

# Air Ambulance Northern Ireland Volunteer Policy November 2020



## **Introduction**

This policy sets out the broad principles for volunteer involvement at Air Ambulance Northern Ireland. It is of relevance to all within the organisation, including volunteers, staff, members, and those elected or appointed to positions of responsibility.

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it remains appropriate to the needs of Air Ambulance Northern Ireland and its volunteers. The date of next review is stated at the bottom of this document.

A copy of this policy is given to each volunteer as part of their induction and we hope that our volunteers will find it a useful reference document.

## **What We Do**

Air Ambulance NI, in partnership with Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, is the local charity that provides the Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) for Northern Ireland.

The service brings urgent medical assistance to anywhere in the province, operating seven days a week for 12 hours per day (7am – 7pm). It can get to anywhere in Northern Ireland in approximately twenty-five minutes. This Helicopter Emergency Medical Service benefits those whose lives are at serious risk following significant injury or trauma.

Air Ambulance NI needs to raise approximately £2million each year to maintain this service so public donations are crucial. NIAS are responsible for providing the clinical expertise and equipment.

**Our Vision:** A world class helicopter emergency medical service for the people of Northern Ireland.

**Our Mission:** To provide outstanding critical care where and when it's needed most.

**Our Values:** We share a set of core values that define us as an organisation and the way we work, these values are; *Respect, Integrity, Teamwork and Accountability.*

## **Purpose of this Policy**

Our purpose in adopting this policy is to:

- Highlight and acknowledge the value of the contribution made by volunteers.
- Reflect the purpose, value, standards and strategies of Air Ambulance NI in its involvement of volunteers.
- Recognise the respective roles, rights and responsibilities of volunteers in Air Ambulance NI.
- Confirm Air Ambulance NI's commitment to involving volunteers in its work.
- Help to ensure the quality of both the volunteering opportunities on offer and the work carried out by volunteers.
- Acknowledge the current areas of volunteer involvement in Air Ambulance NI.

Air Ambulance NI's Volunteer Co-ordinator (VC) is responsible for recruiting and deploying volunteers within the Charity and providing support to Area Fundraising Managers (AFMs) and the volunteers for whom they are responsible.

## **Scope of the Volunteer Policy**

Unless specifically stated otherwise, the policy applies to all volunteers representing the charity.

## **Definition of Volunteering**

An Air Ambulance Northern Ireland volunteer is someone who, of their own free will and without expectation of financial compensation beyond the reimbursement of expenses, performs a task at the request of and on behalf of Air Ambulance NI.

Volunteering will not replace paid employment in any instance and will complement the work of paid staff.

## **Volunteer Charter**

Air Ambulance NI acknowledges the importance of volunteers in our work and the valuable contribution that they make to the charity. The HEMS Team could not operate without the support of our volunteers. Air Ambulance NI is committed to involving volunteers in appropriate positions throughout the organisation and in ways that are of value to the volunteer and the organisation.

### **Volunteers can expect:**

- To feel valued by Air Ambulance NI.
- To have a clear understanding of their duties and responsibilities.
- Volunteering for AANI to fit around their lives and the right to say no without fear of embarrassment.
- To be given all the necessary information about a volunteering activity.
- To have an effective induction to their role.
- To have an understanding of the structure of Air Ambulance NI and relevant personnel.
- To receive relevant training appropriate for the role and to be provided with the appropriate tools, equipment and materials to carry out the role.
- Not to be used instead of paid workers.
- To have ongoing support and guidance from the charity.
- To have all reasonable expenses incurred in respect of their volunteering reimbursed, should they desire it.
- To be afforded fair treatment with regards to Equal Opportunities.
- To be given the same protection as paid workers under Health and Safety regulations.
- To have their role and the tasks they are required to perform scrutinised for Risk Assessment purposes.
- To be protected by the charity's Public Liability insurance.
- Air Ambulance NI to have in place a problem solving procedure to ensure that any issues are dealt with in an appropriate and timely manner.
- To be aware of the charity's policies and procedures and to have any necessary guidance regarding implementation.
- To receive an appropriate reference, if required.

### **Air Ambulance NI expects volunteers:**

- To understand that as a volunteer for AANI, the volunteer becomes a representative of the charity and should behave accordingly, being aware that their actions affect the charity.
- To accept the charity's vision, mission and values and to act as a member of the overall team in achieving Air Ambulance NI's goals.
- To ensure all money collected on behalf of the charity is returned to the charity as soon as possible.
- To declare any conflict of interest.
- Not to bring Air Ambulance NI into disrepute either during or outside their volunteering activities.
- To adhere to all the charity's policies and procedures, in particular, Health and Safety, GDPR and Equal Opportunities
- To comply with the charity's application process.
- To carry out the tasks to the best of their abilities.
- To attend commitments at the times agreed and to give adequate notice of any known absence or holidays. In the event of unavoidable absence, to advise the VC or relevant AFM as soon as possible.
- To wear any volunteer uniform provided by Air Ambulance NI if appropriate.

- Not to speak to any media representative.
- To ensure any volunteering activity undertaken is agreed in advance with the VC/AFM.
- Not to visit the airbase unannounced. All visits to the airbase must be booked via the office as outlined in the terms and conditions.
- To appreciate that the relationship between the volunteer and Air Ambulance NI is an agreement in honour only and with no intent to create a legally binding contract of employment between the parties.

#### **Air Ambulance NI recognises that:**

- Volunteers form a core part of the Air Ambulance NI team and play a complementary role alongside paid staff.
- The experience should be beneficial for both volunteers and the organisation.
- We should provide equality in accessing volunteer roles and strive to create a diverse and inclusive organisation.
- We should treat all volunteers equally and provide clear guidance in our volunteer policies and procedures.
- Volunteering should be an enjoyable experience and we will endeavour to take into account the individuals' motivations and aspirations when finding suitable volunteer roles.
- The relationship between the organisation and the volunteers is mutually beneficial and that we must respect the opinions and thoughts of volunteers by listening to them and learning from what they say.

#### **Volunteering with Air Ambulance NI**

- We offer three volunteering roles:
  - Community Ambassador;
  - Collection Box Coordinator
  - Casual Volunteer
- All volunteer roles will have clear role descriptions, outlining the responsibilities of that role and the necessary skills, attitude, experience and commitment required to undertake that role. These will be reviewed at least every two years.
- Risk assessments are conducted for each role. These will be regularly reviewed and updated as appropriate.
- Volunteers are for the most part required to be over the age of 18, although there may be some further restrictions on age depending on the role and activity. Under 18's may be able to volunteer for specific activities but will require parental consent.
- In addition to this policy, separate policies outline our approach to:
  - Equal Opportunities
  - Problem Solving
  - Expenses
  - Health and Safety
  - GDPR
  - Social Networking

## **Volunteer Recruitment**

Air Ambulance NI is committed to equal opportunities and believes that volunteering should be open to all, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs or an offending background which does not create a risk to vulnerable groups, including children.

Volunteering opportunities will be widely promoted in ways that make them accessible to all members of the community. Roles and opportunities will be advertised in a variety of places including, but not exclusively on our website, via Volunteer Centres, on volunteer recruitment websites, via social media and within the local community.

### **Initial Contact**

Our first point of contact with a prospective volunteer will be a phone call with our Volunteer Co-ordinator. We will discuss the types of roles available and the skills that the charity is looking for from its volunteers, as well as the type of volunteering experience the prospective volunteer is seeking.

### **Selection**

Prospective volunteers will then complete an application form and, if appropriate to the role, supply two satisfactory references from people who have known them for at least three years. The references do not necessarily need to be from an employer/former employer but should not be from a family member.

- Volunteer recruitment will be conducted by the **Volunteer Coordinator** who aims to allow both parties to give and receive sufficient information to assess whether available roles match the volunteer's skills, qualities and interests.
- Our selection criteria for appointing volunteers is based on the individual's suitability to carry out the role. Information about the volunteer not relevant to the performance of the volunteering tasks concerned will be disregarded.
- Volunteers who are considered unsuitable for a particular task will be given feedback on request and either be offered alternative voluntary involvement with the organisation or signposted to external opportunities via Volunteer Now.

### **Disclosure and Barring Services / Criminal Convictions**

We have a duty to minimise risk to our organisation, staff, other volunteers and members of the public. Air Ambulance NI is committed to involving ex-offenders as volunteers where possible.

During the application process we will ask potential volunteers about unspent convictions and a formal risk assessment may be carried out if appropriate. Volunteers may be required to agree to an Access NI check being carried out.

We will consider the following when recruiting ex-offenders as volunteers:

- The nature and seriousness of the offence.
- The relevance of the offence in relation to the volunteering opportunity.
- The circumstances under which the offence was committed.
- Any patterns of offences and the date of the offence.
- The candidate's attitude towards the offence now.

Once appointed, volunteers must inform Air Ambulance NI if they, at any stage of their volunteering, receive a criminal conviction. Volunteers must also inform Air Ambulance NI of any other circumstances that could affect their ability to fulfil their volunteering role or adversely affect Air Ambulance NI. Receiving a criminal conviction will not necessarily stop you from volunteering with the charity, but each case will be heard on an individual basis.

### **Equality of Opportunity**

Air Ambulance NI is committed to diversity in all areas of our work. The Charity believes that we have much to learn from diverse cultures and perspectives. Various abilities, backgrounds and needs are recognised as making a valuable contribution to the work that we do.

Applicants will be asked to complete an Equal Opportunities Monitoring form which will allow us to monitor the diversity of our volunteer pool and allow us to plan for recruitment of underrepresented groups. Further information on our approach is included in our Equal Opportunities Policy.

### **Volunteer Management**

Overall responsibility for volunteer management sits with the executive team of the charity. As a small charity the team is easily accessible and known to all of our volunteers.

Day to day coordination of the volunteer programme is managed by the Volunteer Coordinator or Area Fundraising Manager, depending on the volunteer role. This individual also provides support and guidance to all volunteers.

Our Volunteer Coordinator has overall responsibility for the volunteer strategy for the organisation. Alongside the AFMs, the VC is responsible for the management and welfare of the organisation's volunteers and providing support to other members of staff who manage volunteers.

### **Induction and Training**

New volunteers will be invited to attend a group induction session which will cover information on the charity and its work, role specific information and all volunteer policies and procedures.

An Induction checklist will also be completed for all new volunteers.

### **Communication**

It is our intention to ensure all volunteers are properly briefed about the activities to be undertaken and given all the necessary information to enable them to perform with confidence. Ongoing training will be provided as necessary, including refresher training.

Volunteers will receive monthly communications by email or post according to their preference.

This will include updates on key information about Air Ambulance NI as well as details of upcoming volunteering opportunities. Volunteers are then asked to respond with their availability for individual events.

In advance of any event, volunteers attending that event will be briefed on specific requirements such as background to the event; duties to be carried out; and timings.

We also host an annual event for volunteers when they can visit the airbase for full familiarisation with the operational work of the HEMS team.

### **Support and Supervision**

Volunteers should take any concerns and questions relating to their volunteering to the Volunteer Coordinator, or appropriate Area Fundraising Manager.

Volunteers will have access to support and supervision in relation to their role. This will enable both the volunteer and the charity staff to identify, monitor and evaluate the volunteer's involvement, recognise achievements and identify individual training needs, including that relevant to their particular volunteering role and to their wider personal development. The frequency, duration and format of these sessions will be agreed between the volunteer and the Volunteer Coordinator or Area Fundraising Manager as relevant for the volunteer role being undertaken.

### **Expenses**

Air Ambulance NI recognises that the reimbursement of expenses incurred in traveling to and from the place of volunteering or in the course of volunteering is important. This is necessary to ensure that all individuals have access to voluntary opportunities.

The organisation's volunteers can claim reasonable out of pocket expenses to cover travel and food/refreshments, subject to the production of receipts as evidence of the expenditure. What can be

reclaimed from the organisation and the calculation of expenses will be explained to the volunteer before they start any activity likely to give rise to expenses.

Please see Volunteer Expenses Policy for further details.

### **Insurance**

Volunteers are covered by Air Ambulance NI's Public and Employers Liability insurance whilst engaged in their volunteering role at the place of volunteering activity.

The organisation does not insure the volunteer's personal possessions against loss or damage.

## **Health & Safety**

Air Ambulance NI has a duty of care to avoid exposing volunteers to risks to their health and safety whilst at the place of volunteering activity.

A risk assessment has been completed for each volunteering role and all volunteers will be provided with a copy of our Health and Safety policy.

If a volunteer becomes aware of a situation that may give rise to Health and Safety concerns, they should notify a member of staff immediately.

## **Confidentiality**

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all privileged information to which they are exposed. Any confidential information that a volunteer becomes familiar with should not be discussed with anyone outside of Air Ambulance NI. Failure to maintain confidentiality may result in termination of the volunteer's relationship with the organisation.

All confidential information about our volunteers is treated with the same regard and in line with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Any breaches are dealt with accordingly.

Volunteers will be briefed on GDPR policy at their induction and if appropriate issued with a copy of the policy.

## **Recognition**

The charity fully recognises the valuable contribution all our volunteers make to the work of the charity. Without this support our awareness and fundraising work could not function.

We aim to recognise this contribution to all volunteers both formally and informally and will ensure every task undertaken is given the acknowledgement it deserves. Volunteers are recognised in several ways including at events, in our newsletters, through social media and on our website.

## **Problem Solving**

Whilst we always aim to ensure our volunteers are well briefed and fully appreciated, there may be situations where either a volunteer or the charity team are concerned about a particular issue.

Our approach is that in the first instance the volunteer and VC or AFM should discuss any concern and seek to resolve any differences on an informal basis.

Should this not be possible we then refer to our Problem-Solving Procedure which is fully outlined in a separate policy. A copy of this policy is available to all volunteers by contacting the charity office.

## **Providing Feedback**

We welcome and encourage feedback at any time. This should be directed to the Volunteer Coordinator.

Volunteers will also be given the opportunity, where relevant, to share their views and opinions about the organisation. An annual volunteer survey is planned and other opportunities to contribute ideas and opinions will be communicated to all volunteers as they arise.

## **Leaving**

When volunteers leave the organisation, they will be invited to take part in an exit survey to offer thoughts and feedback. We will also provide references on request.

## **Review Date of Policy**

This version: October 2020

Next Review: October 2021

## **Further Information**

For further information and more detailed policies listed below please contact the Volunteer Coordinator on 028 9262 2677, or email [volunteering@airambulanceni.org](mailto:volunteering@airambulanceni.org)

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_