



NORTHSTAR

Family Support Project

Volunteer Policy

Volunteer Mission Statement

Northstar Family Support Project is dedicated to maintaining a quality programme where Volunteers in collaboration with staff can unlock their potential and learn from each other in a supportive environment.

Northstar Family Support Project provides supports to the public, and we would not be able to provide the level of supports without the time, energy, and commitment of volunteers.

Northstar Family Support Project prides itself on developing volunteer and student placement opportunities that will enhance personal and educational learning for the volunteers.

Northstar Family Support Project strives to maintain best practice in all areas of our work from recruitment to onsite support that ensures the volunteers have the best possible experience and the opportunity to gain a thorough understanding of and contribution to work of the Project.

We aim:

- To enable Volunteers to develop and contribute to all areas of the work of Northstar Family Support Project
- To offer a more holistic and varied experience to Volunteers.
- To work to ascertain Volunteer requirements and roles with a view to developing service potential.
- To offer a variety of quality Volunteer opportunities to encourage members of the local communities to Volunteer in the Project and thus gain an understanding of our work.

We achieve this through:

- Working closely with Volunteers and educational institutions to assess requirements and role development
- Maintaining links with other agencies to promote the services of the Project opportunities for potential Volunteers.
- Providing thorough induction, selection, and training programmes for all volunteers.
- Matching volunteers' skills with roles to ensure they are exploring their full potential.
- Striving to maintain best practice in our work with volunteers

Scope

All volunteers and employees operate under the Projects Policies & Procedures. The following are some of those relevant to volunteering:

- Volunteer Management Procedure
- Professional Boundaries
- Code of Conduct
- Complaints
- Confidentiality
- Equal Opportunities

Purpose

The purpose of this document is:

- To provide a framework of guidelines that deals broadly with the practical aspects of involving Volunteers.
- To provide a Policy that can develop a good and consistent practice involving Volunteers.
- To respect and accommodate the diversity of Volunteers' backgrounds and to be sensitive to the diversity of arrangements and relationships that this creates.

Principles

The principles of the Northstar Family Support Project Volunteering Policy are:

- The Project ensures that those Volunteers offering a regular commitment are properly integrated into the Project and that mechanisms are in place for them to contribute to its work.
- The Project recognises Volunteers as a core part of the team in roles which complement, but never substitute, the work of paid staff.
- The Project expects that staff at all levels will work positively with Volunteers and, where appropriate, will actively seek to involve them in their work.
- The Project recognises that Volunteers require satisfying volunteering experiences including personal development and seeks to help Volunteers meet these needs, as well as providing the necessary training for them to undertake their voluntary activity effectively.

Recruitment

Northstar Family Support Project implements a fair, effective, and open system in the recruitment and selection of Volunteers.

The Project strives to create a diverse and inclusive Volunteer programme and is committed to ensuring equality of access to its Volunteer opportunities and equality of treatment for Volunteers in all its policies and practices.

Opportunities Policy

Northstar Family Support Project implements a recruitment and selection process that is appropriate to the role offered to potential Volunteers.

The Project aims to allow both parties to give and receive sufficient information to assess whether the Volunteer opportunities available match the potential Volunteers' skills, qualities, and interests.

All applicants for volunteering with the Project are required to complete an application form; assistance can be given with this if necessary.

Additional measures may be implemented depending on the nature of the Volunteer role that may include Garda vetting.

If unsuccessful, applicants will be offered an opportunity to discuss the outcome and identify possible alternative volunteering activities within or outside of the Project.

Induction and Training

All Volunteers, whether volunteering for ongoing, short-term or “one-off” roles, undergo an induction/briefing that provides all the information appropriate to their role to help them understand the work of the Project and fulfil their role.

Induction arrangements vary according to the service and the nature of the voluntary activity to be undertaken.

Where possible, Volunteers are offered additional training to enable them to fulfil their voluntary role more effectively.

Trial Period for Volunteers

All Volunteers start with a three (3) month trial period where either the Co-Ordinator or the volunteer may choose to withdraw from the Volunteer agreement.

Volunteer Role Description and Agreement

Volunteers are given an agreement and specific role description which outline the expectations and responsibilities of both the Volunteer and Northstar Family Support Project. These documents are not legally binding nor are they a contract of employment or for paid provision of a service.

Support and Supervision

Whilst all staff have a role to play in supporting Volunteers the Co-Ordinator will have responsibility for the overall management of Volunteer involvement including overseeing the implementation of this policy.

Volunteers can attend individual and/or group supervision meetings (where appropriate) where they are provided with support to feedback on progress, discuss future role development and raise any ideas or concerns. This may be offered through a variety of systems, such as briefing/debriefing, supervision, volunteer forums etc.

All staff required to undertake such duties are provided with training in the management, supervision, support and training of Volunteers.

Communication and Recognition

The Northstar Family Support Project recognises the core role that Volunteers fulfil within the Project. It endeavours to communicate with Volunteers in appropriate ways, for example, meetings, notice boards and email. It also recognises the importance of seeking Volunteers’ ideas and opinions at regular intervals each year by various means.

The Northstar Family Support Project appreciates the valuable contribution its Volunteers bring to the Project and makes regular efforts to recognise and celebrate them.

The Northstar Family Support Project provides Volunteer references on request.

An exit evaluation of the volunteering experience is provided for all Volunteers leaving Northstar Family Support Project to enable them to give feedback on their experience.

Expenses

The Northstar Family Support Project values our Volunteers and actively works to ensure that barriers do not exist to Volunteer involvement.

All Volunteers, students and board members are offered reimbursement of their travel expenses, to and from the site of their voluntary activity, within the maximum limits currently in force within the Project.

Other agreed expenses, incurred as a necessary part of the Volunteer's activities, are reimbursed.

Any action by a volunteer, student or board member that will require reimbursement must be approved by the coordinator beforehand.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

The Northstar Family Support Project takes care to protect Volunteer information as part of its data protection responsibilities in paper format and/or electronically.

All such information is treated in accordance with Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 (as amended) ("the Acts") and Volunteers are entitled to inspect such information about their involvement with Northstar Family Support Project. Likewise, the Project expects Volunteers to protect any personal or confidential information to which they may have access through their volunteering with the Project.

Managing Risk

The Northstar Family Support Project is committed to ensuring the well-being and safety of its Volunteers and, in turn, expect Volunteers to contribute to maintaining a safe volunteering environment.

All Volunteers are covered by Northstar Family Support Project employer liability insurance policy whilst they are on the Project premises or engaged in voluntary activity on the Project behalf. In the event of specific activities that require personal liability insurance, this will be highlighted in the Volunteer role description before any activity is undertaken.

Volunteers are thoroughly inducted into Northstar Family Support Project and introduced to all relevant health and safety aspects to their area of volunteering following local Health and Safety Policies.

All services identify possible areas of risk specific to the involvement of Volunteers and produce written risk assessments for eliminating or minimising such risks.

Volunteers are expected to cooperate with staff and follow Risk Assessments relating to their volunteering.

Where a Volunteer, as a direct consequence of his or her voluntary activity with the Project suffers emotional harm to the extent of requiring counselling or therapy, the Northstar Family Support Project will support the Volunteer in exploring suitable options.

Volunteer Conduct

All Volunteers will have access and must adhere to the Northstar Family Support Projects' Code of Conduct Policy, Complaints, Equal Opportunities Policy, and the Confidentiality Policy.

Resolving Concerns/Issues

Northstar Family Support Project aims to treat all Volunteers fairly, objectively, and consistently.

Northstar Family Support Project seeks to ensure that Volunteers' views are heard, noted, and acted upon promptly and aim for a positive and amicable solution.

If a Volunteer has any problems or complaints about volunteering, they should talk to the Co-Ordinator.

Northstar Family Support Project takes the concerns of its Volunteers very seriously and will make every reasonable effort to resolve any difficulties.

In the event of a problem, all relevant facts should be obtained as quickly as possible.

Support will be provided by the Co-Ordinator to the Volunteer while they endeavour to resolve the problem informally. If an informal resolution does not prove possible, the Northstar Family Support Projects' Grievance Procedure will be referred to.

If a volunteer's behaviour is repeatedly or seriously unacceptable, they will be asked to leave the Northstar Family Support Project.

If circumstances arise where the Co-Ordinator deem a Volunteer not a good fit for a particular role, they may be asked to change their role or will be signposted to other Volunteer opportunities outside of the Northstar Family Support Project.