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# VOLUNTEER POLICY

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COTTAGE AUTISM NETWORK  
CHY18103

**Policy Statement:**

- Cottage Autism Network Ltd. is committed to providing a professional and efficient service in supporting volunteerism.
- We recognise that in order to achieve our goals, we need to involve volunteers in our work and it is also essential that we present a model of good practice in volunteer management.
- We regard volunteers as a valuable resource and encourage them to get involved at all levels of the organisation and within all appropriate activities. We aim to train, support and supervise our volunteers to the best of our abilities, and to act quickly and fairly if difficulties arise.

*Diversity of Volunteers within Cottage Autism Network Ltd.*

There are three main types of volunteers currently engaging and recognised by CAN, which are as follows:

1. Occasional Volunteers – These are people who volunteer at events. They volunteer occasionally, perhaps a few times per year.
2. Regular Volunteers – These are people who take on a particular task, on an ongoing basis.
3. Board Members – These people hold positions of responsibility in the Governance of the organisation and have been elected/co-opted based on their skills and experience.

**1. Procedural Guidelines:***1.1 Purpose of the Document*

The purpose of this internal document is to provide guidance on all aspects of volunteering at the Cottage Autism Network Ltd. It does not constitute a binding contract. It supplements other Cottage Autism Network Ltd policies and procedures, as well as our definition of volunteering, our mission statement and our value base.

These procedures apply to all non-elected volunteers who undertake tasks on behalf and at the direction of the board of Cottage Autism Network Ltd.

*1.2 Responsibility*

The Volunteer Co-Ordinator is responsible for ensuring that the policy and the procedures in this document are implemented efficiently and effectively. All other volunteers (including voluntary management committee members) are expected to facilitate this process.

*1.3 Eligibility*

Cottage Autism Network Ltd. will consider involving anyone as a volunteer. Individuals must, however, be able to demonstrate a commitment to the aims of the organisation and may only be placed if their needs as a volunteer match the needs of the organisation.

### *1.4 Working Times*

Working times are negotiated between the Volunteer Co-Ordinator and the volunteer and are as flexible as the tasks allow. When expecting to be absent, volunteers should inform their Co-Ordinator as soon as possible, so that alternative arrangements can be made.

### *1.5 Appropriate Behaviour*

Volunteers are expected to work within the policies and procedures of the Cottage Autism Network Ltd. and adhere to its ethos. As representatives of the organisation, they are responsible for presenting a positive image of the Cottage Autism Network Ltd. to the outside world.

### *1.6 Representation of the Cottage Autism Network Ltd.*

Volunteers must seek prior approval from the Volunteer Co-Ordinator before undertaking anything that might affect the organisation. This includes, but is not limited to, statements to the press, joint initiatives with other bodies, and agreements involving contractual or financial obligations.

### *1.7 Confidentiality*

Cottage Autism Network Ltd. respects the volunteer's right to privacy and confidentiality. In turn, volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all privileged information to which they are exposed while volunteering with Cottage Autism Network Ltd.

### *1.8 Records*

A system of records is maintained on all volunteers, including volunteer recruitment forms and vetting forms.

### *1.9 Service at the discretion of Cottage Autism Network Ltd.*

Any voluntary service is at the discretion of Cottage Autism Network Ltd. Cottage Autism Network Ltd. may, at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate volunteer's relationship with the organisation. Similarly, volunteers may at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate their relationships with Cottage Autism Network Ltd. Notice of such decisions should be communicated at the earliest opportunity, preferably in writing.

## **2. Recruitment**

### *2.1 Role descriptions and person specifications*

Like paid staff, volunteers require a clear and accurate description of the tasks 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. This must include a title of the volunteering role, starting and finishing dates, hours and place of work, name of supervisor and tasks to be undertaken. If appropriate, a brief person specification may also be drawn up. The role description may be amended in joint agreement with the volunteer and the Volunteer Co-Ordinator. A copy of the final version must be given to the volunteer before commencing voluntary work.

## *2.2 Applications*

Volunteers are recruited on a pro-active basis by the organisation using publicity avenues that are suitable for the roles that need to be filled. Potential volunteers may also apply speculatively. Volunteers are recruited in accordance with Cottage Autism Network Ltd. equal opportunities policy. All volunteers are required to complete an application form.

## *2.3 Interviews*

If necessary, applications are short listed and suitable candidates are invited to attend an informal chat with a Volunteer Co-Ordinator, to ascertain their interest and suitability for the role. All unsuccessful candidates are thanked for applying and encouraged to reapply for other volunteering opportunities, either current or in the future.

## *2.4 Checks for suitability*

References are always taken up. Garda vetting applies to all volunteers seeking work with children or vulnerable adults.

## *2.5 Appointment*

Formal appointments are made only after the role description has been agreed and all necessary checks have proved acceptable. No placements are made unless the requirements of the volunteer and the volunteer's supervisor can be met.

## *2.6 Probation*

All placements are subject to an initial trial period of one month. At this point, volunteers may continue in their current role, be reassigned to a more suitable role, or be asked to leave.

# **3. Training**

## *3.1 Induction*

All volunteers receive induction when they begin voluntary work with the Cottage Autism Network Ltd. This consists of a general introduction to the organisation, as well as a specific orientation on the purposes and requirements of their volunteering role.

## *3.2 On-the-job training*

Volunteers receive ongoing on-the-job training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their tasks well. The training must be appropriate for the demands of the position and the capabilities of the volunteer.

## *3.3 Additional Training*

Volunteers are actively encouraged to identify training courses, seminars, conferences and so on, which would help them to perform their roles better and which would aid their personal development. Priority is given to long standing volunteers and those who have received little or no training in the past.

### *3.4 Training Information*

If additional training was paid for by Cottage Autism Network Ltd, any course or other materials belong to the organisation. All volunteers are required to submit a short report outlining the content and usefulness of the course or the meeting attended. Training information must be disseminated to the relevant people within the organisation.

## **4. Supervision**

### *4.1 Lines of Communication*

Lines of communication should operate in both directions and should exist formally and informally. Volunteers must have access to all appropriate information, memos, materials and meetings relevant to their assignments. Volunteers must be consulted on all decisions that would substantially affect their volunteering conditions.

### *4.2 Supervisors*

Each volunteer must have a clearly identified supervisor who is responsible for the day-to-day management of that volunteer. The Volunteer Co-Ordinator normally takes on the supervisor's role, but all Board members receive training and guidance on how to involve volunteers effectively in the work of the organisation.

### *4.3 Dismissal*

Volunteers who do not adhere to the organisation's rules or who fail to perform their volunteer assignments satisfactorily may be subject to dismissal. No volunteers' involvement will be terminated in writing until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with their supervisor. Grounds for dismissal include, but are not limited to, the following: gross misconduct, being under the influence of drugs (including alcohol), theft, misuse of equipment and materials, abuse of clients and co-workers, breaches of confidentiality, failure to abide by Cottage Autism Network Ltd. policies and procedures and failure to complete duties to a satisfactory standard.

### *4.4 Concerns and grievances*

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 Board. The Board will discuss the issue as soon as practical after receiving a written complaint and take appropriate action. The chair of the board makes the ultimate decision

### *4.5 Exit Interviews*

Where possible, informal exit interviews are held with any volunteers who are leaving the organisation, either because they have reached the end of their project, or are leaving for some other reason. Interviews are usually conducted with the volunteer's ex- Co-Ordinator and written records are kept. The session should ascertain why the volunteer is leaving, how they found the volunteering experience and what suggestions they offer to improve the way the organisation operates. The offer of a personal reference for future employment etc is made to each volunteer.

## **5. Support & Recognition**

### *5.1 Support*

Cottage Autism Network Ltd endeavours to provide the support necessary to encourage and empower volunteers to make a meaningful contribution and gain significant benefits from their voluntary work. Support forms part of the regular supervision sessions and gives volunteers a safe setting in which to express themselves, let off steam and discuss how they feel about volunteering. The Volunteer Co-Ordinator will always try to be available to volunteers who require support in other areas that are affecting their performance.

### *5.2 Recognition*

Volunteers provide a unique service to Cottage Autism Network Ltd., the benefits of which are difficult to quantify. It is essential that their efforts are recognised and rewarded. Cottage Autism Network Ltd. Volunteer Co-Ordinator is responsible for thanking all volunteers informally on a regular basis for the valuable contribution that they make to the organisation.

### *5.3 Insurance*

Insurance is provided by Cottage Autism Network Ltd to cover all volunteers working on behalf of and at the direction of the organisation.

### *5.4 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.

## **6. Monitoring and Evaluation**

### *6.1 Cottage Autism Network Ltd Volunteer improvements*

Cottage Autism Network Ltd monitors and evaluates volunteer involvement in the organisation on a regular basis and seeks to make ongoing improvements.

### *6.2 Feedback*

Constructive feedback on this document is always welcome.