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| ***Version*** | ***Date*** | ***Author*** | ***Changes*** |
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#### Athletics Ireland - Volunteer Policy Statement

Athletics Ireland is the representative body for athletic disciplines in Ireland. We act as the co-ordinating body between clubs, schools and universities and in doing so we stand over the regional, national and international competitions across the athletic disciplines of Track & Field, Cross-Country, Road Running, Mountain Running, Ultra-Running and Mass Participation events.

Athletics Irelandis committed to providing a professional and efficient service in supporting volunteerism in athletics. Volunteers are an integral part of athletics without whom the sport could not function. We encourage volunteers to become involved at all levels of the organisation and within all appropriate activities. We provide training and support to all of our volunteers and act quickly and fairly when difficulties arise.

We acknowledge the unique characteristic of a professional executive who are heavily dependent on the support, advice and direction of voluntary members of the board, committees, regions, coaches and clubs and we aim to promote this working relationship as a mutually beneﬁcial and supportive one.

Athletics Ireland retains a strong volunteer ethos and the thousands of administrators, officials, coaches & parents who give freely of their time play a vital role in our organisation. Volunteering is vital to the growth and improved structure of clubs. There are opportunities for everyone to be involved.

1. **Club Administration and Management:** Key roles in the club include Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and Registrar, Public Relations Officer and Children’s Officer. These functions ensure the smooth running of the club.
2. **Coaching:**There are great opportunities to become involved in [coaching](http://www.athleticsireland.ie/coaching/how-to-become-a-coach) whether you provide a support to qualified coaches or become a qualified coach yourself through the coaching education pathway.
3. **Officials:** [Officials](http://www.athleticsireland.ie/competition/officials)play an important role in making hundreds of competitions and events run smoothly throughout the length and breadth of Ireland on a weekly basis. There is a clear pathway for involvement and development on officials in Athletics Ireland.

Athletics Irelandis committed to providing a professional and efficient service in supporting volunteerism in athletics. Volunteers are an integral part of our sport without whom athletics cannot function. We encourage volunteers to become involved at all levels of the organisation and within all appropriate activities. We provide training and support to all of our volunteers and act quickly and fairly when difficulties arise.

This policy document outlines the general principles that apply within volunteering in our sport.

#### Volunteer Policy Guidelines

**1. General principles**

1.1 Purpose of document
The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on all aspects of volunteering in athletics. It supplements the Athletics Ireland Strategic Plan 2013-2016 and our Code of Ethics & Good Practice for working with Childrenpolicies and procedures.

These procedures apply to all volunteers who undertake tasks on behalf and at the direction of the Athletics Ireland.

1.2 Responsibility
Athletics Ireland is responsible for ensuring that the policy and the procedures in this document are implemented efficiently and effectively. All other staff and volunteers (including voluntary management committee members) are expected to facilitate this process.

1.3 Eligibility
Athletics Ireland and affiliated clubs 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 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.

1.4 Working conditions
Volunteers will be treated as equally and fairly as paid staff and are included in the organisations, functions and decision-making processes wherever practical. Volunteers are provided with appropriate work sites and have access to the space, equipment and facilities necessary to volunteer effectively and comfortably.

1.5 Working times
Working times are negotiated between Athletics Ireland and affiliated clubs. 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 clubs as soon as possible, so that alternative arrangements can be made.

1.6 Appropriate behaviour
Volunteers are expected to work within the policies and procedures of the Athletics Ireland Code of Ethic and Good Practice in Children’s sports and uphold its ethos. As representatives of the organisation, they are responsible for presenting a positive image of thesport.

1.7 Representing Athletics Ireland & affiliated clubs
Volunteers must seek prior approval from the Athletics Ireland and affiliated clubs before undertaking anything that might affect the organisation as a whole. This includes, but is not limited to, statements to the press, joint initiatives with other bodies, and agreements involving contractual or financial obligations.

1.8 Confidentiality
Athletics Ireland and affiliated clubs respect 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 the sport.

1.9 Records
A system of records may be maintained on all volunteers, including contact details, vetting disclosures, dates and times of service, duties performed, courses completed etc. Volunteer records are accorded the same confidentiality as staff records and are maintained by Athletics Ireland and the affiliated clubs the volunteer is a member of.

1.10 Termination of service
Any voluntary service is at the discretion of the Athletics Ireland and the affiliated club the volunteer is a member of. They may, at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate volunteer’s relationships with the organisation. Similarly, volunteers may at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate their relationships. Notice of such decisions should be communicated at the earliest opportunity in writing setting out the reasons for termination. All volunteers are entitled to appeal the decision under the Athletics Ireland dispute resolution process.

**2. Recruitment**

2.1 Volunteering role descriptions
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 should include (if applicable) 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.

2.2 Applications
Volunteers can be 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 or come via volunteers from affiliated athletics clubs.

2.3 Interviews
If necessary, applications may be short listed and suitable candidates invited to attend an informal chat to ascertain their interest in and suitability for a role. Written records of all interviews should be kept. 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
Garda Vetting and references (safe recruitment) are always completed if the role requires it; other checks may also be completed (for example, ascertaining professional qualifications). Volunteers are always advised in advance of the intention to make these checks. If they refuse permission and cannot provide an acceptable reason, they will not be considered for placement.

2.5 Appointment
Formal appointments are made only after the role description has been agreed and all necessary safe recruitment 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
Placements may be subject to an initial trial period. At the end of this period, the affiliated clubmeets 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.

**3. Training**

3.1 Garda Vetting & Safeguarding Training
A Garda Vetting disclosure must be obtained by an applicant through Athletics Ireland before they can begin relevant or regular work with children or vulnerable persons. Basic awareness in child safeguarding training must also be completed within six months of taking up a post.

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

3.3 On-the-job 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 must be appropriate for the demands of the position and the capabilities of the volunteer.

3.4 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.

3.5 Training in Athletics Ireland
Athletics Ireland offer a comprehensive range of training in Child Safeguarding, Technical Officials and Coach Education. You can speak to your Regional Development Officer for more information about training courses in your area to help with your development in the sport.

**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 club Chairperson or an Event Director normally takes on the supervisor’s role and should receive training and guidance on how to involve volunteers effectively in the work of the organisation.

4.3 Supervision sessions
Volunteers receive regular appraisals of their work, based on their role descriptions. Evaluation sessions take place at least once a month between the volunteer and his or her supervisor. These review the performance of the volunteer, suggest any changes in work style, seek suggestions from the volunteer on means of enhancing the volunteer’s relationship with the association, convey appreciation to the volunteer and ascertain the continued interest of the volunteer in serving in his or her role. The sessions also serve as an opportunity to plan future tasks.

4.4 Corrective action
If appropriate, corrective action may be taken following evaluation sessions. Examples would include the organisation of training for an identified training need, the reassignment of a volunteer, or the dismissal of a volunteer.

4.5 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 the Code of Ethics & Good Practice for working with Children policies and procedures and failure to complete duties to a satisfactory standard.

4.6 Complaints and Disciplinary Procedure
If volunteers are not satisfied that issues relating to their volunteering are being handled appropriately or if they have a complaint, they are entitled to have their concerns reviewed by the club management committee. The club management committee will discuss the issue as soon as practical after receiving a written complaint, and take appropriate action. The Athletics Ireland Complaints and Disciplinary Process as set out in the policy and the Athletics Ireland Constitution will apply in all complaints and disputes.

4.7 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-supervisor 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 and recognition**

5.1 Support
Athletics Ireland endeavours to provide the support necessary to encourage and empower volunteers to make a meaningful contribution and gain significant benefits from their voluntary work.

5.2 Recognition
Volunteers provide a unique service to the sport of athletics. The benefits of which are difficult to quantify. It is essential that their efforts are recognised and rewarded. Athletes, parents and staff are all responsible for thanking volunteers informally on a regular basis for the valuable contribution that they make to Athletics Ireland. Athletics Ireland is responsible for ensuring that more formalised recognition takes place at key times.

5.3 Expenses
Volunteers give their time and skills free of charge, so it is essential that where appropriate Athletics Ireland & affiliated clubs cover preapproved costs that may occur in the course of undertaking voluntary work for the organisation. The costs of volunteering should never be allowed to discourage those from getting involved.

5.4 Insurance
Appropriate insurance is provided by Athletics Irelandto cover all volunteers volunteering on behalf and at the direction of the organisation as part of our annual membership.

5.5 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.