



***(Incorporating St Patrick's University Hospital, St Patrick's Hospital, Lucan and Willow Grove Adolescent Unit)***

**Policy Name:** Volunteer Policy

**Article:** 26

**Policy No:** COM 0008

**Department (if applicable):** Communications, Advocacy and Engagement

**Date Implemented:**  
28/05/2016

**Policy Updated:**  
09/04/2025

**Revision Date:**  
09/04/2028

**Authorisation/Signature:**

TAMARA NOLAN, COMMUNICATIONS, ADVOCACY & ENGAGEMENT

## 1. Policy

St Patrick's Mental Health Services (SPMHS) is committed to providing a professional and efficient environment to support volunteerism in the organisation. We regard volunteers as a valuable resource. We aim to train, support and supervise our volunteers to the best of our abilities, and to act quickly and fairly if difficulties arise.

## 2. Objectives

All staff managing volunteers are responsible for ensuring that the policy and the procedures in this document are implemented efficiently and effectively. All other staff and volunteers including voluntary Board Governors are expected to facilitate this process.

People wishing to volunteer must be able to demonstrate a commitment to the aims of the organisation, and may only be accepted if their needs as volunteers match the needs of the organisation. No person who has a conflict of interest with any aspect of the organisation will be accepted as a volunteer.

Voluntary Board Governors may not undertake other voluntary work within SPMHS itself but will be encouraged and supported by SPMHS if they wish to volunteer elsewhere. Members of the Service User and Supporters Council (SUAS) and the Service User Advisory Network (SUAN) may undertake other voluntary work within SPMHS.

## 3. Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers

### *Relationship with paid staff*

Volunteers are appointed to enhance the capacity of paid staff. Clear roles are established to differentiate between paid staff and volunteers so that mutually beneficial and complementary relationships can be fostered. SPMHS will not utilise volunteers in place of paid staff.

Volunteers are treated as equally as paid staff and are included in the organisation's functions and decision-making processes wherever practicable. Volunteers are provided with appropriate work sites, and have access to the space, equipment and facilities necessary to volunteer effectively and comfortably. A volunteer will be allocated a manager who will be responsible for managing and supervising them.

#### *Working conditions*

Working times are negotiated between the SPMHS manager and the volunteer, and are as flexible as the tasks allow. Voluntary time commitment is never expected to match that of full-time paid staff, but unscheduled absences can create organisational problems. When expecting to be absent, volunteers should inform their manager as soon as possible so that alternative arrangements can be made.

#### *Appropriate behavior*

Volunteers are expected to work within the policies and procedures of SPMHS, and to adhere to its ethos. As representatives of the organisation, they are responsible for presenting a positive image of SPMHS.

Volunteers must seek prior approval from the SPMHS manager 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.

#### *Confidentiality*

SPMHS 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 SPMHS. All volunteers are required to sign a confidentiality policy. (copy is appended at the end of the policy).

#### *Records*

A system of records is maintained on all volunteers, including dates and times of service, duties performed, evaluation of work, etc. Volunteer records are accorded the same confidentiality as staff records.

#### *Service at the discretion of SPMHS*

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

#### *Recruitment*

##### *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 is developed for each voluntary opportunity. This includes a title of the volunteering role; starting and finishing dates; hours and place of work; name of manager; 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 SPMHS manager. A copy of the final version is given to the volunteer before commencing voluntary work, as it is used in supervision and evaluation sessions. Role descriptions define a time limit for voluntary involvement, after which time it is reviewed, and updated, if appropriate.

### *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 SPMHS' equal opportunities policy. All volunteers are required to complete an application form. If necessary, applications are shortlisted and suitable candidates are invited to attend an interview to ascertain their interest in and suitability for the role.

### *Interviews*

Shortlisting, selection and interviews may be used. This is dependent on the volunteering opportunity. Unsuccessful candidates are thanked for applying and encouraged to reapply for other volunteering opportunities, either current or in the future. References are always taken up. If the role requires, Garda vetting is sought. Other checks may also be completed (for example, ascertaining professional qualifications, insurance etc.). Volunteers are always advised in advance of the intention to make these checks. If they refuse permission and cannot provide an acceptable reason, they are not selected. Formal appointments are made only after the role description has been agreed and all necessary checks have proved acceptable.

### *Appointment*

No placements are made unless the requirements of the volunteer and the volunteer's manager can be met. All placements are subject to an initial trial period of one to six months, depending on the role. At the end of this period, the SPMHS manager meets with the volunteer to discuss the volunteer's suitability for their role. At this point, volunteers may continue in their current role, be reassigned to a more suitable role or be asked to leave.

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

### *Training*

Volunteers receive initial and ongoing on-the-job training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their tasks well. The training is appropriate for the demands of the position and the capabilities of the volunteer. All volunteers complete mandatory training as required for their role, including policy orientation.

Volunteers may identify training courses, seminars, conferences, and so on, which would help them to perform their roles better and which would aid their personal development. Approval to undertake such training free-of-charge must be given by the SPMHS manager, and this will only be done if sufficient funds are available. Priority is given to long-standing volunteers and those who have received little or no training in the past. If additional training is paid for by SPMHS, any course or other materials belong to the organisation and must be filed in the SPMHS office. Training information must be disseminated to relevant people within the organisation.

### *Supervision*

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

Each volunteer has a clearly identified manager who is responsible for the day-to-day management and supervision of the volunteer. It is the responsibility of the manager to evaluate performance, convey appreciation, identify training needs and address issues as they arise.

### *Corrective action*

If appropriate, corrective action may be taken following evaluation sessions. Examples include the organisation of training for an identified training need; the reassignment of a volunteer; or the dismissal of a volunteer. Volunteers who do not adhere to the organisation's policies, 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 manager. 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 SPMHS policies and procedures, breach of communication policy and failure to complete duties to a satisfactory standard.

If volunteers are not satisfied that issues relating to their volunteering are being handled appropriately, they are entitled to have their concerns reviewed by a member of the senior management team (SMT). The SMT will discuss the issue as soon as practicable after receiving a written complaint and take appropriate action.

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 former manager. The session ascertains why the volunteer is leaving, how they found the volunteering experience and what suggestions they offer to improve the way the organisation operates.

### *Support*

SPMHS endeavors to provide the support necessary to encourage and empower volunteers to make a meaningful contribution and gain significant benefits from their voluntary work. The SPMHS manager will always endeavour to be available to volunteers who require support in any areas that are affecting their performance and to provide opportunities to discuss any issues, or to provide an update on how the volunteering role is progressing.

### *Recognition*

Volunteers provide a unique service to SPMHS, the benefits of which are immense. It is essential that their efforts are recognised and rewarded. SPMHS staff are responsible for thanking all volunteers informally on a regular basis for the valuable contribution that they make to the organisation. The SPMHS manager is responsible for ensuring that more formalised recognition takes place at key times.

### *Monitoring and evaluation*

Volunteers give their time and skills free-of-charge so in turn SPMHS offers to reimburse any out-of-pocket expenses they may incur while undertaking voluntary work for the organisation. The costs of volunteering should never be allowed to discourage those on low incomes. Volunteers are encouraged to develop their skills while involved with the organisation, and are assisted with assuming additional and greater responsibilities over time if they desire this. SPMHS periodically reviews and evaluates volunteer involvement in the organisation to make ongoing improvements.

Constructive feedback on this document is always welcome. It should be given to the SPMHS HR Department who will ensure that it is considered fully.

### *Insurance*

Insurance is provided by SPMHS to cover all volunteers working on behalf of, and at the direction of, the organisation.

SPMHS currently has the following insurances in place:

(a) Employers Liability – Limit of Indemnity €13,000,000 any one occurrence

(b) Public Liability – Limit of Indemnity €13,000,000 any one occurrence

Volunteers working on behalf of SPMHS are covered under both policies.

#### **4. Organsational Policies**

All staff members and volunteers of SPMHS are obligated to adhere to the procedures and practices as outlined in the following SPMHS policies;

- *GLD 0014 Complaints Policy*
- *GOV 0020 Incident Reporting*
- *GOV 0019 Child Protection*
- *GOV 0030 Confidentiality in the Workplace*
- *GOV 0024 Management of allegations of abuse of a SU by an employee*
  
- *HRP 39 Obligation to Report*
- *HRP 09 Corrective Action Procedure*
- *HRP 12 Grievance Policy*
- *HRP 38 Speak up Policy*
  
- *HRP 29 Dignity at Work*
- *FMFSP 0001 Fire Safety*
- *FM0017 Emergency Evacuation Plan*
- *QMI 0008 SPMHS Charter*
  
- *Any additional department policies as agreed with the department manager*

It is each individual's responsibility to familiarise themselves with the content of the above listed SPMHS policies which are available from the Clinical Governance Manual.

# CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

## CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT BETWEEN ST PATRICK'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES (INCORP. ST PATRICK'S UNIVERSITY AND ST EDMUNDSBURY HOSPITALS) and X

The maintenance of the confidentiality of service users, staff and St Patrick's Mental Health Services (hereinafter known as 'SPMHS') is a priority for the organisation. X and SPMHS share this responsibility and should make every effort to safeguard this confidentiality. In keeping with this, all volunteers are required to read and sign the following Confidentiality Agreement.

Confidential information may be defined, for the purposes of this agreement, as information that:

- a. Is, has been or will be obtained in the course of involvement with SPMHS
- b. Is, has been or will be otherwise acquired in trust due to involvement with SPMHS
- b. Relates particularly to the organisation's business, service users or that of other persons or bodies with whom the organisation has dealings of any sort, and
- c May not be made public by, or with the authority of, SPMHS.

This is not an exclusive or exhaustive list.

## AGREEMENT

I acknowledge that, in the course of my role as a volunteer, I may have access to, or hear information concerning the medical or personal affairs of service users and / or staff or other health service business. I agree that such records and information are strictly confidential and, unless acting on the instructions of an authorised officer or in the proper discharge of duties, on no account must information concerning staff, service users or other health service business be divulged or discussed except with express written consent of the CEO.

I agree to exercise due care to ensure the safe-keeping of all documentation or other material containing confidential information, and at the end of my involvement with SPMHS, or at any other time upon demand, return to the organisation any such material in my possession. I agree to maintain all records relating to my role in a manner that prevents access by unauthorised persons.

I agree not to disclose any information held by the organisation and not independently available to a third-party without the written consent and permission from management of SPMHS.

I realise that a breach of confidentiality is considered an extremely serious matter and will be dealt with as such by SPMHS management..

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of volunteer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
For and on behalf of St  
Patrick's Mental Health Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date