to ensure good practice in working with volunteers
- Encourage and enable, rather than restrict, the involvement of volunteers

The Volunteering Procedure is intended primarily for use by the Trust's employees and volunteers.

The Trust is committed to an ongoing process of monitoring and evaluating the guidelines in consultation with all relevant parties.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Trust recognises the important role that voluntary assistance plays in complementing its staff and supports and encourages the efforts of the voluntary sector. The purpose of voluntary services is a two way process; that of helping to meet and enhance the care of patients, their relatives and carers and to provide an avenue for members of the community to offer their services.

Their role is complementary and not a substitute for paid staff.

Confidentiality is paramount and volunteers will be required to sign the Volunteer Agreement thereby committing to their responsibility not to divulge information on staff, patients, their relatives and carers or the business of the Trust that they might have access to during their time with the Trust.

The Trust expects that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers and treat them with respect and dignity.

The Trust reserves the right to remove a volunteer(s) at any such time that there is sufficient concern to do so.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that a system is in place for the safe and effective use of volunteers.

The Chief Executive delegates responsibility for the management of volunteers to the Director of Operations.

The Director of Operations delegates responsibility for the management of volunteers to the Non-Emergency Services Manager.

SCOPE

The procedure applies to all volunteers working within the Trust.

ROLE AND VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING

The Trust recognises values and supports the important part volunteers play in the Trust's work.

Volunteers are individuals who choose freely to give their time to support the work of the Trust without receiving any financial benefit beyond reimbursement of expenses.

Volunteers aim to benefit themselves, the users of services, the organisation, and the wider community in which they live.

Steps will be taken to ensure that staff at all levels are clear about the role of the volunteers and to foster good working relationships between staff and volunteers.

EXPECTATIONS OF VOLUNTEERS

The Trust is committed to ensuring that volunteers will receive the following:

- Full information about the Voluntary Car Service and a clear idea of their responsibilities to the Trust;
- A clear statement of engagement
- Information on Trust related Policies, Procedures and expectations;
- Be assigned a contact person from the Trust;
- Be consulted in decisions which affect them.

It is expected that volunteers should:

- Comply with all of the Trust's existing policies, procedures and frameworks;
- Participate in information sessions;
- Undertake voluntary work at agreed times;
- Inform Non-Emergency Services Manager if unable to attend;
- Give as much warning as possible , if unable to continue volunteering;
- Raise any issues of concern relating to their voluntary work with the Non-Emergency Services Manager.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The efficiency and the reputation of any Trust, no matter how well organised and equipped it may be, depends on the conduct and efficiency of staff employed and volunteers engaged in providing support for the work of the Trust. Volunteers have the responsibility to perform their duties within the limits of the laid down procedures and the requirements of the Trust. Actions outside of these limits could have legal implications for:

- The Patient
- The Volunteer
- Northern Ireland Ambulance Service

Most people have very little knowledge of the Trust. To the public the Trust is the personal attention which the members of staff give to their patients. To deserve the trust of patients, the respect of other Emergency Services, Health Service in general and the public, it is necessary to have a code of conduct which imposes high standards of behaviour and self discipline. In other words how volunteers conduct themselves when going about their daily duties.

Integrity and Reliability

A person of integrity is one who has high moral and personal standards. In the Trust, integrity and reliability means that volunteers are dependable and can be trusted to work efficiently without constant supervision and:

- Have high personal standards
- Can conduct themselves appropriately towards patients and others
- Have a sense of responsibility
- Are honest
- Have self discipline
- Are loyal

Personal Standards

Bearing in mind that the volunteers mix with other health workers and enter patients' homes they should never need reminding of personal cleanliness.

The public image of the Trust stems directly from the appearance and conduct of individual volunteers and they should always be mindful of appearance.

Fitness and Health

The volunteer should ensure that he/she has had sufficient rest between acting as a volunteer and any employment.

A Sense of Responsibility

The volunteer has a duty of care to the patients and has access to confidential information about them. The volunteer should:

- Never divulge information to unauthorised personnel or give statements about service matters to the local or national news;
- Comply with all related policies and procedures;
- Not smoke on any health care premises;
- Not operate whilst under the influence of alcohol/drugs;
- Maintain the reputation and professional image of the Trust.

Conduct and Behaviour Towards Patients and Others

Anxiety and stress can make some patients seem unreasonable. The volunteer should try to recognise and relieve this by being tactful, re-assuring, understanding and sympathetic, and never being bad tempered, impatient or offensive.

The volunteer should always be respectful and avoid over familiarity and unless their names are known, always address patients as “Sir” or “Madam”. Never discuss a patient’s condition or treatment with others unless they are authorised to know. Always maintain the ethics of patient confidentiality.

Always show respect for customs, values and beliefs which may be different to his/her own.

The volunteer will come in contact with others who care equally for patients, for example, relatives or other agencies and he/she should be aware of the needs of patients’ relatives, friends or others who may be concerned with the patient and should co-operate with other Services. The volunteer will not be drawn into arguments and always refer problems to the Non-Emergency Services Manager. The volunteer should do nothing to destroy the confidence of patients and relatives.

Honesty

Volunteers enter private homes alone and are therefore in a position of trust where honesty is paramount.

ENGAGEMENT

The Trust has an Equal Opportunities Policy and will not discriminate on the grounds of gender, disability, marital status, race or sexual orientation. It acknowledges the importance of social inclusion and recognises that all prospective volunteers have something of value to offer.

In order to reach a wide section of the community, engagement as a voluntary car driver is by a variety of means including, adverts in local press, word of mouth, BSO Trawl, NIAS Website.

INITIAL CONTACT

People interested in voluntary work will contact the Employee Resourcing Section of the Human Resources Department for an Information Pack and Registration Forms.

SELECTION

All volunteers must complete a registration form. Two written references are required.

Volunteers will be asked to provide information with their registration form about any criminal convictions that they may have.

An additional check with Access NI is required. All information in relation to Access NI will be dealt with in the strictest confidence, following set guidelines, and will not necessarily prejudice the person from being accepted for voluntary work.

Prior to commencement of the voluntary work, the volunteer may be required to complete an Occupational Health Questionnaire and attend an occupational health appointment.

Minimum details on volunteers, including the application form, references, next of kin details, insurance and driving licence details, correspondence and any other relevant information deemed relevant/necessary, will be held by the Non-Emergency Services Manager.

The Non-Emergency Services Manager is responsible for populating and maintaining the Trust's Register of Volunteers. The register will include appropriate information extracted from the Volunteer Agreement, such as personal details, training etc.

All information held on volunteers will be kept in line with the Data Protection Act. It is the responsibility of the Non-Emergency Services Manager to ensure that volunteers are made aware of the rights to view information held by the Trust under the Freedom of Information Act.

INDUCTION

Induction sessions should be provided for all new volunteers and should cover as a minimum:

- Tour of Non-Emergency Ambulance Control Centre
- Volunteer Procedure
- Role of Volunteer
- The need for confidentiality
- Contact Person
- Trust related policies, procedures and expectations

IDENTITY BADGES

All volunteers will be issued with an identity badge and will be required to wear it at all times whilst volunteering.

INSURANCE

Volunteers using their own vehicles are responsible for providing confirmation that this use is covered by their own insurance policy. Annual checks will be carried out by the Non-Emergency Services Manager.

ON-GOING HEALTH SUPPORT

The Employee Resourcing Section is responsible for facilitating referrals to the Occupational Health Department if the Non-Emergency Services Manager deems it would be beneficial in the circumstances.

EXPENSES

Volunteers are **not** paid employees, therefore they will receive remuneration for out of pocket expenses only, i.e., mileage allowance and meal expenses.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Trust will ensure that the effective utilisation of volunteers will be monitored by the Non-Emergency Services Manager and an annual evaluation report be submitted to the Trust Board.

POLICY AND REVIEW

This procedure will be subject to regular review and will be updated to reflect any changes in volunteer involvement.