



# **Camara Education's Volunteer Policy**

Updated: December 2016

# 1 The Volunteer Programme

## 1.1 Why we involve volunteers

The work of Camara Education (hereonin referred to as Camara), as an organisation, could not happen without the support of volunteers. Our Refurbishment and Education Hubs are reliant on volunteers to operate effectively and efficiently. We regard volunteers as a valuable resource and encourage them to get involved at all levels of the organisation and within all appropriate activities. We aim to train, support and supervise our volunteers to the best of our abilities, and to act quickly and fairly if difficulties arise.

Camara recognises that volunteers bring additional skills and diversity to our work that adds value and depth to all we do. It is the policy of Camara to involve volunteers to assist us but also to assist volunteers in developing their skills and experience.

Camara's mission is to transform education using technology to empower disadvantaged students. Camara's volunteers contribute to this mission. We acknowledge and value the contribution of volunteers and undertake to organise our volunteer programme effectively.

## 1.2 Volunteer expectations

*Camara Volunteers can expect:*

- To be valued as an individual
- To be respected and valued for their individual knowledge and skills
- To have support, feedback, encouragement and appreciation
- To have opportunities to develop skills
- To work in a safe environment
- To have opportunities for training
- To have access to information about the organisation policies and ethos
- Camara to deal with disciplinary and grievance matters
- To volunteer in a friendly atmosphere

The conduct of all staff and volunteers is guided by integrity, discretion and dignity, and they shall expect and encourage such conduct by others.

*Camara expects Volunteers:*

- To treat fellow volunteers and staff with respect
- To carry out the tasks, as outlined in their placement description, to the best of their abilities.
- To be committed, reliable and punctual
- To ask for help or support when needed
- Follow and adhere to procedures and guidelines
- Endeavor to promote Camara in a positive manner

### **1.3 Purpose of this volunteer policy**

The purpose of this volunteer policy is to:

- outline our practice of involving volunteers
- ensure consistency and good practice in the recruitment, selection and ongoing management of volunteers.
- respect and accommodate the diversity of volunteers backgrounds

It is not a binding contract but rather exists to provide guidance on all aspects of volunteering at Camara. This policy supplements other Camara policies and procedures and the Volunteer Handbook. It is the responsibility of all staff members to ensure that this policy and the procedures in this document are implemented efficiently and effectively.

### **1.4 Definition of volunteering**

“Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, the environment, or individuals outside (or in addition to) one’s immediate family. It is unpaid and undertaken freely and by choice” - The Volunteering Strategy for Northern Ireland, May 2011.

### **1.5 Diversity**

Camara is firmly committed to creating a culture in which diversity and equality are actively promoted. Camara is always open to accepting volunteers and will consider any person over the age of 18. Camara encourages those from all backgrounds, disciplines, cultures, nationalities, gender and age to get involved. Additionally Camara staff and volunteers are encouraged to embrace diversity among co-workers. More can be read on this in the Equal Opportunities policy, Appendix 5 of the Volunteer Handbook.

### **1.6 Responsibility**

The Camara Volunteer Office is responsible for ensuring that the policy and that the procedures in this document are implemented efficiently and effectively. All other staff and volunteers are expected to aid this process.

### **1.7 Who is eligible to volunteer?**

Camara will consider involving anyone over 18 who is committed to the ethos of Camara as a volunteer. Potential volunteers must 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. All volunteers must complete our recruitment and selection process as outlined in Section 2.

## **1.8 Relationship with paid staff**

Volunteers are engaged by Camara, not as a substitute for paid staff but to enhance their ability. Equally, Camara will not accept the services of its paid staff as volunteers. Clear roles are established to differentiate between paid staff and volunteers to create a complementary relationship. Camara expects and encourages that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers.

## **1.9 Working conditions**

Volunteers are treated as members of the Camara team. They are treated equally with paid staff and are included in the organisation's functions and decision-making process wherever practical. They are kept informed of what is happening in Camara via the Quarterly call meeting and newsletters. Volunteers work alongside paid staff in appropriate work sites and have access to the space, equipment and facilities available to volunteer effectively.

Conditions in the Camara refurbishing workshop can be cold and dusty and workshop volunteers will need to dress appropriately. They are also asked to wear steel toe-cap shoes for health and safety purposes. Volunteers must not take bags into the workshop, but keep valuables on their person at all times. Camara cannot take responsibility for valuables lost or stolen. Volunteers are asked to complete an incident form should they cut or injure themselves in any way.

## **1.10 Volunteering times**

Working times are negotiated at the start of the placement between the supervisor and the volunteer. They are as flexible as the tasks allow. When expecting to be absent, volunteers should inform their supervisor or the Volunteer Manager as soon as possible, so that alternative arrangements can be made as unscheduled absences can create organisational problems.

## **1.11 Confidentiality**

Camara 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 Camara.

## **1.12 Data protection**

Volunteer data is held on the secure Camara Salesforce database. Information includes first and last name, home contact details and emergency contact details. Volunteer records are held in confidence but volunteers may request to see their own personal information file at any time. Personal information about staff, volunteers or any member of the Camara community including information in databases and hard copy files shall be kept secured and shall not be readily accessible to others.

### **1.13 Representation of Camara**

As representatives of the organisation, volunteers are responsible for presenting a positive image of Camara to the outside world. Volunteers must seek prior approval from Camara 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.

### **1.14 Service at discretion of Camara**

Volunteers who do not adhere to the organisation's rules or who fail to perform their volunteer assignments satisfactorily may have their offer of volunteering withdrawn. No volunteer's involvement will be terminated until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possibly ending the agreement with their supervisor. Grounds for being asked to leave 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 co-workers, breaches of confidentiality, failure to abide by Camara's policies and procedures and failure to complete duties to a satisfactory standard.

## **2 Recruitment and selection**

### **2.1 Role descriptions and person specifications**

Volunteers are entitled to a clear and accurate description of the tasks and responsibilities they are expected to undertake. A role description is available for each voluntary opportunity and is shared with volunteers before they start their placement. This will be used in subsequent support and supervision processes. All voluntary roles should be reviewed and amended as appropriate by the volunteer and Camara. Camara is willing to engage with volunteers in other ways that fit with our aims and objectives. An individual may approach Camara with suggestions for additional volunteer opportunities.

### **2.2 Recruitment and selection**

Volunteers are continually recruited by the organisation using appropriate publicity. They may also come via volunteer placement services such as Volunteering Ireland or through structured work experience placements through colleges or other educational institutions.

In the case of office volunteer roles, volunteers are asked to supply a CV and cover letter. Volunteer placements are made by a meeting and discussion with appropriate staff member/s, to match the applicant's skills, talents and interests with the needs of Camara. The meeting should also be used as an opportunity to answer any questions the volunteer might have about the role. If offered a position, the Volunteer Manager will send a welcome email with a link to Camara's online registration form, handbook and volunteer policy. The offer is subject to the receipt of satisfactory references and self-disclosure re convictions.

In the case of workshop volunteer roles, potential volunteers resident in Ireland are invited to

do a Workshop Tour and have an informal interview with either the Workshop Manager or Supervisor. In the case of volunteers coming from abroad an informal phone interview will be arranged. If offered a position, the Volunteer Manager will send a welcome email with a link to Camara's online registration form, handbook and volunteer policy. Again the offer is subject to the receipt of satisfactory references and self-disclosure re convictions. .

Where there are more candidates than needed the most suitable candidate will be selected. All volunteers will be asked the same interview questions to ensure consistency and fairness in evaluating candidates.

Where candidates have been unsuccessful they will be signposted to Volunteer Ireland and their online volunteer database I-VOL to seek other opportunities.

Applicants will not be treated less favourably on the grounds of sex, gender, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, age, membership of the Traveller community, political or religious beliefs, family status or responsibility for dependants, or put at a disadvantage by unjustifiable conditions or requirements. See our Equal Opportunities policy for more information on this.

Please refer to our Volunteer Handbook for more information on our recruitment & selection process.

## **2.3 Checks for suitability**

Two referees will be sought for all volunteers at stage of registration. The referees will be emailed a reference form to complete. Camara has determined that garda vetting checks for volunteers are not necessary as our volunteers are never in a position to build up a relationship of trust with a young/vulnerable person. We do however ask volunteers a self-disclosure question regarding whether they have a conviction/s. The convictions listed below may preclude an individual from volunteering with Camara but not automatically. This list is not exhaustive.

- Identity theft/cyber security breaches
- Breaches of data protection
- Burglary/Petty theft
- Assault

## **2.4 Acceptance**

### **2.4.1 Volunteer Agreement**

On being accepted as a volunteer the applicant signs a volunteering agreement which means they have read and agree with Camara's ethos, policies and codes of behaviour. This will also include an outline of the time commitment the volunteer is making and will state the designated supervisor assigned to the volunteer.

### **2.4.2 Trial period**

All placements are subject to an initial trial period agreed in advance by the Supervisor and volunteer - typically one month. At the end of this period, the assigned Supervisor/Volunteer Manager will meet 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 Induction**

All volunteers receive a welcome email from the Volunteer Manager with a general introduction to Camara and a link to the online registration form. In addition all volunteers receive an induction when they begin voluntary work with Camara. This consists of:

- Introduction to the mission and values of the organisation
- Short videos of Camara's work
- General introductions to staff in the area in which they will be working (i.e. Office volunteers will be introduced to office coworkers and Workshop volunteers to the Workshop Team)
- Tour of the premises, pointing out the Operations Table where the first aid box and Risk Assessment audit are kept
- Specific orientation on the purposes and requirements of their volunteering role
- A health and safety orientation including training on manual handling.

### **3.2 Training**

Volunteers are assigned a supervisor for the duration of their placement. The supervisor will provide them with the necessary information and skills they will need to carry out their role. All long term volunteers have regular meetings with their supervisors, either group or one on one. In addition Workshop volunteers will receive hands on training and support by other long-term volunteers. Also in the Workshop seminars are held every few months on a topic chosen by the volunteers. These are facilitated either by a long term volunteer or the Camara IT Manager and serve the purpose of fostering further learning.

### **3.3 Additional training**

Volunteers are encouraged to identify training courses, seminars and conferences which would help them perform their roles and aid their personal development. Approval to undertake such training free of charge must be approved by the Camara CEO and training which incurs a cost will only be done if funds are available. Priority will be given to long standing volunteers and those who have received little or no training in the past. In the first instance volunteers must raise their request with their supervisor.

## **4 Supervision**

### **4.1 Line 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

Every volunteer will have a clearly identified supervisor who is responsible for day-to-day support and direction and shall be available to the volunteer for consultation and assistance. The supervisor is assigned at the time of recruitment. Volunteers can request to meet with their supervisor if any issues arise. Volunteers are supported through the following:

- Having a clear role description
- On the job training
- Supervision meetings
- Having an opportunity to express their views through online surveys
- Attendance at Quarterly Call meetings (a forum for all staff and volunteers to gather)

## 4.3 Unrealistic Demands

Volunteers can refuse demands they consider unrealistic or that they do not have the skills to carry out. It is important that the Camara Volunteer Manager is informed if a volunteer is faced with a situation beyond the scope of their role. Camara does not expect volunteers to:

- Make tea/coffee
- Supervise the Workshop
- Manage other interns

## 4.4 Settling Difficulties

We aim to identify and resolve problems at the earliest possible stage and we ask volunteers to communicate issues or concerns to us as soon as they arise.

In the event of a problem arising, complaints should be raised with the volunteer's assigned Supervisor. If the issue is not resolved at this discussion the complaint should be made in writing to the Volunteer Manager. Likewise if the problem is with the Supervisor, the Volunteer Manager should be notified. A special meeting will be held with the relevant staff and volunteers. It will be dealt with within fourteen days and treated in a confidential manner. For more information please refer to the Volunteer Grievance Policy and Procedure, Appendix 2 of the Volunteer Handbook.

In the event of a complaint arising against a volunteer, a meeting with the volunteer and his/her Supervisor is the first port of call. For further information please refer to the Policy for Dealing with Issues and Concerns that Arise, Appendix 3 of the Volunteer Handbook.

## 4.5 Asking a volunteer to leave

Volunteers who do not adhere to the organisation's rules or who fail to perform their volunteer assignments satisfactorily will be supported to do so correctly. If the problem has not been resolved after a number of attempts to support the volunteer, their relationship with Camara may be ended. Grounds for being asked to cease volunteering include but are not limited to, gross misconduct, being under the influence of drugs or alcohol, theft, misuse or unsafe use of equipment, abuse of co-volunteers and staff, breaches of confidentiality, failure to abide to Camara policies, failure to complete duties to a satisfactory standard. For more information on this and an appeals process please refer to Camara's Policy for Dealing



with Issues and Concerns that Arise.

#### **4.6 Concerns and grievances**

If volunteers are not satisfied with issues relating to their volunteering, they are entitled to present these concerns to the Volunteer Office or the Camara senior management team. These issues will be discussed and appropriate action will be taken with the Camara Management Team having the ultimate decision.

#### **4.7 When a volunteer leaves**

Informal exit interviews will be held with any volunteer leaving Camara who has been with the organisation three months or more. The interview is an opportunity to explore why the volunteer is leaving, their experience and any suggestions they can offer to improve the running of the organisation. Each volunteer is entitled to a personal reference when requested.

In addition online feedback forms are sent out to all volunteers on completion of a placement and constructive feedback is always welcome from volunteers. Feedback is reviewed officially annually by the volunteer steering group and presented at a team meeting with a view to improvements being made to how Camara works with volunteers where necessary/appropriate.

### **5. Support and recognition**

#### **5.1 Support**

Camara continuously strives to provide the necessary support to all volunteers. This support is predominantly provided by the volunteer's direct supervisor and Camara's Volunteer Manager to encourage, empower and enable each volunteer to gain benefits from their voluntary experience. Volunteers are also encouraged to contribute to areas outside their role, where possible, by adding their skills to a Skills Bank which is shared throughout the organisation. This can provide them with the opportunity to work across a number of different functional areas.

#### **5.2 Communication**

Volunteers will receive ongoing communication from the Camara team. Camara uses the following methods to communicate with volunteers:

- Face to face support & supervision
- Email
- Phone

#### **5.3 Recognition**

Volunteers contribute to an invaluable amount of the work being done in Camara, the benefits of which are difficult to quantify. It is essential that their efforts are recognised and rewarded. Camara staff are responsible for thanking all volunteers informally on a regular

basis for the valuable contribution that they make to the organisation. The Volunteer Office is responsible for ensuring that more formalised recognition takes place at key times, such as the Summer BBQ and End of Year celebration. Camara seeks to show volunteers that they are valued and recognised in the following ways:

- Thanking volunteers through our quarterly e-newsletter
- Hosting an annual recognition event - Summer BBQ
- Highlighting the impact of our volunteers during National Volunteer Week and on International Volunteer Day.
- Sending Christmas eCards
- Recognition in the Camara Annual Report
- Long service awards for volunteers with 2+ years service

#### **5.4 Breaks**

All volunteers are entitled to coffee and tea available to all staff and volunteers in the shared canteen.

#### **5.5 Expenses**

Volunteers give their time and skills free of charge. While it is not possible for Camara to reimburse volunteers for the cost of travelling to and from the office, it will reimburse any out of pocket expenses volunteers may incur in the course of undertaking voluntary work for the organisation - e.g. travelling to attend a recruitment fair or representing the organisation at events like Africa Day. All expenditure by a volunteer must be approved in advance by their Supervisor who will complete the expense claim form on behalf of the volunteer, attach the receipts and give to finance. This must be done in the month that the expenses are incurred.

#### **5.6 Insurance**

Public Liability Insurance is provided by Camara, covering all volunteers volunteering on behalf and at the direction of the organisation. Further details of the policy are available upon request.

#### **5.7 Health & Safety**

Camara adheres to all health and safety legislation to provide a healthy work environment, as far as is practicable, and in line with the company Health and Safety Statement which can be found on the Camara website. Employees and volunteers have responsibilities for their own safety and should be aware of these.

A risk assessment audit has been conducted of the premises and all possible functions carried out by both volunteers and staff. Training will be provided for all volunteers before carrying out certain functions, e.g. using the fork lift. The risk assessment audit can be found in a folder on the Operations Table and all volunteers are informed of this at induction.

## **5.8 Monitoring and evaluation**

### **5.8.1 Volunteer Involvement**

Camara monitors and evaluates volunteer involvement in the organisation on a regular basis and seeks to make ongoing improvements. Evaluation includes:

- Online surveys twice annually to evaluate the experience of volunteers
- Exit interview will be held with all those with Camara three months or more
- An online exit feedback survey will be sent to all volunteers at departure

All feedback from these means will be reviewed annually by the Volunteer Manager. Issues will be raised where appropriate at Management meetings. Policy amendments will be shared with all staff and volunteers.

### **5.8.2 Feedback**

Constructive feedback on this document is always welcome. It must be given to the Volunteer Manager who will ensure that it is considered fully. It was last reviewed in Q4 2016.

*Going forward this policy will be reviewed in the final quarter of each year - next review Q4 2017*