

## **Volunteering Policy**

### **Aims and Principles**

A Little Lifetime Foundation is the voice for bereaved parents and their families across Ireland, our aim is to promote healthy grieving and bring understanding and hope when a baby dies at any stage of pregnancy, during or after birth.

We provide our support information, support facilitation and services nationally.

As a charity, people are our most important asset. We therefore recognise that it is crucial that we attract volunteers to our organisation to help us achieve our charitable purpose and associated goals. A Little Lifetime Foundation wants to involve volunteers to continue to add to the established national network of trained members (hereinafter called the Support Team) who, arising out of their own personal experience of the death of a child, will ~~help~~ *support* parents and families whose baby has died or who is expected to die around the time of birth

### **What do we do to support parents and families.**

- host and facilitate Group Parent Support Meetings, both open and closed meetings
- provide one-to-one professional counselling
- facilitate creative workshops throughout the year
- provide online support through our private Facebook groups, our online forum and via email
- host Services of Remembrance during the year
- arrange the writing and publication of booklets and leaflets and distribution of them free of charge to bereaved parents and families, maternity hospitals, health centres, health care professionals and other interested people
- provide our Wrapped-in-Love tiny clothing items and wraps to all hospitals to give to parents who need them
- host exhibitions, meetings, lectures, classes and courses either alone or with others
- organise training in bereavement foundation skills, counselling and befriending skills for the Support Team
- provide on-going supervision to the Support Team
- organise any training for the Board, volunteers or employees and organise any training as the Foundation thinks appropriate
- educate midwives, chaplains, doctors and other interested professionals
- endeavour to make the public more aware of the grief felt by bereaved parents and families and its long-term effects
- undertake research into any aspects of the grief and to publish and disseminate the results of such research
- provide all our support services including our professional counselling, literature and Wrapped-in-Love items free of charge
- run the business of the charity, administration, finance, premises upkeep and management.

### **How we work**

A Little Lifetime Foundation is a voluntary organisation. The Board, members of the admin and support teams are all volunteers and we have one part time employee. It would be impossible for us to offer the service and support we do without the volunteers who provide it. We try to provide a high standard in all our services by adhering to core values that govern everything we do.

**The organisation's core values are;**

- We respect each other
- We offer a safe and confidential space for parents and families to share their experience
- We listen with compassion and hear what is being said without judgement
- We show consideration for each other's beliefs - both religious and spiritual
- We do not offer solutions
- We stay on the journey of grief with those who need support along the way
- We respect the diverse nature of the families we support

**Our volunteers are valued;**

The volunteer-led, peer support nature of our work gives the charity its unique character. Our volunteers are the very heart of our work and the driving force that has provided support since the establishment of the charity in 1983. They provide the essential peer support newly bereaved parents and families need in the early days of their loss while being there for those who are a little bit further down on the journey of loss. The everyday running of the charity; administration, finance, development and service structures are all performed by volunteers. It is impossible to quantify the invaluable service they give to our organisation and A Little Lifetime Foundation would like to state how much we truly appreciate their time and commitment.

**What type of volunteer roles are there in A Little Lifetime Foundation;**

- Parent Support
- Administration/Accounts
- Fundraising
- PR/Marketing
- IT/Web Design and Maintenance

A policy is in place to clearly outline guidance on all aspects of volunteering at A Little Lifetime Foundation. and it complements other A Little Lifetime Foundation documentation and procedures, as well as our definition of volunteering, our mission statement, and our values and ethos as a voluntary organisation that offers services and support to bereaved parents and their families at a very difficult time in their lives.

The process to select new volunteers is informal. All our volunteers are bereaved parents themselves, so they usually attend support services for up to two years prior to offering to become volunteers themselves. Or it may be parents who make contact many years later. Some parents want to be part of the support services and some have an interest in the running of the organisation. Others want to be involved in fundraising and we support and encourage all levels. We mention the need for volunteers in our publications and at our parent events.

## **Eligibility**

A Little Lifetime Foundation as a provider of services and support to bereaved parents and families, undertakes all reasonable steps to confirm that those who seek acceptance, as Volunteers, are suitable to undertake the tasks that are allocated to them.

All Volunteers must be able to demonstrate a commitment to A Little Lifetime Foundation and our aims as a national organisation. They must have an understanding of our core values and how we operate our front-line services.

## **Your Rights as a Volunteer**

- To be treated with dignity and respect
- To work in a safe environment where health and safety obligations are met
- To have a clear and specific description of your role
- To be given tasks that match your personal goals, skills and motivation as far as is possible within the charity
- To do meaningful work that is appreciated within the charity
- To be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the course of your volunteering work
- To be provided with *ongoing* supervision to support you in your work with parents
- To receive any support and training deemed necessary
- To have your confidentiality respected at all times
- To decline volunteering commitments without being made to feel guilty
- To be informed and consulted on matters which directly or indirectly affect you and your work
- To be made aware of the grievance procedure

## **Your Responsibilities as a Volunteer**

- To work within the aims, objectives and ethos of ALLF
- To adhere to all the charity's policies
- To treat all ALLF staff and other volunteers with respect
- To treat parents, families and other stakeholders with respect
- To carry out tasks assigned to you to the best of your ability
- To support ALLF in its compliance with all regulatory requirements, for example, maintaining records in compliance with GDPR.
- To avail of

## **A Little Lifetime Foundation has a commitment to its volunteers in relation to;**

- Clear information about the organisation and their role within it. Volunteers are given copies of all the organisation's policies and procedures and are expected to adhere to our core values
- Each volunteer is provided with training and roles defined and supervision provided
- A safe working environment
- All volunteers who provide services for the organisation do so in a safe environment and Health & Safety Policies adhered to
- Volunteers and staff will respect each other's positions, duties and responsibilities  
Clear guidelines will be given in relation to both staff and volunteers

- If a volunteer shows particular interest in an area they will be offered further training and support and opportunity to develop those interests
- The Board will recognise and offer their appreciation and encouragement for the role of the volunteer and the role they play in the organisation
- Other commitments are respected

### **Representation of A Little Lifetime Foundation**

Volunteers must seek prior approval from the Board before undertaking anything that might affect the organisation. This includes, but is not limited to, any interviews with the media, comments on website forums, initiatives with other professional bodies or agreements involving contractual or financial obligations.

### **A Little Lifetime Services**

Volunteers may at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate their relationships with A Little Lifetime Foundation. Notice of such decisions should be communicated at the earliest opportunity to give the organisation an opportunity to replace Volunteers or make the appropriate arrangements.

Similarly, any voluntary service is at the discretion of A Little Lifetime Foundation we may, at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate a Volunteer's relationships with the organisation.

### **Security and Screening**

We do not work directly with children but children do attend our service and events. Volunteers are not allowed to be alone at any time with a child or vulnerable adult. Volunteers must adhere to our Child Protection Policies and Guidelines to protect children at any service/event organised by the charity. Volunteers must support the charity's compliance with the regulatory bodies such as Tusla, for example, by undertaking Children First training.

### **Induction and Training**

The organisation is committed to induction and training volunteers and providing supervision. On-going training is provided in topics and on issues that arise and new changes to ensure proper care and support for bereaved parents. Volunteers who work in the Support Services are still assessed for a trial period of a year to make sure they are able for the difficult challenge of working in the area of grief. This is to protect the volunteer and the parents and families we provide support to.

Volunteers are encouraged to attend training to develop their skills and to advance the work of the charity. Appropriate training opportunities are identified by the Board of ALLF.

### **Support and Supervision**

Volunteers will be supported by the Board of the organisation and the charity's bereavement therapist.

The process of support and supervision is provided in Support Team Group Meetings, Group Supervision and individual supervision sessions.

### **Reimbursing volunteer expenses**

Expenses incurred by volunteers in carrying out the support services we provide or admin duties for the organisation is claimed back by providing a receipt and/or a completed and signed 'Expenses Claim Form'

The items that can be claimed for -

Travelling expenses

Telephone expenses

Food

Over-night accommodation (bed & breakfast) can be claimed for if this was not arranged by the organisation

Expenses can be claimed whenever needed but volunteers are encouraged to submit their claims regularly and in a timely manner. All expenses for the calendar year should be submitted by the year-end so that the accounts for that year may be closed out.

### **Health and Safety**

The organisation will undertake its duty of care to for volunteers under our Health and Safety Policy in accordance with the statutory regulations.

### **Insurance**

All volunteers are covered by our organisation insurance provided they comply to our policy of wearing the organisations official ID at public events and comply with our Health & Safety Policy, Child Protection and any other policies deemed necessary by the organisation. All volunteers are given copies of these policies.

### **Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy**

All volunteers will be welcomed and given equal opportunity. A Little Lifetime Foundation reserves the right to make decisions on the volunteers offering support to bereaved parents and that applies to all volunteers.

### **Confidentiality**

ALLF is committed to maintaining the privacy of our volunteers. All information provided to us is confidential and ALLF is committed to holding data on our volunteers securely.

All parents and family private information is confidential and any record of same must be kept in accordance with Data Protection Policy. This means that you can expect that any information that is provided while volunteering will be held in the strictest confidence. No information will be released to a third party without the volunteers full, informed, and written consent, except in those circumstances mandated by law.

Complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed because of state statutes that require disclosure of information for specific purposes. The following exceptions to confidentiality are mandated by law:

- When there is a court order requiring the release of information
- When a volunteer is compelled by subpoena to provide sworn testimony in a court proceeding
- When a person threatens to harm a named individual
- When a person threatens to harm himself or herself

- When child physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse or neglect is suspected Volunteers may discuss issues related to parents within the supervision sessions or one to one sessions. These sessions are bound by the same rules of confidentiality as the volunteer.

### **Resolving Problems**

In the case where problems arise, we need a procedure to deal with these problems in a fair and consistent way. To ensure that this aim is fulfilled, we have adopted a resolution process. This process is designed to help and encourage all our volunteers to achieve and maintain satisfactory standards of conduct and performance, and to provide the opportunity for improvement where necessary.

### **Informal Procedure**

Where minor problems of performance or conduct are alleged (e.g. poor timekeeping/unreliability, minor mistakes in the tasks being undertaken etc.), our Board or Bereavement Therapist, as appropriate, should hold an informal discussion with the volunteer to discuss this and decide on an appropriate course of action. They should inform the volunteer of future expectations, set clear goals and tell them about future action that will be taken if expectations are not met.

Where the issue is related to your ability to undertake the role, this will be addressed during supervision and support sessions. Appropriate expectations and goals will be set. Where there is no improvement, there will be an informal three-way meeting with the volunteer and relevant charity staff. The following courses of action will then be available:

- Reasonable changes to the volunteer's role to enable him/her to carry it out
- Change of volunteer placement, where appropriate and available
- Developing a time-bound plan to address problems. Our Support Team Manager will evaluate whether problems are addressed and carry out a review at the end of the time-bound period

### **Formal procedure**

Where more serious problems of performance or conduct are alleged, or there is no improvement in relation to any earlier issues dealt with informally, the following procedure will be followed:

- Investigation - Our Support Team Manager or another suitably appointed person will investigate the matter and prepare a report for the Board
- Review Meeting - Our Support Team Manager will hold a review meeting with the volunteer and a member of the Board
- The volunteer will be advised in advance of the allegations against him/her and given time to answer the allegations.

### **Best Practice**

A Little Lifetime Foundation is committed to best practice across our support services and will closely monitor and evaluate all our activities, seeking feedback from both our parents who avail of the services and Volunteers who provide them. All feedback will be assessed

and where possible applied to ensure we concentrate on continuous improvement as an organisation.

If you have any queries regarding this Volunteer policy, contact us at [info@alittlelifetime.ie](mailto:info@alittlelifetime.ie) or by telephone to 01 8829030.

Our policies will be reviewed in accordance with independent agency requirements and updated when required.

Approved and adopted: August 21<sup>st</sup> 2021