



Making hospital a happier place for children through play and advocacy

# Volunteer Policy

**Version 2020**

The Volunteer Policy is to be read in association with the Constitution of the Children in Hospital Ireland, Memorandum of Association and Volunteer Manual.

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# 1. Volunteering with Children in Hospital Ireland

## Introduction

Children in Hospital Ireland is a membership-based organisation. Its mission is to promote the wellbeing of children within the healthcare system in Ireland, in particular, before, during and after hospitalisation.

In working towards fulfilling this mission, Children in Hospital Ireland provides information and support to parents and carers and engages in advocacy in relation to healthcare services for children.

In addition, the organisation seeks to make hospital a happier place for children and young people through a volunteer-provided play and recreation service. This service is provided in different settings within the hospital – on the wards, through a playroom and ward combination, in out-patient departments, and in emergency departments. The service is now available to children and young people in 14 hospitals and paediatric urgent care centres throughout the country. Children in Hospital Ireland is the only charity managing such a voluntary service in Irish hospitals.

## Volunteering Opportunities

The majority of the people who volunteer with Children in Hospital Ireland do so in order to help in the provision of the organisation's play and recreation services. In so doing, these volunteers nurture curiosity and creativity and provide distraction at a time that can be very stressful for children – and for their parents and carers.

Other volunteers are engaged in the Children in Hospital Ireland *JustAsk* service which is available in Children's Health Ireland (CHI) at Crumlin; this involves volunteers welcoming families and providing way-finding information. This is a service that is greatly valued by both families and hospital staff.

Children in Hospital Ireland also has non hospital-based volunteer opportunities: these include fundraising, office administration, communications and marketing, membership of the Board, and co-option onto a sub-committee of the Board.

All volunteers involved with Children in Hospital Ireland must also be members of the organisation throughout the time they are volunteers. The membership fee is paid annually, in January. Membership provides volunteers with voting rights and a right to attend the AGM.

Volunteers with Children in Hospital Ireland have access to training and learning opportunities, insurance coverage while volunteering, and support from the organisation's

staff members, in particular the Volunteer Manager. Volunteers have a responsibility to participate fully in initial and ongoing training, to co-operate with other volunteers, with hospital staff and staff of Children in Hospital Ireland, and to adhere to the organisation's policies and procedures that are relevant to their role.

Children in Hospital Ireland recognises the invaluable role which volunteers play in the work of the organisation and their contribution to the achievement of its aims. It is committed to formally recognising the volunteer contribution on a regular basis, including through 'thank you' and recognition events.

### **Scope of Policy**

This volunteer policy applies to all hospital-based volunteers with Children in Hospital Ireland.

For non hospital-based roles, specific procedures for recruitment, induction and support will apply. Details are available from the relevant staff member.

## **2. Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers**

### **Recruitment Process**

Children in Hospital Ireland welcomes enquiries from prospective volunteers at any time, but only holds Information and Interview sessions (I&I), with subsequent training sessions, on one or two occasions per year for each hospital location. A prospective volunteer may participate in an I&I and training session in any location which is convenient for them, regardless of the hospital they wish to volunteer in.

### **Diversity**

Children in Hospital Ireland encourages the recruitment and engagement of volunteers from a diverse range of backgrounds, and actively seeks to have a team of volunteers which is representative of the community. Volunteers of all genders, ages, cultures, nationalities and experiences are welcomed and valued.

### **Information and Interview (I&I)**

Information and Interview (I&I) sessions are held to enable prospective volunteers learn about Children in Hospital Ireland and what is entailed in being a volunteer.

The sessions include background information on the organisation, volunteer role description, what is expected of volunteers, opportunities available, and an explanation of the application process. These evenings end with an informal group interview, where four to five prospective volunteers are interviewed by a staff member or an experienced volunteer. These interviews, which last about ten minutes, serve to identify the motivations, suitability,

and fit of prospective volunteers, as well as allowing Children in Hospital Ireland personnel to directly engage with them.

## **Application Process**

Following a successful interview, applicants are emailed the paperwork which they need to complete, along with the details of training. Paperwork requirements include completing a general application form; submitting a CV, two forms of ID, and written references from three referees; submitting an application for Garda Vetting; completing a confidentiality agreement form and completing a volunteer agreement form. These requirements may be subject to change. The Children in Hospital Ireland office staff are available to assist with queries concerning the paperwork requirements.

## **Garda Vetting**

The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 ('the 2012 Act') requires that a 'relevant organisation' which recruits employees or volunteers to undertake certain work or activities with children or vulnerable persons must ensure that these employees and volunteers are vetted by An Garda Síochána before undertaking such work or activity. Children in Hospital Ireland is a 'relevant organisation' within the meaning of the 2012 Act and the work it recruits volunteers to undertake in hospitals falls within the scope of activities for which Garda vetting is required.

All prospective volunteers must therefore be Garda vetted. Children in Hospital Ireland has entered into a written agreement with the hospitals in which it operates its services whereby it is agreed that Children in Hospital Ireland, rather than the hospital, will conduct the vetting application process in respect of its prospective volunteers and on receipt of the outcome of the vetting process will furnish a copy to the hospital, if requested.

After the National Vetting Bureau has processed an application from a prospective volunteer it will provide a disclosure to Children in Hospital Ireland. Where the disclosure reads 'NIL', vetting is considered to be completed. Where the Bureau disclosure includes a report of convictions or concerns a risk assessment will be conducted by Children in Hospital Ireland in order to decide if the applicant is suitable to work with children as a volunteer. The hospital in which it is intended to place newly recruited volunteers may have involvement in this process of assessment. (Please see Children in Hospital Ireland Garda Vetting Policy.)

Prospective volunteers who have lived abroad for six months or more must provide Children in Hospital Ireland with a police clearance form from that country. Where all reasonable attempts to do so have been made but it is not possible to provide a police clearance, Children in Hospital Ireland will risk-assess each case individually in consultation with the hospital in which it is intended the volunteer will be based.

Garda Vetting is to be renewed after three years where a person is still volunteering with the organisation.

## **Volunteer Training**

All new volunteers must attend a full-day training session organised by Children in Hospital Ireland. This training includes a section on child protection, an introduction to the key requirements for volunteers set out in the Children in Hospital Ireland Volunteer Manual, and scenario-based discussion of the Code of Conduct for volunteers. All volunteers will be given a copy of the Volunteer Manual, which includes the Code of Conduct.

In addition, all new volunteers are required to complete the HSE online e-module: *An Introduction to Children First*.

On their first day of volunteering, each new volunteer will have a hospital-level induction; this may be for an individual or for small groups and will be led by a hospital play specialist or by a Children in Hospital Ireland team leader or experienced volunteer.

If a volunteer decides to defer volunteering for more than one year they must refresh their training before resuming volunteering.

## **Volunteer Placement**

On completion of the Children in Hospital Ireland training programme and application process, including satisfactory reference checks and a disclosure satisfactory to Children in Hospital Ireland under the Garda Vetting process, new volunteers are placed in the hospital of their choice. Volunteers are assigned to a shift on a regular day and time and may be placed with a partner, or as part of a team of volunteers, or under the direct guidance of a play specialist. Some may be designated as 'floating' volunteers: their role will be to work with a volunteer when that person's original volunteer partner is unavailable.

Finalisation of a placement may take some time in order to ensure that the shift selected is agreeable to the volunteer, their partner, the team and the hospital. New volunteers have an introductory period of three months to ensure that the arrangements are mutually satisfactory. During this period, the Children in Hospital Ireland Volunteer Manager will get in touch with the volunteer to discuss how he or she is settling in and finding the experience. The volunteer should feel free to contact the Volunteer Manager for information and support if they have any queries or are experiencing any difficulties.

## **3. Supporting Volunteers**

### **Support from Staff Members**

The Volunteer Manager with Children in Hospital Ireland holds the primary responsibility for engaging with and supporting the organisation's hospital-based volunteers. The Volunteer Manager remains in contact via communications through team leaders, through newsletters, as well as directly, throughout the year. In addition, given the invaluable role played by volunteers, all Children in Hospital Ireland staff members recognise that supporting and engaging with volunteers is an important part of their work.

### **Team Leaders**

Team leaders are experienced volunteers who, after discussion with the Volunteer Manager, take on the additional role of supporting new and current volunteers. This includes responsibilities in the area of induction of new volunteers, team level communications, organising informal get-togethers, and more in-depth communication with the Volunteer Manager. Team leaders are supported through one training day and one team leaders' meeting each year.

## **4. Volunteer Management Procedures**

### **Child Protection**

The wellbeing and safety of all children in the hospitals where volunteers are placed and of those who use Children in Hospital Ireland's services are of foremost concern. Children in Hospital Ireland has a Child Protection Policy and a Child Safeguarding Statement which are publically available and the provisions of which are covered in detail in training undertaken before placement. Additionally, in compliance with HSE policy, all volunteers are required to complete the HSE Children First e-module before placement and to renew this training every three years.

Safeguarding measures implemented by Children in Hospital Ireland include: Garda Vetting (and police clearance in the case of those who have lived abroad for six months or more); volunteers work in pairs or under the supervision of hospital staff; training covers child protection and the requirements set out in Children in Hospital Ireland Volunteer Manual, including a Code of Conduct; a copy of the Volunteer Manual is given to all volunteers; ongoing support and contact with team leaders as well as with the Volunteer Manager.

Child protection concerns and incident reporting procedures are as follows:

1. Volunteers must immediately report any incident or concern to the Clinical Nurse Manager or the play specialist with whom the volunteer is working at the time that an issue of concern arises;
2. A written report should be filed with the hospital, if requested;

3. The volunteer should contact the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) for Children in Hospital Ireland as soon as possible. (The DLP is currently the Volunteer Manager of Children in Hospital Ireland.) This contact may be by phone call or by email, but should be followed up with a signed incident report form – as will be requested by the DLP.
4. The hospital social work team and Children in Hospital Ireland’s DLP will determine if the incident meets the threshold for reporting to Tusla – Child and Family Agency.

## **Data Management**

Children in Hospital Ireland understands that all personal information given by a volunteer is privileged, must remain confidential and used only as it directly relates to the volunteer position and for the purposes it was requested.

Children in Hospital Ireland will therefore gather, maintain, store, and delete all data in line with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Children First legislation. Data is retained only for as long as a person is volunteering and for one year afterwards. For further details, please see the Children in Hospital Ireland Data Protection Policy.

Children in Hospital Ireland has an Equality and Diversity Monitoring Form which volunteers are invited to complete. Doing so is, however, optional. The purpose of this form is to enable the organisation obtain an accurate picture of the volunteer team over time. The information is only ever reported on anonymously and never used in determining the suitability of a volunteer application.

## **Confidentiality Agreement**

All volunteers must sign a confidentiality agreement before they can be placed as a volunteer. In this, volunteers commit to treating their co-workers and the families and children with whom they work with respect for their dignity and right to privacy. Volunteers agree that information they may become aware of in the course of their work in the hospital must not be shared beyond needs that may arise from their role as a volunteer. This does not preclude volunteers from sharing information with Children in Hospital Ireland or with the hospital regarding child protection and safeguarding concerns. Failure to abide by the confidentiality agreement may result in disengagement of the volunteer.

## **Health and Safety**

All volunteers are covered by Children in Hospital Ireland insurance while volunteering in a hospital. Volunteers are expected to be vigilant regarding issues that may affect the safety of children or of volunteers themselves during their shift.

Food and drinks are not permitted in play environments. All falls or incidents should be reported to the nurse on duty. Any spills of play materials should be cleaned up without



delay; in the case of a medical/bodily incident the nursing staff should be alerted immediately.

Play materials should be monitored for damage on a regular basis in coordination with the full team of volunteers, and the play specialist wherever possible.

In some instances, a volunteer may be asked by nursing staff to hold a baby or walk a patient from their ward or room to the playroom. Even though this request comes from a member of the nursing staff, it remains the volunteer's choice whether or not to carry out the task. No volunteer should feel pressurised to undertake a task which they would not feel confident or comfortable in undertaking.

### **Infection Control**

Sick children are very vulnerable to infection and it is each volunteer's responsibility to ensure that they do not compromise a patient's health in any way. It is vital that volunteers adhere to the guidelines on infection control outlined in Children in Hospital Ireland training sessions, as well as to any further requirements that may be set out by the hospital. This may mean attending additional trainings on an annual basis. Volunteers must ensure that they thoroughly clean their hands before entering, and while in, the hospital and must not go to the hospital if they have any infection that might compromise the wellbeing of a child.

Infection control rooms should be entered by volunteers only with permission from hospital staff with the authority to grant this permission. Should they be asked to enter such rooms, volunteers may choose not to do so if they have concerns for their own personal health and safety.

### **Additional Training Requirements**

Some hospitals will require volunteers to take additional trainings on an annual or routine basis. These courses may include: hand hygiene, standard precautions, fire safety, and manual handling. Volunteers must notify the Volunteer Manager when they have completed these courses.

### **Dress Code**

All volunteers must follow the Children in Hospital Ireland dress code while volunteering. This includes light casual clothing with short sleeves plus the Children in Hospital Ireland tabard, or the Children in Hospital Ireland t-shirt. The volunteer's name badge should be worn and be visible at all times. Volunteers should also note other dress code requirements: no jewellery (one plain ring is acceptable), no nail varnish, and close-toed flat shoes.

All HSE hospitals have a 'Bare below the elbows' policy to facilitate infection control. It is for this reason that guidelines specify short sleeves, no rings with stones, no watches or other jewellery, and no nail varnish.

## **Attendance**

After signing the Children in Hospital Ireland sign-in book on arrival in the hospital, volunteers must make themselves known to hospital staff, checking in with the relevant nurse or play specialist. This procedure gives volunteers the opportunity to find out if there are any special considerations that must be taken into account on that day, to build relationships with the staff, and to fit play volunteering into the life of the hospital.

If a volunteer is unable to attend for their shift, they must contact their team leader or partner. If they are to be away for more than one shift, they must contact the team leader. If they wish to defer volunteering for an extended period they should contact the Volunteer Manager.

## **Complaints Procedure**

Children in Hospital Ireland operates a complaints policy to ensure that complaints about its services, from whatever source, are dealt with in a fair and courteous manner and that problems are resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible. A complaint may be made by a volunteer, a hospital staff member or a member of the public. A complaint is any concern which is raised relating to the quality of the service which Children in Hospital Ireland provides.

A person who wishes to make a formal complaint about Children in Hospital Ireland services may do so by writing to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the organisation. The CEO or a delegated person will be the contact person for the person who has made a complaint.

When a complaint is received, Children in Hospital Ireland will record the details of this and within one week will issue a letter of acknowledgement to the complainant. The complaint will be investigated as swiftly as possible and, where applicable, the complainant will receive a regular written update on the progress of the investigation, at intervals of no more than three weeks.

Children in Hospital Ireland will try to resolve the matter within eight weeks of receiving the complaint. If the complaint cannot be resolved within this period, the complainant will be notified in writing of the anticipated timeframe for the conclusion of the investigation. Within one week of the conclusion of the investigation of the complaint, Children in Hospital Ireland will issue a resolution letter detailing the outcome of the investigation.

This letter will include, if applicable, an explanation of the steps being taken to ensure there is no recurrence of any problem(s) or failure(s) identified. If at any time the complainant is dissatisfied with the handling of the complaint, or if Children in Hospital Ireland cannot resolve the complaint within the anticipated timeframe, the complainant will be notified of their right to refer the matter to the Chairperson of Children in Hospital Ireland.

### **Disengagement**

Volunteers who do not adhere to Children in Hospital Ireland policies and procedures or fail to comply with the Code of Conduct may be subject to disciplinary procedures or disengagement. No disengagement will occur without first discussing the situation or incident with the volunteer, and using the complaints procedure outlined in the Volunteer Manual.

Grounds for disengagement include, but are not limited to, volunteering under the influence of alcohol or drugs, misuse of equipment, exchanging contact information with children or their families, child protection concerns. All disengagements will be noted in writing and all relevant records will be stored securely.

## **5. Volunteer Support and Recognition**

### **Initial and Ongoing Support**

In line with Children in Hospital Ireland's mission, and its existence as a membership-based organisation, volunteers are recognised as a core part of the organisation and valued as individuals, as well as teams. Staff members strive to support prospective, new and existing volunteers through the full life-cycle of the volunteering experience.

Thus, throughout the recruitment process both the Office Administrator and the Volunteer Manager are on hand to make the experience as clear and manageable as possible. The office will be in touch regarding dates for recruitment and training and paperwork to be completed, and will, in so far as possible, follow up on missing forms. Volunteers are asked to check in with the office regarding any delays.

Once placed, there are several layers of support available to the volunteer. This arises in the first instance from building close working relationships with their partner, team, and hospital staff. Each volunteer is a part of a larger hospital team of volunteers, led by a team leader for whom they will have contact details. Any queries or concerns can be brought to the attention of the team leader and/or the Volunteer Manager. Throughout the year, there will be opportunities for volunteers to get to know other people volunteering in the hospital and in other hospitals.

Ongoing training and learning opportunities will be made available to volunteers throughout the year. These include occasional further trainings in specific areas, an annual National Volunteer Teambuilding and Workshop Day, as well as the Annual Lecture and the AGM. Interested volunteers have the opportunity to progress to the role of team leader. Team leaders, as described earlier, take on the additional role of supporting new and current volunteers, facilitating communication within the team and between the team and the Volunteer Manager. Team leaders are supported through one training day and one team leaders' meeting each year. The Volunteer Manager remains in contact through team leaders, both directly and through newsletters, throughout the year.

### **Financial Impact of Volunteering on the Volunteer**

Children in Hospital Ireland strives to minimise the financial impact volunteering will have on the volunteer. Although Children in Hospital Ireland encourages all hospitals to provide free or discounted parking, travel to the hospital and parking arrangements remain the responsibility of the volunteer.

Volunteers will be asked to attend events and workshops hosted by Children in Hospital Ireland, often in Dublin for accessibility to volunteers throughout the country. The cost of travel to such events is supplemented by the organisation wherever possible, and the volunteer will be informed of provisions in this regard in the invitation to the event.

In so far as possible, Children in Hospital Ireland in partnership with the hospital staff will supply the play materials and other resources needed for the volunteer play and recreation service. Volunteers should not bring in toys or items from home: this is because of hospital requirements regarding infection control and health and safety, and in order to avoid a financial burden on the volunteer.

### **Volunteer Recognition**

Children in Hospital Ireland strives to hold volunteer appreciation events each year and to provide mementos in recognition of long-standing service. All staff members hold responsibility for ensuring that in their direct and indirect contacts with volunteers they make known, wherever appropriate, the organisation's appreciation of their contribution.

### **Feedback**

Volunteer feedback is vital for ensuring improvement in services and supports for volunteers. Volunteers may provide feedback informally at any time, and have an opportunity to do so formally through the Annual Volunteer Feedback Survey, which is carried out at the end of each year.

When a volunteer completes their time volunteering with Children in Hospital Ireland, the Volunteer Manager will offer an exit interview, either by telephone, email, or a written

survey. The purpose of the exit interview is to ascertain how the volunteer found their experience and to learn of any suggestions they may have for improvements to the organisation and service.