



Mental Health Reform
Promoting Improved Mental Health Services

Volunteer Policy

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1. About Mental Health Reform

Mental Health Reform (MHR) is the national coalition on mental health in Ireland. MHR's membership represents a broad range of interests, including housing, disability, children's rights, human rights and ethnic minorities. MHR provides a unified voice to drive progressive reform of mental health services and supports in Ireland.

The Board of Directors are responsible for approving this policy and ensuring that it is adhered to.

2. This policy

This policy describes MHR's approach to volunteering. It sets out the role of volunteers and how they will be supported in their role. This policy should be read and implemented by any staff member with responsibility for the recruitment and/or management of volunteers. This policy should also be shared with volunteers.

3. Volunteering with MHR

MHR recognises and accepts that the achievement of its mission is best served by the active participation of the wider community. MHR accepts and encourages the involvement of volunteers in its work.

MHR sees volunteering as a way of furthering active citizenship and community involvement; of introducing areas of innovation and new perspectives to the organisation the organisations or communities they volunteer with.

MHR recognises that volunteers bring energy, perspective, knowledge and creativity. MHR will ensure that volunteers are fully inducted and encouraged to contribute and develop their skills, knowledge and experience. MHR is a small organisation with a big mission. Volunteers, including our Board of Directors, are part of the fabric of the organisation.

MHR recognises that volunteers require satisfying work and opportunities for personal development. MHR will endeavour to support volunteers in these areas by providing training opportunities, mentoring and supervision.

4. Recruitment of Volunteers

MHR is committed to equal opportunities for all volunteers and believes the promotion of equality and accommodation of diversity contributes significantly to the effectiveness of the organisation.

Volunteers will be assigned to a role without regard to gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race or membership of the traveller community, as defined under the Employment Equality Acts, 1998 to 2008.

All volunteers are interviewed and reference checks conducted.

5. Volunteer Agreement

Volunteers will be provided with a volunteer agreement, which will include the volunteer role, time commitment and obligations of both MHR and the volunteer. A sample agreement is included in this policy document.

6. Role Descriptions

MHR will define the role and responsibilities for each volunteer prior to the volunteer commencing their position with the organisation. The role description will list the general tasks, duties and responsibilities for the voluntary position. It will also include any skills, experience or attributes required for the role.

7. Safeguarding

Depending on the specific volunteer role, a volunteer may be asked to disclose any criminal convictions. Any decision on a candidate's suitability will be based on the nature of the role in the organisation, the nature of the offence and when it was committed.

Volunteers are also required to disclose to MHR if they receive any convictions during the period of volunteering. Volunteers may be asked to undergo Garda vetting.

8. Training Support & Development

MHR is committed to ensuring that volunteers receive appropriate induction. This will be coordinated by the volunteer's line manager.

MHR is committed to providing support and development opportunities to volunteers. The volunteer's line manager will be the main point of support.

Volunteers will receive regular supervision, support and feedback in meetings with their manager. These meetings are designed to review the volunteer's performance and to discuss concerns or suggestions the volunteer might have.

Volunteers will be given the opportunity to identify training and development opportunities during their placement with MHR. Volunteers will be encouraged to attend conferences and meetings that are appropriate and relevant to the role.

9. Time Commitment

Volunteers will be asked to commit to a specific period of time which will be agreed in advance. Volunteers are expected to perform volunteer's duties within this agreed time. Prior to commencing a volunteer role with MHR, the details of the time

commitment and the hours/days will be agreed with MHR. The time commitment will be set out in the volunteer agreement (see clause 5).

10. Confidentiality

In the course of their role, volunteers may become aware of personal or sensitive matters that are confidential. These matters could relate to an individual or to an organisation. MHR takes privacy and confidentiality extremely seriously. Failure to respect confidentiality will result in the termination of the volunteer agreement

All documentation and communications in writing, including emails, remain the property of MHR. Volunteers must comply with the organisation's data protection policies and procedures. Failure to do so will result in the termination of the volunteer agreement.

11. Professional Boundaries

Volunteers with MHR are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times.

12. Volunteer Allowance

There is no payment for volunteering with MHR. However, MHR may provide an allowance to volunteers to meet the cost of travel related to the role and light lunch. Payment of this allowance is discretionary and dependent on the nature and duration of the volunteer role.

13. Voluntary work and social welfare payments

If you are a recipient of a social welfare payment you may be allowed to volunteer and keep some or all of your payment. Your local social welfare office will advise on this. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to advise social welfare before taking up a volunteering role.

14. Health & Safety

MHR is committed to providing safe working conditions and environment. The organisation will make every effort to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable the safety, health and welfare of all employees and volunteers. Volunteers must ensure they work in accordance with MHR's health and safety policy and procedures and comply with instruction of the MHR designated health and safety officer.

15. Grievance Procedure

MHR believes that effective communication, openness, active listening and cooperation lead to the efficient and effective resolution of grievances. MHR's

grievance policy is the mechanism used to ensure grievances are resolved in a fair and timely manner. A grievance by a volunteer will be taken seriously and will be resolved as soon as possible (see MHR grievance policy).

16. Internet and telephone usage

MHR volunteers must comply with the organisation's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) policies and procedures. These policies include guidelines on acceptable usage of internet and telephone and the use of social media.

17. Exit Interviews

Volunteers may be invited to participate in an exit interview at the end of their placement. Participation in exit interviews is voluntary.

18. Volunteer Agreement (sample)

Volunteer agreement

This agreement is between MHR and _____

MHR is committed to ensuring that you have a quality volunteer experience, which is both productive and rewarding.

a) MHR accepts the commitment of _____

From the period _____ to _____

b) You agree to volunteer for _____ hours per week over on the following days:

Mon Tues Wed Thurs Fri

The volunteer role is: _____

The volunteer will be supervised by _____

MHR agrees to:

- provide adequate information and training so you may meet the expectations as described in your volunteer role description;

- explain what is required of you and to support and provide encouragement to help you achieve the desired results;
- assign you with a supervisor who will provide you with regular support and supervision meetings and act as a 'go to' person;
- treat you with respect and courtesy at all times;
- be receptive to any comments and feedback from you; and
- value and recognise your role as a volunteer.

You agree to:

- fulfil your role as outlined in the volunteer role description;
- perform your role to the best of your ability;
- comply with MHR's organisational policies and procedures;
- meet time and task commitments and to provide sufficient notice when not available; and
- act in a manner that is in keeping the principles of MHR.

Declaration

This agreement is binding in honour only, and is not intended to be a legally binding contract. Neither party intends any employment relationship to be created now or at any time in the future. This agreement may be cancelled at any time by either party.

Name _____

Signed _____

Date _____

By the Volunteer

Name _____

Signed _____

Date: _____