

Volunteering Policy



About us

Solas Moyle was established in 2010 as a response to the concerning rate of suicide in the Moyle area. The organisation have evolved over the last 5 years, to focus on the prevention of mental ill health. Our vision statement is *Solas Moyle offers support to promote positive health & wellbeing, in a warm & welcoming environment.*

We believe in the need for compassionate support which is tailored to meet the needs of each individual. Our support programmes offer both one to one and group based activities, including meditation, craft & craic, yoga, complementary therapies and counselling; as well as events to raise awareness of issues around mental health & wellbeing. Our support is available, free of charge, for everyone in order to help people of all ages and circumstances.

Over the past 5 years, the organisation has been led solely by volunteers, who have the drive, dedication and passion to ensure Solas helps improve the emotional wellbeing of our community.

Purpose of our volunteer policy

Our volunteer policy has been created to show our volunteers and potential volunteers that we have spent time and care in planning how volunteers will be involved and welcomed at Solas. It also outlines that all volunteers will be treated in a fair and consistent way. It should also help our volunteers understand what support is available to them and what they can expect from us.

The reason we welcome volunteers

Volunteering is a great way to share enthusiasm, skills and ideas whilst having fun and meeting like-minded people. By volunteering for Solas you will be making a positive contribution to the community. Volunteers are vital to our work. We have spent time making sure that all our roles are meaningful and have compiled accurate role descriptions and person specifications. We promote our opportunities as widely as possible including through Causeway Volunteer Centre.

Attracting volunteers and volunteer agreement

Solas is committed to the principle of equal opportunity for all volunteers and to providing volunteers with a work environment free of discrimination and harassment. Further information can be found in our Equal Opportunities Policy. We have a range of opportunities for volunteers to get involved in. We advertise our vacancies through the Causeway Volunteer Centre and the Community NI website and on our Facebook page. We also rely on word of mouth to raise awareness of our opportunities in the local area.

Everyone interested in volunteering will be asked to complete an application form, outlining your area of interest, what you wish to gain from volunteering and skills you bring to the organisation. Once we receive a copy of your completed application form, a member of our team will get in touch to arrange an informal chat to agree together which option best matches your interests and time availability and also our needs.

When considering an applicant for a role we will bear in mind the need for flexibility e.g. time off for holidays, care duties etc. and also our ability to offer appropriate support to people with additional needs. All enquiries will be responded to within 3 weeks. You will always be asked what you want to get from your volunteering and this will be kept in mind throughout your placement and discussed during support and supervision sessions. We will always be mindful that volunteers with additional needs get the support they need. If you are unsuitable for a specific role after our initial introductory period, we will let you know and if unable to offer you an alternative role within our organisation we will refer you to Causeway Volunteer Centre.

If you are suitable we will take up references and carry out vetting checks if appropriate. The need for vetting checks depends on the nature of the role as described by Access NI.

Access NI Checks

Some volunteer roles will require an Access NI check to inform Solas of any criminal convictions that a person wishing to volunteer may have. For example, any volunteer position which involves regulated activity with children or vulnerable adults will be subject to an Access NI check. Having a criminal record does not necessarily mean that you can't volunteer with us. This will depend on the nature of the position, together with the circumstances and background of your offence or other information contained on a disclosure certificate or provided directly to us by the Police.

Induction and training

All volunteers will receive induction covering

- Information about Solas, our vision, mission and our future plans;
- Role of the volunteer; tasks and responsibilities
- Organisational chart showing the different roles within Solas
- Tour around our facilities
- Copy of all the relevant policies and procedures
- Essential procedures such as timekeeping, rota;
- Information about training and ongoing learning opportunities
- Volunteer agreement including name of immediate supervisor

There will be an introductory period of two months to give both volunteers and Solas time to discover if you are suited to each other. A review will be made midway through this period and also at the end. This is not an assessment; it is just a check to make sure that you get the maximum benefit from your volunteering.

An e copy of all relevant information will be provided for the volunteer to keep and refer to.

Support and Supervision

All volunteers will receive regular support and supervision to assess how you are getting on, explore opportunities for development or changing roles, discuss training needs or issues arising. It will also be a chance to make sure you are kept in the loop about what is happening in the organisation as a whole and to express your opinions and give general feedback. Your supervisor will always keep in mind your reasons for volunteering and try to ensure that they are being fulfilled as far as possible. Any difficulties arising from the volunteer not meeting the organisation's needs will also be addressed in a positive and supportive way.

A member of the management committee will have special responsibility for ensuring that volunteering issues are discussed at management level.

Resolving Difficulties

If a volunteer has any difficulty with their role they should raise the matter firstly with their supervisor with a view to resolving the issue informally. If this is not resolved satisfactorily you can make a formal complaint to the management committee: The procedure for making a formal complaint is outlined within our Complaints Procedure document. You will be given a copy of this. You can contact Causeway Volunteer Centre at any time for support.

Recognition and reward

We could not do the work we do without our volunteers. To acknowledge this we will always say thank you and show appreciation for a job well done. We will offer our volunteers some formal recognition at least once a year. This may take the form of presentation of Certificates, thank you letters, a celebration event, or written acknowledgement.

We will provide references for volunteers who have been in placement for more than 6 months and who have left within the last year.

In Kind Room Rental

As our volunteers input a significant amount of their time into Solas, therefore we offer in-kind room rental. This is available to all volunteers on a 4:1 ratio, i.e. every four sessions worked (3 hours period), a volunteer can use a room free of charge for an hour. This room hire must be agreed by Solas without affecting existing programs.

Safe Environment

Solas has a valid insurance policy so that volunteers are covered by public/employers liability insurance, which you are advised to read. It covers the volunteering activities you will be doing. You will also be given copies of our Health and Safety Policy and simple instructions on how to perform tasks safely as well as procedures for dealing with accidents and emergencies. Appropriate risk assessments are carried out on all activities involving volunteers e.g. one off events, outings.

Attendance & holidays

Solas aim to be flexible in arranging your working hours to suit your wishes, however reliability & good time keeping is expected.

Please let your supervision know when you are unable to volunteer, so that alternative arrangements can be made during your absence.

Expenses

We value our volunteers and want to ensure that there are no barriers to volunteer involvement. Solas is mindful that volunteer expenses need to be included in budgets and we aim to reimburse all reasonable out of pocket expenses e.g. travel, however this cannot be guaranteed due to gaps in funding. Volunteer expenses need to be agreed in advance and are discussed during induction. In order to claim expenses, an Expenses Form must be completed, valid receipts provided and this should be handed in to the volunteer coordinator for review and passed to the treasurer for processing.

Confidentiality

We expect all volunteers to adhere to confidentiality guidelines which will be explained to you before you begin volunteering with us and this also includes use of social media and contact with any press.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We are committed to embracing diversity and promoting equality and inclusion. When representing Solas as a volunteer we expect you to support our commitment to promoting equality.

Volunteering whilst on benefits

You can volunteer while on benefits so long as you meet the conditions for getting the benefit and let the relevant Benefits Team know that you are volunteering.

Finishing volunteering with Solas

If you find employment or wish to stop volunteering with us for other reasons, we would appreciate as much notice as possible. If you are unhappy with your role, we may be able to offer you an alternative opportunity, so please discuss this with your supervisor.