



General Code of Conduct for Volunteers in Foróige

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Introduction

In Foróige we take pride in the standard of conduct of our volunteers. We are committed to maintaining these standards and ensuring they are applied

consistently and to improving them as part of the organisation's commitment to continuous improvement.

This Code of Conduct has been drawn up to guide and support volunteers regarding what is considered to be acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. It is not possible to list all situations that volunteers in Foróige may find themselves in, although the Code provides general guidance that will cover a wide range of situations. Where volunteers are in doubt about the acceptability of any aspect of their conduct or that of others they should consult the club leader or a member of staff or a manager as appropriate for guidance.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE

Actions and decisions of volunteers in Foróige must be based on an overriding concern for the value, rights, needs, aspirations and welfare of young people and participants in Foróige programmes and projects and will take precedence over personal interest i.e. the needs and well-being of young people must take priority over any other concerns.

The needs and aspirations of young people and participants will be considered on an individual basis. Volunteers in Foróige will treat all young people, participants, colleagues¹, and staff of Foróige and other organisations with dignity and respect at all times in all interactions including face to face and online.

SAFEGUARDING AND PROTECTING YOUNG PEOPLE

The Board of Foróige believes that the safeguarding, welfare and protection from harm of children and young people is of paramount importance in everything Foróige does. The conduct of volunteers must always be in keeping with both 'Protecting Young People, Guidelines and Information for Foróige Volunteers Regarding Child Protection and Welfare Concerns',² and Foróige's 'Code of Good Practice For Working With Young People',³ which take precedence over this Code of Conduct.

Respect for Diversity

¹ i.e. other Volunteers in Foróige

² 'Protecting Young People, Guidelines and Information for Foróige Volunteers Regarding Child Protection and Welfare Concerns', 2018.

³ Foróiges 'Code of Good Practice For Working With Young People', 2018.

Volunteers will try not to impose their own personal, political, or religious beliefs on young people or colleagues, nor suggest to young people or colleagues that adoption of particular beliefs or values may result in preferential treatment.

Where young people or participants seek advice which may require a value judgement, the volunteer should only provide information on the range of options available within the law and within Foróige guidelines. Volunteers are encouraged to contact a member of staff should such a situation arise for further help and guidance.

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

All volunteers in Foróige must comply with Foróige's Code of Good Practice, which takes priority over this Code of Conduct.

Further, no volunteer 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; 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, 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 and Social Media Guidelines.

VIOLENCE

Volunteers in Foróige must not be violent or threaten violence towards young people, participants, colleagues, staff of Foróige or other organisations, or the public.

Volunteers will take appropriate measures to prevent, avoid, and calm potentially violent situations.

Where a violent situation does arise involving young people, volunteers 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 volunteer is comfortable doing so, and there is a serious risk of harm to a young person volunteers 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 volunteers must consider if there are adequate numbers to ensure the volunteer will not be at serious risk. Where force is unavoidable, only reasonable force may be used to restrain the violent person. Volunteers 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 staff person.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Within the resources available, volunteers 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.

Volunteers 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.

Volunteers may attempt to secure appropriate services and resources (including financial) to enable young people and participants to meet their needs, and will ensure that such resources are equitably allocated independent of personal preference or prejudice and can be evidenced.

Volunteers will ensure that such resources are used solely for the benefit of young people and participants and are not misused.

EMPOWERMENT

Volunteers, as relevant to their own role, will:

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

PARTICIPATION

Please refer to the Youth Participation and Advocacy Toolkit for further information and Foróige literature on working with young people

Volunteers will, as far as is practical:

- Consult young people and participants, 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 and participants in identifying and defining the services they require
- Volunteers are encouraged to participate in organisation decision making structures locally and nationally and will encourage colleagues to participate in same.

QUALITY

Foróige recognises that quality is vitally important and requires a commitment from everyone in the organisation to continual improvement. Volunteers should

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

Within the resources available, volunteers 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 a staff member

USE OF RESOURCES

Volunteers will not misuse or use for personal purposes or gain any of Foróige's/the club or groups physical or financial resources e.g. furniture, equipment, IT and telecommunications equipment and software, materials, etc.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Where a volunteer has a conflict of interest in relation to the procurement of any item, or the recruitment of any person, this conflict of interest will immediately be declared to other appropriate volunteers and staff person and the volunteer will take no part in the procurement or recruitment process.

TRUST

The provision of quality services requires volunteers 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 volunteer.

Volunteers will not commit any act, including saying or writing anything in any format or forum, that may knowingly bring Foróige into disrepute or diminish the trust and confidence of the public. This may include activities outside the place of volunteering 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, volunteers 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

Volunteers are expected to demonstrate absolute integrity and honesty, e.g. in relation to handling money, recording of financial transactions, claiming

expenses, use of resources and recording of other administrative information, such as grant applications/reports to funders.

INCOME GENERATION

Those engaged with fundraising for Foróige 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 volunteer has reason to believe that a young person or participant is in need of guidance or advice⁴ which the volunteer is not competent or able to give (by reason of circumstances beyond his/her control), the volunteer will inform the young person or participant of this. However, the volunteer may decide, depending on the nature of the guidance/advice required to give them such help and support as is necessary to enable them to obtain the appropriate help or advice. This may include trying to access the necessary help or advice for the young person or participant.

Volunteers will not engage in a counselling relationship with young people or participants. This does not preclude volunteers from engaging in the vital task of active listening and facilitating young people to explore options and the implications of these options.

Foróige requires that volunteers who work with young people or participants will be physically, emotionally and mentally competent to meet the needs of young people and participants. The Volunteer has a responsibility to present him/herself in attitudes, behaviour and personal manner so as to provide a positive experience for young people.

Volunteers will acknowledge limitations in their knowledge or competence and highlight to the appropriate staff person any duties or responsibilities which they would be unable to perform in a safe and skilled manner.

The skills and knowledge of volunteers are vital in providing a high quality service to young people and participants. All volunteers have both the right and responsibility to actively participate in identifying their own learning needs,

⁴ If a volunteer has any concerns that this is a child welfare or protection they must report it immediately to a staff member under Foróige's Child Protection Guidelines

receiving feedback and participating in appropriate training and development activities to address these learning needs.

Staff or appointed volunteers will provide other volunteers with support, and training and development opportunities.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

All volunteers must comply with Foróige's Drugs, Tobacco and Alcohol Policy and Guidelines.

Volunteers who may have an alcohol or drug problem should disclose or acknowledge this on a confidential basis to an appropriate staff person as it may impact on their work with young people whose safety must take priority.

APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES

Young People

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

Adults

The friendships that develop between volunteers and volunteers and staff members are recognised and encouraged however, while volunteering/working in Foróige appropriate boundaries must be maintained. It is the responsibility of volunteers to maintain appropriate boundaries between personal and professional relationships.

GIFTS AND BENEFITS

Volunteers will not ask for or otherwise seek any personal gifts, fee, or benefits (including inclusion in a legacy) from a young person or participant.

Volunteers may not receive personal gifts from suppliers or potential suppliers of services or products to Foróige. This does not preclude accepting small gifts.

INFORMATION ON YOUNG PEOPLE

All volunteers will comply with Foróige's Data Protection Policy and Procedures. In the collection and collation of information on young people and

participants, volunteers will explain to young people and their parents/guardians 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 required purpose
- 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
- properly protected against loss or breach of confidentiality.

Disclosure of information concerning a young person or participant or colleague⁵ to an unauthorised person is a breach of confidentiality.

Volunteers must ensure that issues relating to individuals 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), it is demonstrably in the interest of the young person or participant, it is required by law, or where there is an over-riding concern for the rights or safety of others.

Volunteers should make clear to individuals 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 individuals, volunteers will ensure that the rights of those individuals are upheld and their privacy respected. Individuals and the appropriate manager will be consulted to obtain their consent before any material which identifies individuals is obtained or published.

For further information please contact dataprotection@foroige.ie

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Volunteers will comply with the law and Foróige policy and procedures in relation to health and safety. In particular, all volunteers will:

- Take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others
- Co-operate with Foróige to comply with relevant health & safety requirements
- Not interfere with / misuse anything provided in the interests of health & safety.

⁵ Hereafter referred to as “individuals”

- Report potential hazards to the appropriate person e.g. Hall Committee

CHALLENGING INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

Any volunteer 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 Foróige individual⁶ or member of the public, has a responsibility to make such representations as shall remedy the situation. A volunteer who fails to make such representations could be regarded as colluding in the inappropriate behaviour and therefore, in part, shares responsibility for it.

Where a volunteer 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 Club Leader/staff person. If appropriate action is not taken, volunteers may use Foróige's grievance procedure.

Foróige individuals cannot give permission for volunteers to disregard the Code of Conduct or other organisational policies or procedures.

Volunteers may be uncomfortable in informing on colleagues and may wish to do so confidentially. While volunteers may request to do so confidentially, they must be aware that this may prevent Foróige taking appropriate action, and that there are circumstances, particularly where someone is at risk of harm, where the information must be disclosed to a third party.

VICTIMISATION

Board members, staff and volunteers will not in any way victimise volunteers who raise 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 outcome.

COMPLAINTS

Volunteers will comply Foróige's Feedback and Complaints Policy⁷ and Procedures. Where a volunteer receives a complaint from a young person or participant, parent, guardian, another organisation, or member of the public they

⁶ Meaning a young person, participant, staff member, Board member or volunteer

⁷ Here after in this section referred to as "the policy"

must work within the policy, which involves firstly listening carefully to the nature of the complaint. S/he will then, at the earliest opportunity consult with an appropriate staff member who will assist him/her in working within the policy.

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.

LEGAL INFRINGEMENT

Volunteers will not knowingly encourage any infringement of the law by a Foróige individual, nor collude with a Foróige individual in the evasion of the consequences of an illegal act. If a volunteer becomes aware of an illegal, or potentially illegal act they must inform the appropriate staff member immediately.

Where a volunteer is considering taking legal action against a Foróige individual, 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 a volunteer believes that it is wrong to follow this Code in particular circumstances, volunteers must seek advice from an appropriate staff member as soon as possible.

REVIEW OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

This Code will be reviewed at least every three years. Staff and volunteers will be consulted for their ideas in the review of this Code. However they are encouraged to identify code shortcomings or suggest additions or amendments at any time.

* AT THE HEART OF
BUILDING STRONGER
COMMUNITIES IN IRELAND



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