



D'SIGN ARTS (NI) VOLUNTEER POLICY

Introduction

D'Sign Arts Volunteer Policy is written to recognise the contribution made by volunteers and to provide a framework for how we will manage volunteers whilst recognising the voluntary nature of our relationship with volunteers.

D'Sign Arts defines volunteering as “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.

Values

1. D'Sign Arts values the involvement of volunteers in our work because they help reflect the interests, needs and resources of the community we aim to serve and bring a unique perspective on all our work.
2. D'Sign Arts values volunteering across the community and recognises the important contribution volunteers are making in media, arts, drama, and the many vital services which we deliver. D'Sign Arts will seek to provide a local environment for volunteering which will enable it to grow.
3. D'Sign Arts recognises volunteers as an important part of our team, with a distinctive but complementary role alongside the committee.

4. Insofar as D'Sign Arts benefits from the skills, experience, and enthusiasm of volunteers, we believe that volunteers should be able to gain personal benefits from the experience. We are committed to managing volunteers in a way that ensures that the needs of both parties are met.
5. D'Sign Arts strives to create a diverse and inclusive charity within a diverse and inclusive community. Therefore, we are committed to ensuring equality of access to high quality volunteer opportunities and equality of treatment for our volunteers in all our policies and practices.

Planning for Volunteer Involvement

6. Volunteers are involved at all levels of our organisation as D'Sign Arts (NI) is a volunteer led charitable organisation.
7. All volunteers are provided with a written role description, outlining the purpose, tasks, and main expectations of their role. This role is reviewed at least once a year with the Chairperson and / or the Vice-Chairperson.
8. Volunteers with D'Sign Arts are fully protected by the charity's public liability and personal accident insurance. However, drivers using their cars in connection with their voluntary work must inform their own insurance company to ensure adequate and continued cover.
9. D'Sign Arts recognises that the provision of out-of-pocket expenses ensures greater commitment to equality and access to opportunities to volunteers with us. We therefore endeavour to seek to provide out of pocket expenses, however this is subject to funding.
10. D'Sign Arts endeavours to provide adequate and appropriate facilities, equipment, and resources to enable volunteers to fulfil their roles.

11. Kenneth Taylor (Chairperson) and Paul Stewart (Vice-Chairperson) are responsible for the overall management of volunteer involvement, including overseeing the implementation of this policy and dealing with any difficult situation relating to volunteers. The volunteer's designated supervisor provides support and supervision, identifies training requirements, countersigns expenses claim etc.

Recruitment and selection

12. D'Sign Arts is committed to serving and representing all the people of the Deaf Community and wishes to see all sections of the community represented among our volunteers. Volunteer opportunities are widely promoted throughout the Deaf and Hearing Community including Hard of Hearing (HoH) people and Children of Deaf Adults (CODA), and we will endeavour to make recruitment and selection materials available in a format accessible to any individual or group, upon request. Furthermore, D'Sign Arts regularly reviews the make-up of the volunteer team to identify and target any under-represented group(s).

Management of volunteers

13. D'Sign Arts is committed to improving the effectiveness of volunteers. Volunteers are provided with relevant training (some of which will be compulsory) to help them carry out their role safely. Volunteers may choose to attend any in-house training course that they feel is relevant to their voluntary work, subject to the approval of the Chairperson / Vice-Chairperson and availability of places. Volunteers attending approved training courses, internal or external, may do so within their normal hours of voluntary work and may reclaim out-of-pocket expenses.
14. D'Sign Arts aims to reflect the voluntary nature of our relationship with volunteers in all our policies and procedures for managing their involvement. Therefore, the Chairperson / Vice-Chairperson deals with minor complaints or grievances about or by volunteers or their work through the usual support and supervision procedures, in the first instance.

However, we recognise our duty is to protect the wellbeing and interests of all our stakeholders and therefore operate a formal complaints procedure in the case of more serious complaints. In the case of particularly serious offences, as specified in the Code of Conduct, this process may be bypassed and/or the subject of the complaint asked to leave. Where a criminal offence is suspected, the matter will be handed over to the police.

15. D'Sign Arts recognises the important role that volunteers fulfil within the charity. It endeavours to communicate with volunteers in appropriate ways, including volunteer meetings and the monthly 'D'Sign Arts Update' signed video.

It also recognises the importance of seeking volunteers' ideas and opinions at regular intervals and conducts an annual volunteer survey and provides suggestion boxes on the survey forms. Feedback from volunteers is always welcome and any volunteer may make representations to the Committee meetings every three months.

16. To effectively monitor the work that volunteers do and how they are managed, a personal file is maintained for all volunteers, which includes:
 - a. *contact details and other relevant personal information;*
 - b. *details of the application and selection process;*
 - c. *agreements made;*
 - d. *hours worked;*
 - e. *records of support and supervision activities;*
 - f. *training undertaken and any complaints or grievances made or received.*

Some of this information and other relevant information may also be recorded in computerised records. All such information is treated in accordance with Data Protection Regulations.

17. Opportunities will be sought by D'Sign Arts to recognise the value of volunteers' contributions and communicate their appreciation to volunteers both formally and informally.

18. This policy and accompanying procedures will be reviewed every three years to ensure that it reflects best practice for volunteering in D'Sign Arts.

Creating an enabling environment for volunteering

D'Sign Arts will review its grants schemes to community organisations to ensure that good practice in volunteer involvement is encouraged.

D'Sign Arts will ensure that organisations seeking to offer services to D'Sign Arts in response to tendering processes, demonstrate high standards of volunteer management where volunteers are involved in service delivery.