

Foróige

General Code of Conduct for Foróige Board Members & Staff



October 2016

CODE OF CONDUCT

Introduction

Foróige is proud of the standard of conduct of its Board and staff¹. Foróige is committed to not only maintaining these standards and ensuring they are applied consistently, but also to improving them as part of the organisation's commitment to continuous improvement.

This Code of Conduct has been drawn up to clarify what is expected of Board Members and staff and what is considered to be professional and unprofessional behaviour. It is not possible to list all situations that Board Members and staff may find themselves, although the Code provides general guidance that will cover a wide range of situations. Where Board Members or staff are in doubt about the professionalism of any aspect of their conduct or that of others they will consult an appropriate member of staff or manager for guidance. If Board members are in doubt they should consult the Chair.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE

Actions and decisions of Board Members and staff will be based on an over-riding concern for the value, rights, needs and aspirations of young people/participants and volunteers in Foróige programmes and projects. Professional responsibility will take precedence over personal interest. The needs and aspirations of young people/participants and volunteers will be considered on an individual basis. Board Members and staff will treat all young people, participants, their colleagues, volunteers in Foróige and staff of other organisations with dignity and respect at all times.

RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

Board Members and staff will try not to impose their own personal, political, or religious beliefs on young people/participants and volunteers or colleagues, nor suggest to young people/participants and volunteers that adoption of particular beliefs or values may result in preferential treatment. Where young people/participants or volunteers seek advice which may require a value judgement, the Board or staff member should only provide information on the range of options available within the law and within Foróige guidelines. Board Members and staff in Foróige are encouraged to contact a member of management should such a situation arise for further help and guidance.

¹ Staff refers to any person in receipt of payment for services provided including but not limited to full time, part time and occasional staff. It also includes those in management positions.

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

All Board members and staff will comply with Foróige's Code of Good Practice which takes priority over this Code. In particular, all Board members and staff will comply with Foróige's Right to Dignity at Work Policy.

Further, no Board Member or staff will subject young people, participants, colleagues, volunteers or others to any form of bullying. That is, repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individuals' right to dignity.

This includes behaviour which may humiliate, intimidate, verbally abuse, victimise, exclude and isolate, intrude through pestering, spying or stalking, imply threats, inappropriate language or humour, etc.; or any form of harassment if the action or the conduct is unwelcome to the young person, colleague, volunteer or employee, and could reasonably be regarded as offensive, humiliating or intimidating.

Harassment is defined as any act or conduct, including spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material.

Harassment includes sexual harassment, which can be defined as any act of physical intimacy, any request for sexual favours, any other act or conduct including spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material if the act, request or conduct is unwelcome and could reasonably be regarded as sexually offensive, humiliating or intimidating.

Please refer to relevant Foróige policies and Guidelines e.g. Right to Dignity at Work, Social Media Guidelines

VIOLENCE

Board Members and staff in Foróige must not be violent or threaten violence towards young people, participants, volunteers, colleagues, staff of Foróige or other organisations, or the public. Board Members and staff will take appropriate measures to prevent, avoid, and calm potentially violent situations.

Where a violent situation does arise involving young people, Board Members and staff must immediately seek appropriate assistance e.g. other staff or volunteers, their managers, security or the Gardaí.

If it is felt that there is no alternative, and the Board Members or staff is comfortable doing so, and there is a serious risk of harm to a young person Board Members and staff may intervene in a violent situation – however, this is discouraged unless it is genuinely felt that there is a serious risk of harm to a young person.

If intervening in a violent situation Board Members and staff must consider if there are adequate numbers to ensure the Board Members and staff will not be at serious risk. Where force is unavoidable, only reasonable force may be used to restrain the violent person. Board

Members and staff concerned for their safety should remove themselves from the immediate situation and immediately contact other staff or volunteers on duty, their manager, and/or the Garda, as appropriate. All threats of violence must also be reported immediately to the appropriate manager.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Within the resources available, Board members and staff will work in such a way as to give equal opportunity for each young person, participant and volunteer to achieve their potential and will not discriminate against young people, participants or volunteers on the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, or membership of the Traveller community.

Board members, Staff will make every effort to ensure that each young person's and participant's rights are understood, observed and upheld and the rights of other persons affected by the young person or participant are also observed and upheld.

Managers will provide equal opportunity for each applicant for a post (see recruitment and selection policy for details) and for current members of staff to achieve their potential (including training and promotion) within the organisation. Managers, staff or volunteers will not discriminate against other employees or volunteers on the grounds of age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marital or family status, nationality, religion or political beliefs or tradition, or membership of the travelling community.

Board members and Staff will attempt to secure appropriate services and resources to enable young people and participants to meet their needs, and will ensure that such resources are equitably allocated independently of personal preference or prejudice. Board Members and staff will ensure that such resources are used solely for the benefit of young people and participants and are not misused.

EMPOWERMENT

Board Members and staff, as relevant to their own role, will:

- Support young people/participants and volunteers, both individually and collectively, to maximise their potential, at their own pace
- Support the ability and opportunity of young people/participants and volunteers to make well-informed decisions and increase their control of their own lives
- Help increase the range of choices open to young people/participants and volunteers and the information that young people/participants and volunteers have about these choices
- Be encouraged to maximise their own potential within the organisation

PARTICIPATION

For further information please refer to the Youth Participation & Advocacy Toolkit and also other relevant Foróige literature regarding working with young people

Board Members and staff will, as far as is practical:

- Consult young people/participants and volunteers, individually and collectively, about decisions which may affect them
- Encourage and support young people and participants to voice their views
- Actively promote the participation of young people/participants and volunteers in identifying and defining the services they require
- Encourage and support young people/participants and volunteers to participate in decision-making

QUALITY

Foróige recognises that quality is vitally important and requires a commitment from everyone in the organisation to continual improvement. Board members and Staff will:

- Encourage feedback from young people, participants, volunteers and other stakeholders (e.g. referral agencies) on the services provided
- Suggest innovations and improvements to the services provided through relevant organisation structures

Board members and staff will:

- Maintain a high quality of services
- Be familiar with, and comply consistently, with relevant standards and procedures established by Foróige
- Highlight any deviation from agreed standards or procedures to their line manager/Chair of the Board

USE OF RESOURCES

Board members and Staff will not misuse or use for personal purposes (unless exceptions have been made e.g. mobile phones) or gain, any of Foróige's physical or financial resources e.g. furniture, equipment, IT and telecommunications equipment and software, materials, etc.

PROCUREMENT OF RESOURCES

All Board Members and staff will follow Foróige's procurement and recruitment and selection policies and procedures. Where a Board member or staff member has a conflict of interest² in relation to the procurement of any item, or the recruitment of any person, this conflict of

² A conflict of interest is defined as a conflict between the private interests and the official or professional responsibilities of a person in a position of trust. If there is any doubt please discuss with a line manager/Chair of the Board as appropriate

interest will immediately be declared and the Board member or staff member will take no part in the procurement or recruitment process.

TRUST

The provision of quality services requires Board Members and staff to be reliable, punctual, honest, fulfil reasonable expectations and communicate with others in a way that enhances trust and confidence in the integrity and reliability of each Board and staff.

Board Members and staff will not commit any act, including saying or writing anything in any format or forum, that may bring Foróige into disrepute or diminish the trust and confidence of the public. This may include activities outside the workplace where these are directly linked to the person's role in the organisation or are of such a serious nature as to diminish the trust and confidence of the public and/or funders.

Consistent with their agreed role, Board Members and staff will take decisions in the best interest of young people/participants and volunteers without regard to personal or professional gain or prospects.

FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRITY

Board Members and staff are expected to demonstrate absolute integrity and honesty, for example, in relation to handling of money, recording of financial transactions, claiming of expenses, use of resources and recording of other administrative information, such as time sheets.

INCOME GENERATION

Those engaged with fundraising or applying for funding for Foróige will do so in a manner which demonstrates the highest level of honesty and enhances the trust of the public in the integrity of Foróige and comply with relevant Foróige policies and guidelines.

PERSONAL COMPETENCE

Where a Board Member or staff has reason to believe that a young person/participant or volunteer is in need of help or advice which the Board or staff Member is not competent or able to give (by reason of circumstances beyond his/her control), the Board or staff Member will inform the young people/participants and volunteers of this and give them such help and support as is necessary to enable the young person or participant to obtain the appropriate help or advice. This may include trying to access the necessary help or advice for the young person or participant.

Board Members and staff will not engage in a counselling relationship with young people/participants and volunteers, unless qualified and employed specifically to do so. This does not preclude Board Members and staff from engaging in the vital task of active listening and facilitating young people and participants to explore options and the implications of these options.

Foróige requires that Board Members and staff who work with young people or participants will be physically, emotionally and mentally competent to meet the needs of young people and participants. Each member of staff and volunteer has a responsibility to present him/herself in attitudes, behaviour and personal manner. Each Board Member and staff has a responsibility to present him/herself in attitudes, behaviour and personal manner so as to positively provide a positive experience for young people.

Staff will acknowledge limitations in their knowledge or competence and highlight to their manager any duties or responsibilities which they would be unable to perform in a safe and skilled manner.

Foróige will provide appropriate support (including reasonable time-off to attend treatment/counselling) to staff who are suffering from work-related stress where this is discussed with their manager.

The skills and knowledge of Board Members and staff are vital in providing a high quality service to young people/participants and volunteers. All Board Members and staff have both the right and responsibility to actively participate in identifying their own learning needs, receiving feedback and participating in appropriate training and development activities to address these learning needs.

Managers will therefore provide staff with regular support, supervision, appraisal and training and development opportunities. Staff will participate actively in appraisal, supervision and training.

Board Members should discuss identified learning needs with the Chair of the Board

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

All Board members and staff will comply Foróige's Drugs, Tobacco and Alcohol Policy and Guidelines.

Board Members and staff who may have an alcohol or drug problem should disclose or acknowledge this on a confidential basis to an appropriate manager/Chair of the Board and seek support in obtaining treatment. Foróige may support a staff member in receiving the

appropriate treatment for a specified period of time where the staff member has been honest in admitting to the problem and shows commitment to tackling the problem.

Where a manager becomes aware that a member of staff may have, or may be developing an addiction, s/he will share his/her concerns with the member of staff in private and outline the organisation's policies in this area, including the availability of support.

APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES

Young People

Board Members and staff working with young people do so from a position of trust and, as such, appropriate boundaries must be maintained between young people and Board Members and staff. Foróige's Code of Practice on Working with Young People covers this in greater detail.

Adults

The friendships that develop between colleagues and volunteers and staff members is recognised and encouraged however, while volunteering/working in Foróige appropriate boundaries must be maintained.

It is also important to maintain appropriate boundaries with other colleagues and/or volunteers in Foróige. It is the responsibility of Board Members and staff to maintain appropriate boundaries between personal and professional relationships and identify if and when the relationship is inconsistent with the mission and values of the organisation and this Code.

Within the relevant work context Board Members and staff will not give young people/participants and volunteers their home address, phone numbers, or email address, invite volunteers/young people to their home, or disclose personal or intimate information about themselves.

GIFTS AND BENEFITS

Board Members and staff will not ask for or otherwise seek any personal gifts, fee, or benefits (including inclusion in a legacy) from a young people/participants and volunteers.

Board Members and staff may not receive personal gifts from suppliers or potential suppliers of services or products to Foróige. This does not preclude the acceptance of small gifts which can be shared among other staff, volunteers and/or young people or participants. Any such offer of gifts must be declared to the relevant manager or Chairperson.

INFORMATION ON YOUNG PEOPLE AND VOLUNTEERS

Board Members and staff will comply Foróige's Data Protection Policy and Procedures. In the collection and collation of information on young people and participants, staff explain to young people/participants and volunteers the purpose of collecting the information and their rights to access and confidentiality and will ensure that such information is

- adequate, relevant and not excessive for the purpose for which it is required
- obtained fairly and lawfully
- in compliance with data protection legislation
- used or disclosed in accordance with data protection requirements
- only kept for as long as required for the purpose
- made available to the service-user within 24 hours of a request to a manager
- properly protected against loss or breach of confidentiality.

Disclosure of information concerning a young person/participant and volunteers to an unauthorised person is a breach of confidentiality. Board Members and staff will ensure that issues relating to young people/participants and volunteers are not discussed in the presence of an unauthorised person. Disclosure may only be given where it is approved by the young person or participant (or his/her guardian) or the volunteer as relevant, it is demonstrably in the interest of the young person or participant, it is required by law, or where there is an overriding concern for the rights or safety of others.

Staff will make clear to young people/participants and volunteers the extent to which confidentiality will be maintained and the circumstances in which information may be disclosed.

In the carrying out of any research which identifies young people or participants, Board Members and staff will ensure that the rights of young people or participants are upheld and their privacy respected. Young people/participants and volunteers and the appropriate manager will be consulted to obtain their consent before any material which identifies young people or participants is obtained or published.

For further information please contact dataprotection@foroige.ie

HEALTH AND SAFETY

All Board Members and staff will comply with the law and Foróige policy and procedures in relation to Health and Safety. In particular, all Board Members and staff will

- Take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others
- Co-operate with Foróige in complying with relevant Health and safety requirements
- Not interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interests of Health and safety.
- Identify and report potential hazards.

CHALLENGING UNPROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Any Board Members and staff who becomes aware of any action or proposed action by a staff member, Board member or volunteer which s/he considers is not consistent with this Code

of Conduct, or which may be harmful to a young person, participant, staff member, volunteer, or member of the public, has a responsibility to make such representations as shall remedy the situation. Board Members and staff who fail to make such representations is colluding in the unprofessional conduct and therefore, in part, shares responsibility for it.

Board Members and staff cannot give permission for other Board members, staff or volunteers to disregard the Code of Conduct or other organisational policies or procedures.

Staff

Any manager who becomes aware of any action or proposed action by a staff member or volunteer which s/he considers is not consistent with this Code of Conduct, or which may be harmful to a young person/participant, staff member, volunteer, or member of the public, or is otherwise deficient or inappropriate will make such representations as shall remedy the situation. If the situation involves a staff member and is serious enough the manager may invoke the formal disciplinary procedure (see the disciplinary procedure for details).

Colleagues

Where a Board member or staff member feels that a colleague's behaviour, competency or integrity contravenes this Code of Conduct or is otherwise deficient or inappropriate, s/he should, if possible, discuss his/her views with the colleague. If no satisfactory outcome is achieved, or it is clearly a serious issue, the concerns must be communicated to an appropriate manager. If appropriate action is not taken, staff members/volunteers may use Foróige's grievance procedure.

Staff members or volunteers may be uncomfortable in informing on colleagues and may wish to do so confidentially. While Board Members and staff may request to do so confidentially, they must be aware that this may prevent the manager taking appropriate action, and that there are circumstances, particularly where someone is at risk of harm, where the manager must disclose the information to a third party.

Management

Where a Board member, staff member or volunteer feels that a more senior colleague's behaviour, competency or integrity contravenes this Code of Conduct or is otherwise deficient or inappropriate, s/he will discuss his/her views with the more senior colleague's manager. If appropriate action is not taken within a reasonable time-scale, staff members/volunteers may use Foróige's grievance procedure (see the grievance procedure for details).

VICTIMISATION

Board Members and staff will not in any way victimise other Board members, staff or volunteers who have raised concerns, formally or informally, about the actions of a Board member staff member, or volunteer, regardless of their position in the organisation, or invoked the grievance procedure, regardless of the nature of the issue or the eventual outcome.

COMPLAINTS

All Board Members and staff will comply Foróige's Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedures. Where Board Members and staff receive a complaint from a young person/participant volunteer, staff from another organisation, or a member of the public, s/he will listen carefully to the nature of the complaint, give due consideration to its content and advise the complainant of the formal and informal avenues to take the complaint further, and ensure that the complaint is recorded appropriately. Where the complaint represents an allegation of serious misconduct by another staff member or volunteer, or where another person may be in danger, the complaint will immediately be referred to an appropriate manager.

PROTECTED DISCLOSURES

Should a staff person wish to report any possible wrongdoing in the workplace they may make a protected disclosure under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014. This may be made to a member of management, a prescribed body or, in some cases to an external person.

Wrongdoing defined as the commission of criminal offences, failure to comply with legal obligations, endangering the health and safety of individuals, damaging the environment, miscarriage of justice, misuse of public funds, and oppressive, discriminatory, grossly negligent or grossly mismanaged acts or omissions. The definition also includes the concealment or destruction of information about any of the above wrongdoing

LEGAL INFRINGEMENT

Board members, Staff and volunteers will not knowingly encourage any infringement of the law by a young people/participants and volunteers or colleague, nor collude with young people/participants and volunteers or colleague in the evasion of the consequences of an illegal act. If Board Members and staff becomes aware of an illegal act or potentially illegal act they must inform the appropriate manager immediately. If in doubt, Board Members and staff will take advice from an appropriate manager and/or legal advisor.

Where a Board Member or staff member is considering whether to take legal action against a young person, participant, volunteer or employee, Foróige requests that this will be

discussed beforehand without prejudice, with the appropriate manager, or the Chair in the case of a Board member.

CONFLICTING INTERESTS

Where there appears to be a conflict in applying different aspects of this Code to a particular situation, or where Board Members and staff believes that it is wrong to follow this Code in particular circumstances, staff and volunteers will seek advice and guidance as soon as possible from an appropriate manager.

BREACH OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

If Foróige has reasonable grounds to believe that staff have not adhered to the policy as outlined above, it may instigate an investigation. If, following such an investigation, an employee is found to be in breach of this policy; he or she may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

If Foróige has reasonable grounds to believe that Board Members have not adhered to the policy as outlined above, it may instigate an investigation. If, following such an investigation, a Board Member is found to be in breach of this policy; he or she may be subject to disciplinary action, up to invoking Article 5 and/or 34 of the Articles of Association.

REVIEW OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Foróige recognises that any Code of Conduct is never perfect and needs to be regularly reviewed and improved. This Code will therefore be reviewed at least every three years. Board Members and staff will be consulted for their ideas in the review of this Code. However Board Members and staff are encouraged to identify shortcomings in the Code or suggest additions or amendments at any time.