

Policy and Procedures for Working with Volunteers

Services of Louth Volunteer Centre

Louth Volunteer Centre is a member of a network of Volunteer Centres located throughout Ireland.

We operate a “One-stop-shop” for voluntary activity within County Louth.

We provide information and advice to people interested in volunteering and to organisations looking for volunteers.

We also offer support and provide information to organisations regarding best practice in volunteer management principles e.g. designing and implementing volunteer role descriptions, volunteer agreements and volunteer policies.

Our service is free, with our aim being to encourage more people to become involved in volunteering across the county.

Who we work with?

Louth Volunteer Centre will provide a placement service to anyone resident in Ireland wishing to find out more about the volunteering opportunities available.

Accessing our service puts you under no obligation to choose a volunteering vacancy and your details can be removed whenever you wish.

If you reside outside of Louth, we will forward your details to your local volunteer centre, unless you specifically wish to apply for a vacancy on our database.

Louth Volunteer Centre has a database of organisations throughout County Louth who are seeking volunteers to get involved in their work. Our database provides you with information on the organisation and the vacancies.

These opportunities can be ongoing (daily, weekly or monthly) or once-off (community events for example).

For some of the once-off events, we will send out an email to everyone asking if they can help (if you don't want to receive these once-off emails please let us know).

If you have further questions please feel free to ask us.

You do not have to register with us to look at the database, but if you wish to register your interest in a vacancy you will need to be registered.

Initial Enquiries

- Enquiries to Louth Volunteer Centre from potential (and existing) volunteers should ideally be responded to within 3 working days.
- All potential volunteers are asked to register with Louth Volunteer Centre prior to accessing any contact details for specific volunteer opportunities.
- Louth Volunteer Centre has an office in Fitzwilliam Business Centre, Laurence Street, Drogheda, with Outreach Offices in Dundalk and Ardee and we are available to meet with you at any of these offices at the following times:
 1. Ardee - 041 685 7375 (Mon and Thur 10am - 2pm)
 2. Drogheda - 041 980 6900 (Mon - Fri 9.30 - 5pm)
 3. Dundalk - 087 607 1127 (Thur 9am-5pm)
- Once registered, any volunteer who wishes to are invited to meet in person with a Placement Officer for a half hour appointment in order to discuss their expectations and interests. A telephone conversation between the Placement Officer and volunteer is acceptable, if it does not suit the volunteer to meet in person.
- All communication between L.V.C. staff and registering volunteers will take place in a non-judgemental and accepting manner that respects the various backgrounds of individuals using our services.

The Placement Process

“Placement” is what we call the process whereby you find a volunteering role.

It works like this:

- You, the volunteer registers on our website. You can do this in a number of ways. Most people prefer to complete the form themselves online on our website www.volunteerlouth.ie.
- Others give us a call and we complete it over the phone.
- Some fill in our paper form and post or drop it into us, while others arrange to come in and see us and we do it with them. Please try and give us as much information on this form as possible as this will help us to find the most suitable opportunity for you.
- The volunteer will then receive an automatic email from us explaining how the service works.
- If you apply without email we will send this by post.
- Within a few days you will receive a Welcome phone call from us just to check that everything is okay. If you want to talk to us before that, feel free to give us a call.
- Volunteers take responsibility for searching the database themselves for a suitable opportunity – you know better than anyone, what kind of volunteering will suit you.
- If a volunteer doesn't apply for a role after registering on the website we aim to call you back within two working days to see if we can assist you.
- If you don't see anything that you like when searching for a volunteer opportunity, or if you are just unsure what you want to do, feel free to give us a call and ask for a face-to-face meeting, where we can talk through your options.
- If you have any questions about a vacancy please ask a member of our Volunteer Placement Team for clarification.

A face-to-face meeting with the Placement Officer will include the following:

- **Registration online**, if applicable. (Remember that you can say “Pass” for any question you do not wish to answer. The details on the form are for our records and to aid us in suggesting suitable opportunities.).
- **Discussion** of your interests, skills, time commitment etc. We may chat about what volunteering you have done before, or what skills you might like to gain from your volunteering.
- **Browsing** the volunteer opportunity database, discussing different roles, further exploring interests, etc.

- **Deciding** on one or more opportunities that you are interested in.

Apply for an Opportunity

This is where you see one or more opportunities on the database that you are interested in. To let us know, you need to **“Apply for an Opportunity”** your interest in them.

At this stage you are still not committing to a role, you are just showing an interest, but we ask you to limit this to just three opportunities at a time. You can go back and look at more if they don't work out.

Contacting the Organisation

We will forward your details to the organisation and ask them to contact you. We will also confirm the organisation's contact details with you by email or print you a copy if you do not have access to email.

Each voluntary organisation has its own recruitment process, and you will need to follow that process to apply to be a volunteer with them.

Our database should detail what that process is – it may just be an informal chat, you may need to fill in an application form, and for some you will need to undergo Garda Vetting.

We can answer any questions you have.

Louth volunteer centre t: 041 9806900

www.volunteerylouth.ie

Follow-Up

We like to try and keep in touch with you while you are applying for a vacancy, so if anything happens, such as you start volunteering, or you decide not to do it, or you've been in touch with the organisation and they have not been back on to you, please let us know. It helps us to gather this kind of information, and if you want, we can follow up with organisations on your behalf.

You may also receive emails or calls from us, just to check in with how things are going.

Regular Updates & Contact

Every month, we will send out a list of the new volunteering vacancies that have come in and the once-off opportunities that are available.

De-Registering



If at any stage you wish to be removed from our database, please let us know and we can de-activate your file.

What Do We Expect From You?

That You Keep Us Updated

Please let us know how you are getting on, both during and after the placement process. This helps us to help you better; it can help us identify problems and it also let's us know how successful or otherwise the service is.

We will also seek feedback on our service once a year, so please help us out if you have a few minutes to spare and complete the questionnaire we circulate at that time.

If you have any photos, or feedback on how you're doing we would love to see them. We can add them to our web site to encourage other people to get involved in volunteering.

That You Keep Your Organisation Updated

We know how busy our lives can become at times, but it is important that the organisations you have approached are kept up to date.

If you are unable to follow up with a role for a few weeks, or decide after speaking to the organisation that you are no longer interested, please let them know, or let us know and we can pass it on.

Recording of Information

In addition to the information you provide on registration, our database allows us to record notes on the contact we have with you. This will generally include the date of the conversation and any important information discussed. We will also record the opportunities you are interested in, when you have started volunteering and the estimated number of hours you will be volunteering.

You are free to request a copy of any information we hold on you.

Please ask us, or request to see our Data Protection Policy and procedure for further information.

Refusal of Service

Under certain circumstances Louth Volunteer Centre may refuse to accept a registration, or refuse to place volunteers with an organisation.

This may be due to inappropriate behaviour for example, evidence of intoxication.

Appealing This Decision

Should you disagree with the Manager's decision to suspend our service to you, please write to the Chair of Louth Volunteer Centre, Fitzwilliam Business Centre, Laurence Street, Drogheda, Co. Louth

Your appeal will be considered by the Board, or a sub-committee of the Board of Louth Volunteer Centre.

Complaints Procedures

Louth Volunteer Centre welcomes all feedback, both positive and negative as it allows us to deliver a better service to the community.

This is the policy that we will follow if your complaint is about someone's conduct or behaviour.

This could be because you think that someone has behaved in a way that is unsafe, unprofessional, discriminatory, offensive or intimidating.

It could be because someone has broken important rules or policies.

Values and principles

- **You have the right to complain:** We take complaints seriously. You should not be harassed, bullied or put at a disadvantage because of making a complaint.
- **Equality:** You should receive a proper response to your complaint, regardless of your age, gender, disability, race, religion, nationality, social status, sexual orientation or political persuasion.
- **Fairness:** We believe that complaints should be dealt with fairly and openly. Unless it would put other people at risk, those affected by a complaint should have a chance to contribute and respond to any investigation.
- **Safety and welfare take priority:** We will always give priority to concerns that affect safety and welfare. Issues affecting children will be treated very seriously.
- **Confidentiality:** We treat complaints as confidentially as possible. Sometimes we have to discuss complaints with other organisations. If we are worried about a risk to a person or to the public, we might need to pass on our concerns to the right authorities. If necessary, we will get advice from other organisations.

How to make a complaint

If you have a complaint, it is often best to start by having a conversation with someone at LVC.

There are some suggestions below about who to speak to. They may be able to help to resolve your problem.

You could also make a written complaint. The address for written complaints is at the bottom of this policy.

If your complaint needs to be looked into further, you will normally be asked to put your complaint in writing.

We accept anonymous complaints, but it is often very difficult to investigate these properly. It is easier for us to handle your complaint if you provide as much detail as possible.

Who to contact to make a complaint

Complaints will usually be handled the Manager of Louth Volunteer Centre. The address for written complaints has been included at the bottom of this policy.

What will we do to investigate?

We will give an initial response to your complaint within five working days. If the matter is urgent, we will respond more quickly. We will investigate your complaint fairly. This means that we will discuss the complaint with all of the relevant people. We will try to gather any information that may be relevant to handling your complaint. Sometimes we will ask to show copies of information from the investigation to other people to allow them to respond. This is because we believe in fairness and openness. We will not share information if we think that this will endanger someone's safety or welfare.

We reserve the right to seek advice from other appropriate organisations

How will I know what is happening?

You will be given the details of a person who will be your point of contact at Louth Volunteer Centre. That person will make sure that you understand the process, and will help to answer any questions or concerns that you have. You will be given an update on the progress of your complaint every two weeks.

If there are delays in handling your complaint for any reason, we will keep you informed.

If your complaint leads to formal disciplinary action against someone, we will usually inform you about the outcome.

We will not tell you the outcome if that person is a child, or if we believe that telling you would create a risk to other people.

In this situation, we will still try to tell you about how you are affected by the action that we have taken.

What are the possible outcomes or results of my complaint?

In many cases, we are able to resolve problems informally. This might include:

- A change in the way we work
- An explanation or apology
- An agreement to communicate or act differently in future

If an informal resolution is not suitable, then a committee that includes members of the Board of Directors will look at the information about the case. We will try to make sure that this committee does not contain anyone directly involved with your complaint. They might decide to take the following action:

- Formal disciplinary action under the policies of Louth Volunteer Centre



- Formal disciplinary action against a member of staff
- Changes in formal contracts or policies put in place by LVC
- A decision to refer the case to another organisation such as the Garda Síochána
- Closure of your complaint without action

All written complaints should be sent to:

The Manager
Louth Volunteer Centre
Fitzwilliam Business Centre
Laurence Street,
Drogheda,
Co. Louth

Of if you wish the Board of Management to deal with the query if it is regarding the management of the volunteer centre contact ;

The Board of Management
Private & Confidential
C/o Louth Volunteer Centre
Fitzwilliam Business Centre
Laurence Street
Drogheda
Co Louth