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## What is a volunteer?

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Volunteering is defined as the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of the society and the community, the environment or individuals outside ones immediate family. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain.

A Wexford MarineWatch volunteer is someone from the community who contributes to the development of the community. They are valued as individuals who bring a unique contribution to the Wexford MarineWatch team with whom they work. Volunteers work for no reward other than the development of themselves and the community. They accompany Wexford MarineWatch towards a common goal being suicide awareness and prevention, along with Marine Safety.

Also within the Wexford MarineWatch organisation we have “helpers”, these have been defined similar to a volunteer in giving their time and commitment for the benefit of the community but only at “certain events” to fundraise; e.g. Bag Packing etc., while still working towards our common goal of suicide awareness and prevention.

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## Questions to ask yourself before you become a volunteer?

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- What are the needs of the organisation you are looking to volunteer with?
- What does the organisation need help with, and what areas etc?
- Think about your skills?
- Are there skills that you have, that you'd like to use in a volunteer capacity?
- What are **your** needs?

One of the most important considerations you should think about before volunteering are your needs. What do you want to gain from volunteering? This answer varies from person to person and no answer is wrong. From a chance to make a difference, to using a skill or talent; from gaining professional experience to expressing your religious faith; from a chance to meet new people to achieving personal growth; gaining a more balanced life to giving something back. There are lots of reasons people volunteer. Be aware of yours.

For many people the biggest barrier to volunteering is a busy schedule. However, most of us really **can** fit volunteering into our lives. Volunteers with Wexford Marinewatch are asked to give up just 1 night per month. All time put into volunteering within Wexford MarineWatch is valuable and appreciated.

*Remember that you should enjoy your volunteering experience; it should be fulfilling and enjoyable.*

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## Volunteers' rights:

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- To know if, and how, they are being selected.
- To be given meaningful work to do.
- To know what is expected from them.
- To be offered appropriate training.
- To be thanked and to have their Volunteer contribution recognised.
- To receive supervision (in your role as a volunteer) and support.
- To get something out of the work for themselves.
- To know who to go to if there is a problem.
- To be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses if incurred when volunteering.
- To make mistakes and learn from them.
- To be made aware of any disciplinary and grievance procedures.
- To be treated fairly and not to experience discrimination.
- To have safe pleasant working conditions, including insurance cover.
- To be informed about, and given the opportunity to play an active part in the organisation as a whole.
- To be able to say 'no' and to leave the organisation without feeling guilty.

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## Volunteers' responsibilities:

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- To respect the values and aims of the organisation, including more senior members.
- To be committed.
- To be reliable and arrange a replacement for yourself if unable to turn up.  
If you know of any volunteer that is unwell or has any serious illness/incident either to themselves or their family which prevents them from volunteering we would appreciate it if someone can let the Volunteer Liaison Officer know, as we at Wexford MarineWatch appreciate and respect all volunteers time and effort put into the organisation. (Anything that may be confidential does not need to be disclosed, use your own discretion on this matter).
- To be punctual.
- To be presentable and maintain an acceptable level of personal hygiene.
- To attend essential training and meetings when requested.
- To undertake the work to a high standard and to the best of your ability.

- To be honest if there are problems, communication is very important.
- To respect confidentiality.
- To respect other Volunteers and their opinions (whether you agree with them or not).
- To respect any equipment and/or clothing that may be issued to you in the course of your duty.
- To leave when asked and/or when no longer enjoying the volunteering experience.

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## **Organisations' responsibilities:**

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- To ensure the volunteering experience is a rewarding one.
- To ensure equal access and not to discriminate.
- To define clear, meaningful roles for volunteers.
- To have policies and procedures for volunteers.
- To provide all necessary information to volunteers.
- To be available for volunteers.
- To provide training where necessary.
- To thank and value volunteers.
- To provide insurance cover.
- To inform volunteers of any legal liabilities.
- To supervise and to provide support (such as CISM)
- To reimburse any out-of-pocket expenses (once approved in advance).
- To provide a safe pleasant working environment.
- To respect confidentiality.
- To provide safe, maintained, and functional equipment to volunteers.
- To provide a well maintained, taxed, DOE & Insured vehicle where required.

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## **Organisations' rights:**

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- To look for certain qualities and skills in volunteers.
- To select only volunteers who are considered suitable for the work.
- To draw up a volunteer agreement - being the “Volunteer Agreement Form” .
- To ask for tasks to be done in a particular way.
- To ask for commitment.
- To ask for reliability.
- To ask for punctuality.
- To ask for Honesty.
- To deal with disciplinary and grievance matters in an effective, efficient and fair manner.
- To carry out appraisals on individual volunteers to assess their ongoing suitability.
- To ask volunteers to leave if their involvement hinders the organisation achieving its goals
- To ask a volunteer to leave if their performance is not up to the required level to ensure safety & effectiveness.
- To ask a volunteer to leave if they have failed to complete the required training within an agreed reasonable timeframe - this is to ensure the safety & effectiveness of the remainder of the team.

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## **Training**

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*“The value of training is directly proportional to the effort which Management puts into it. Whether you have only a few volunteers, or are entirely dependent upon them, if you don’t train them, then the organisation will inevitably suffer in the long run.”*

*(Lisa Conway, 1994, Working with volunteers: training)*

## Induction

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Even if a volunteer is already highly skilled, induction (sometimes known as orientation) is essential. It is the process of preparing volunteers for a clear relationship with the organisation. It should make volunteers feel comfortable and ensure they better understand the organisation's history, ethos, structure and procedures, so that they will contribute more productively to the organisation's work – and also alleviate any doubts or questions they may have.

## Why do training?

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- Training demonstrates that the organisation believes in a high standard of work
- Training lessens the likelihood of mistakes and other problems
- Training courses can act as a part of your volunteer selection procedures
- Training allows new volunteers to learn about the organisation and their specific tasks
- Training also allows existing volunteers to perform their roles better and to take on new work as the organisation changes
- Training gives volunteers an opportunity to learn about the political, social and economic setting in which the organisation operates
- Training can heighten personal skills and awareness, so the volunteers can function more effectively as individuals and therefore do their Volunteer work more successfully
- It can also improve interpersonal and group awareness, so volunteers can both work more effectively with colleagues and deal more sensitively with the organisation's client group
- Providing standardised training can ensure consistency in approach by different volunteers and continuity over time
- Training helps to minimise risk (for example, health and safety training)

### **Please note!**

Some volunteers value the provision of training enormously, regarding it as an essential part and tangible benefit of their volunteering experience. In these cases, training will undoubtedly increase volunteer confidence and satisfaction. However, others may not see the need for training, or even if they do, they may find the idea very off-putting (possibly because it reminds them of unhappy school days!). If this is the case, the need for training will be put in place with great sensitivity. In all instances, training will be well-planned and appropriate to the needs of organisation and to the needs of the individual volunteer – however in order to meet obligatory insurance requirements, a certain amount of training and certain modules **MUST** be completed to remain a Volunteer.

## Volunteer Work

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Most of our volunteer work will be in the Wexford Harbour Area, along with fundraising events and other work which may be developed or come upon over time. For the Harbour Patrols we to the best of our ability will have a “**Buddy**” system in place, where a new volunteer will work alongside an experienced volunteer and be trained in with that experienced volunteer for the duration of the patrol. This will also help the new volunteer settle into their role and become more familiar with the work and the way the organisation is run.

## Expenses

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During your volunteer work, there is no stage where you will be required to ‘put your hand in your pocket’ . All equipment, clothing, vehicles, fuel, and anything else required for you to volunteer are all provided. In the unlikely instance where a Volunteer finds themselves faced with a situation where they could potentially

be out of pocket (for whatever reason – e.g: Breakdown), once prior approval is received via phone from a member of the management group, the volunteer will be fully reimbursed upon production of a receipt.

## Volunteer review / Appraisal

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At various times throughout each year Wexford MarineWatch will carry out an informal review or appraisal with each volunteer. This informal review includes such things as how you are getting on in the organisation, what you like/dislike about it, any suggestions you may have, anything you want to talk about and how we feel you are getting on in the organisation – also making sure you are happy with the organisation and your role within it.

## Volunteer Meetings

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The input of the volunteers is vital to the ongoing development of Wexford MarineWatch and that is why we hold a volunteer meeting at least once a year (or more frequent if necessary). There is an expectation that you attend these meetings (if you are not able to attend we would appreciate it if you would let us know in advance). These meetings are important for the following reasons, as it provides:

- Updates on the organisations achievements to date or any future fundraising events
- Update on any training to be scheduled
- Feedback of volunteer’s experiences within the organisation so we can adjust our services and develop and learn from these experiences
- To help others learn from these experiences
- Ideas for the organisation
- Socialising with other volunteers to increase the enjoyment and fulfilment of being a part of the organisation - this will be done through group discussions and different learning techniques to help volunteers in their role
- Awareness of who can access the services and what services are on offer within the organisation, such as incentive schemes etc.
- A chance to introduce new volunteers and who they contact if they need support or assistance at any time

*“Volunteers are unpaid workers not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless”*

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## Code of Conduct

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### Bullying and Harassment

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#### Policy

Wexford MarineWatch is committed to maintaining the highest possible standards of ethical and moral behaviour and to provide a safe pleasant volunteering environment in which volunteers are treated with dignity and respect at all times.

Harassment means misconduct of a physical, verbal or non verbal nature which is unwanted and unwelcome. The following are examples of behaviours which are likely to be inappropriate and unacceptable. These examples do not form an exhaustive list:

- Unwanted physical contact;
- Verbal conduct of a sexual or racial nature or relating to disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, hygiene, gender, family or marital status, or membership of the travelling community.
- Non verbal conduct of a sexual or racial nature or relating to disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, hygiene, gender, family or marital status, or membership of the travelling community.

#### Procedure

- First Instance:** Where possible, if a volunteer has been directly or indirectly subject to harassment or bullying, it should be reported to the assigned Supervisor of the Wexford MarineWatch venue in which you are volunteering, the assigned supervisor will then make it clear to the person concerned that their behaviour is unwelcome and it must stop. If this behaviour is perpetrated by the assigned supervisor/s then it should be reported to the volunteer Liaison Officer or a member of the Management Group . If the volunteer Liaison Officer is the perpetrator the report should be made to the Chairperson and likewise if it concerns the chairperson or any trustee then a report should be made to the volunteer Liaison Officer.
- Report the Incident:** If the harassment or bullying continues, or a single incident is sufficiently serious then the Volunteer supervisor will report it to the Chairperson/Board member within Wexford MarineWatch. Wexford MarineWatch will treat such reports sensitively, seriously and confidentially and will be dealt with in an efficient manner.
- Next Steps:** The volunteer will be asked to make a formal complaint via the grievance procedure. Where a formal complaint has been made, a prompt investigation will be conducted.
- Outcome:** If it is decided that the complaint is well founded the procedure will be invoked. If it is decided that there is not enough evidence to support the complaint, then the volunteer will be advised accordingly. Wexford MarineWatch also has a duty to ensure that complaints made are genuine and are not of a malicious nature. Abuse of this policy may result in disciplinary action being taken.

**The above is just a brief outline, further more detailed grievance procedures can be found in both the organisations Health & Safety Policy and SOP's.**

## Managing Diversity (Equal Opportunities)

#### Policy

It is Wexford MarineWatch's policy to treat all volunteers in the same way regardless of their sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, race, ethnic origin or disability, marital or family status, or membership of the traveller community. It is our policy to ensure that none of our volunteers feel discriminated against.

#### Procedure

Provide a non-bias environment.  
 Equal opportunity will be given to all.  
 Resources shall depict men and women in similar situations where possible.  
 Wexford MarineWatch members interact in the same manner with all volunteers.  
 Wexford MarineWatch members and volunteers will use non-bias language.

If you feel discriminated against in any way, please report this directly to your supervisor.

## Grievance Procedure

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### Policy

It is Wexford MarineWatch Policy that all grievances should be brought from the assigned Supervisor/s, chairperson or board member to the attention of the volunteer liaison Officer immediately.

### Procedure

Initially you should raise the matter with assigned supervisor of the Wexford MarineWatch venue in which you are volunteering. If the grievance is against the assigned supervisor/s then it should be brought to the volunteer Liaison Officer. If the grievance is against the volunteer Liaison Officer then it should be brought to the chairperson and likewise if it concerns the chairperson or any management group member then the grievance should be brought to the volunteer Liaison Officer.

The Volunteer liaison Officer/chairperson will examine the grievance fully and seek an effective resolution. The majority of grievances should be satisfactorily dealt with at this stage.

**Step 1 – State your Grievance in Writing:** If the grievance cannot be settled informally or you prefer a more formal approach, it should be stated in writing the nature of the grievance and sent to the Volunteer Liaison Officer/chairperson without delay.

**Step 2 – Meeting:** A meeting with the appropriate person/s will be held to discuss the grievance further as soon as it's reasonably possible. During the meeting, the volunteer should explain their grievance and how they think it could be resolved. The grievance will be investigated by individuals who are independent to the issues raised. The volunteer will be notified in writing of whether the grievance has been upheld.

**Step 3 – Right of Appeal:** If the grievance has not satisfactorily been resolved, an appeal can be made. The volunteer should send a letter of appeal to the Volunteer Liaison Officer/chairperson within five working days of being informed of the decision from the meeting. A further meeting will then be held to consider the appeal. The volunteer will be notified in writing of the decision from the meeting. This decision will be final.

## Disciplinary Procedures

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The following are the disciplinary steps that will be taken if there is a breach in the organisations policies and procedures as per handbook guidelines:

### Stage 1: Verbal Warning

You will receive a verbal warning which will be recorded on Stage 1 of the Disciplinary Report Form. You will sign this report.

### Stage 2: First Written Warning

Your Volunteer Liaison Officer will determine what action to be taken which will be recorded on Stage 2 of the Disciplinary Report Form. You will sign this report.

### Stage 3: Second Written Warning

The issue will be discussed with the chairperson who will determine what further action to be taken. This will be recorded on Stage 3 of the Disciplinary Report Form. You will sign this report.

### Stage 4: Termination

The matter has now become very serious and will be discussed with the Management Group of the Wexford MarineWatch organisation with recommendation that you be dismissed from the organisation.

### **Please Note:**

The severity of the event will determine the level of action required up to, and including, removal from the organisation.

At all stages prior to the volunteer being removed from the organisation, they will be given every opportunity to amend their performance but will be told that failure to meet the required objectives of the organisation may lead to removal from the organisation.

**The above is just a brief outline, further more detailed disciplinary procedures can be found in the organisations SOP's.**

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## **Health, Safety and Risk**

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In the event of a Volunteer accident requiring First Aid:

Report to your supervisor, who will take appropriate action.  
You will be asked to give details of the accident and how it occurred, all of which will be recorded in the Accident Register.

The organisation has a 'Health & Safety policy' which each volunteer is required to read and sign.  
This manual also contains a full risk assessment & analysis of the duties carried out by volunteers and how risk has been reduced as far as possible.

The Organisation also has a manual titled 'Standard operating Procedures' (SOPs) – again which volunteers must read and sign. This outlines the specific requirements for Patrolling as a volunteer and what is required, thus reducing risk of both the volunteer and their partners.

## **Contacts;**

**Thank you for taking the time to go through this handbook and we thank you for joining us at Wexford MarineWatch - your time and effort is very much valued and appreciated. We hope that you will learn, grow and enjoy your time with the organisation. This is your handbook for your own future reference if needed.**

Volunteer Liaison Officer  
Eilish Culleton  
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Volunteer Peer Support Officer  
Philip Creane  
087 6139832

Chairperson  
Frank Flanagan  
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