

Volunteer Policy

Contents

	Page
1 Definition	3
2 Purpose of the Volunteer Policy Document	3
3 Scope and Responsibility	3
4 Recruitment	4
5 Eligibility	4
6 Role Descriptions and person specifications	4
7 Applications	4
8 Relationship with Employees	5
9 Working Conditions	5
10 Appropriate Behaviour	5
11 Representation of MS Ireland	5
12 Confidentiality	5
13 Records	6
14 Termination of Volunteer Arrangement	6
15 Concerns and Grievances	7
16 Expenses	7
17 Insurance	7
18 Personal and Vocational Development	7
19 Monitoring and Evaluation	7
20 Garda Vetting	7
21 Safe Guarding and Child Protection	8
22 Feedback	8
23 Volunteer Application Process	8

Definition

“Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society, local communities, and individuals outside the immediate family, the environment or other causes. Voluntary activities are undertaken of a person’s own free will, without payment.”

The White Paper Supporting Voluntary Activity (2000).

A volunteer in MS Ireland is defined as a person who contributes without payment, their skills and time to an agreed role that assists MS Ireland to achieve its objectives. Volunteer activities are undertaken of persons own free will and may be withdrawn at any time. Volunteers work at all levels of the organisation including volunteer branches, fundraising, administration, communications and board of directors.

Purpose of the volunteer policy document

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on all aspects of volunteering in MS Ireland. It does not constitute a binding contract. It supplements other MS Ireland policies and procedures, as well as our vision, mission statement and our values.

These procedures apply to all volunteers who undertake tasks on behalf of and at the direction of MS Ireland.

The purpose of this policy is to provide all employees and volunteers with clear guidance on involving volunteers in MS Ireland to outline expectations and to ensure the implementation of best practice in the recruitment, selection, management and support of volunteers.

Scope and Responsibility

This policy applies to all Volunteers in MS Ireland

Overall responsibility for volunteers lies with the Board. However, the implementation of this policy is done under the authority of the Chief Executive and his/her Senior Management Team. They will implement various structures to facilitate volunteering in MS Ireland.

The Line Manager will ensure all paper work including vetting is completed in relation to the volunteer. They will also organise an induction to the role that the volunteer is assigned, and to the organisation.

RECRUITMENT

Eligibility

Volunteering is open to anyone. Individuals must, however, be able to demonstrate a commitment to the aims of the Organisation and fulfil the relevant eligibility criteria for the specific volunteer role.

While MS Ireland wishes to facilitate all volunteers, the skills and experience of some volunteers may not always match the needs of the Organisation.

Role descriptions and person specifications

Like employees, volunteers require a clear and accurate description of the role and responsibilities they are expected to undertake. Prior to any volunteer assignment or recruitment effort, a role description must be developed for each voluntary opportunity. See attached role descriptions for:

1. Board volunteer
2. Branch volunteer
3. Fundraising volunteer

The role description may be amended by joint agreement with the volunteer and Line Manager. A copy of the final version must be given to the volunteer before commencing voluntary work. In relation to branch volunteers, this will be the Chairperson of the branch committee. The volunteer policy in regard to branch volunteers needs to be read in conjunction with the Branch Handbook

Applications

Applications from interested volunteers will be welcomed.

Volunteers are recruited in accordance with MS Irelands equal opportunities policy.

Volunteers are required to complete an application form, where practical.

Relationship with Employees

All those who work for or with MS Ireland are part of a team working to achieve designated goals. MS Ireland treats volunteers and employees in the same regard. However, staff and volunteers have different roles and duties that must complement each other.

Working Conditions

Volunteers are protected under the same health and safety guidelines as staff, thus ensuring the health and occupational safety of those working voluntarily for MS Ireland.

Voluntary time commitment is never expected to match that of a full-time Employee, but unscheduled absences can create organisational problems. When expecting to be absent, volunteers should inform their point of contact, where appropriate, so that alternative arrangements can be made.

Appropriate Behaviour

Volunteers have a role to play in helping to create a positive image of MS Ireland to the outside world. It is expected that all volunteers will act in a way so as to foster this image and to refrain from any actions/activities which may bring the organisation into disrepute.

Volunteers are expected to work within the policies and procedures of MS Ireland and adhere to its ethos.

Representation of MS Ireland

Unless explicitly agreed volunteers do not act as representatives for MS Ireland. While volunteers can promote the image, work and values of MS Ireland they should not make statements to the press, form agreements with other bodies involving contractual or financial obligations or other similar activities.

Confidentiality

MS Ireland respects the volunteer's right to privacy and confidentiality. In turn, volunteers are expected to respect the organisation's confidentiality prior to, during and following their role as volunteer. Specifically, volunteers may not disclose any information of a confidential nature referring to the Organisation, or any associates of the organisation. Volunteers may not remove any documents belonging to MS Ireland at any time without proper advance authorisation. On request

at any time, and in particular on termination of the volunteer arrangement, all documents and items belonging to the organisation, anything containing reference to the organisation or any confidential information in the volunteers possession must be returned.

While volunteering on behalf of the organisation, volunteers must devote the whole of their time, attention and abilities to their duties for the organisation. During time working on behalf of the organisation, volunteers may not, whether directly or indirectly, undertake any duties which are inconsistent with their obligations to the organisation.

Volunteers must declare any potential conflict of interest with the organisation as soon as it arises.

Records

A system of records is maintained on all volunteers. Volunteer records are accorded the same confidentiality as staff records.

Termination of the Volunteer Arrangement

MS Ireland may at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate volunteers' relationships with the Organisation. Similarly, volunteers may at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate their relationships with MS Ireland. Notice of such decisions should be communicated at the earliest opportunity, preferably in writing.

It is MS Ireland's intention to facilitate as many volunteers as possible. However, there may be occasions where volunteers fail to meet the designated and agreed objectives and behaviours. In these cases, MS Ireland will review the relationship between the volunteer and MS Ireland.

The volunteer arrangement will be terminated in the event a volunteer does not adhere to the Organisations rules or who fails to perform their volunteer assignments satisfactorily. No volunteer's arrangement will be terminated in writing until the volunteer has had the opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible termination with their supervisor.

Grounds for termination of the volunteer arrangement include, but are not limited to the following: Gross misconduct, being under the influence of drugs (including alcohol) in the course of their duties as volunteers, theft, misuse of equipment and materials, abuse of clients and co-workers, breaches of confidentiality and data protection legislation, failure to abide by MS Ireland's policies and procedures and failure to complete duties to a satisfactory standard.

Concerns and Grievances

MS Ireland aims to ensure the volunteering experience of all volunteers is positive. However, there may be occasions where issues/concerns threaten this experience.

If volunteers are not satisfied that issues relating to their volunteering are being handled appropriately, they are entitled to have their concerns reviewed by the Senior Manager or Chief Executive, as appropriate. The Committee will investigate and discuss the issue as soon as practical after receiving a written complaint and take appropriate action. The committee will consider all information and make a decision.

Decisions can be appealed to the Chief Executive or Board (as appropriate)

Expenses

Volunteers will not expect to receive any payment for their services other than agreed out-of-pocket expenses that they may incur in the course of undertaking voluntary work for the Organisation. These expenses will be subject to the Expenses Policy of MS Ireland.

Insurance

Insurance is provided by MS Ireland to cover all volunteers working on behalf and at the direction of the Organisation.

Personal and vocational development

Volunteers are encouraged to develop their skills while involved with the Organisation and are assisted into assuming additional and greater responsibilities over time, if they desire this.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Garda Vetting

Volunteers in the organisation will be dealing with vulnerable sections of society. In order to ensure that the Organisation is engaging the services of people of the utmost integrity, Garda vetting will be conducted for all Branch Officers.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

MS Ireland is committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of all the children and young people with whom we work. Our Child Safeguarding Statement on child protection is in accordance with

“Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children” (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011) and can be found on our website or is available on request. MS Ireland monitors and evaluates volunteer involvement in the Organisation on a regular basis and seeks to make ongoing improvements. Training is available to MS Ireland staff only at present.

Feedback

Constructive feedback on this document is always welcome. It must be given to a Senior Management Team member who will ensure that it is considered fully

Volunteer - Application Process

	Applications	Interviews	Vetted	Referees
Board Volunteer	√	√	√	√
Branch Volunteer:			√	X
Committee Volunteer		X	√	X
Other Volunteers (Church Gate Collector)		X	X	X
Fundraising Volunteer		X	X	X
Administrative Volunteer		√	√	√

MS Ireland Branch Volunteer Role Description

Branch Network

MS Ireland has a dedicated team of volunteers at our 34 Branches around the country. This is an important role that helps local Branches to carry out the everyday business of the Branch.

Voluntary Branches throughout the country provide a range of services, social opportunities and support for people with MS and their families. Voluntary Branches are self-financing and organise a number of fundraising activities to support their work.

The 34 voluntary Branches are supported by MS Ireland nationally and regionally. Voluntary Branches are run for people affected by MS by people affected by MS and their friends and family.

The role of the Branch involves providing a range of support services to PwMS and their families. The services and activities provided by the Voluntary Branches vary from Branch to Branch.

The core activities of the Branch are carried out by volunteers and they include:

- To undertake fundraising activities ie. Church Gate Collections, flag days, bag packing, collections etc.
- The provision of Information about the organisation and its services.
- Sit on the local Branch Committee
- Help and support the local committee by offering their skill sets
- Work in cooperation with the Regional Office to plan for regional activity and services.
- To provide financial assistance in conjunction with the Regional Worker.
- Promoting the work of the Branch and MS Ireland.
- To support programmes in conjunction with the Regional Office.
- To organise social activities.
- To hold an AGM.