



# VOLUNTEER POLICY

Oxfam is committed to managing and maintaining effective and positive relationships with our volunteers. We want to ensure volunteer time is recognised as a significant and valuable contribution towards Oxfam's work. The association between volunteers and the organisation is seen as a partnership; Oxfam benefits greatly from the skill, experience and enthusiasm of our volunteers but we believe our volunteers should personally benefit from the experience also and are dedicated to ensuring the needs of both parties are met.

## What is 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.

## WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT OF OXFAM

### To be Valued

Volunteers are at the core of Oxfam; they are highly valued and important to all we do. We have been involving volunteers since first established, to allow us to meet our aims and extend capacity to overcome poverty and suffering. Volunteers are involved at every level of the organisation in roles which complement but do not replace the work of paid staff. Oxfam does not currently send volunteers from Ireland to volunteer in its overseas programme.

Staff and volunteers work in partnership to maximise Oxfam's work. All staff are encouraged to consider the involvement of volunteers where this can bring new approaches and be effective in extending their capacity.

### Diversity and Inclusivity

Oxfam is committed to promoting equality and diversity, providing an inclusive and cooperative environment in which all individuals volunteering for and working on behalf of the organisation feel respected and able to give of their best. We are committed to providing equal access to quality volunteer opportunities. It is our objective to ensure you are volunteering in a place that is inclusive, safe and free from discrimination, bullying and harassment.

### To be protected by Oxfam's insurance policies.

As a volunteer, you are covered by **Oxfam's Employers Liability Insurance** in accordance with the requirements of the Employers Liability (Compulsory Insurance Act).

Lockers are provided for personal belongings and it is your responsibility as a volunteer to use these correctly. Mobile phones must be locked away or kept on your person at all times.

**There is no insurance cover for personal effects or personal possessions.**

Oxfam recommends that volunteers do not bring large sums of cash or any personal valuables with them

Volunteers using their cars in connection with their volunteer role must inform their own insurance company to confirm adequate and continued cover.

**To be recognised and appreciated**

Oxfam operates a National Length of Service Award scheme for volunteers. At the request of the Volunteer Supervisor, anyone who has been volunteering with Oxfam for 1 year will receive a certificate and at 5, 10 or 20 years will receive an Oxfam badge and a certificate.

Other recognition events take place, either formally or informally. Oxfam each year promotes Volunteers' Week (usually end of May in R.O.I. and the first week in June in N.I.) as well as hosting local seasonal events.

In addition Oxfam annually nominates volunteers for external awards both locally and nationally.

**To have a voice and be heard**

Oxfam will seek your views on its work as well as on your volunteering and will keep you up to date with its activities. As a volunteer, Oxfam is committed to listening to you and to taking your view into account when making decisions.

We encourage **informal consultation** between volunteers and staff on a daily basis and you should speak to your volunteer supervisor in the first instance. In addition, the following facilities are available to you:

1. Suggestion boxes located at each site
2. Email [irl-volunteer@oxfam.org](mailto:irl-volunteer@oxfam.org)
3. Post FAO: Volunteer Coordinator to the Dublin or Belfast Office

Furthermore, Oxfam informs and consults with volunteers and staff on matters of policy, its activities and the way in which the organisation is run through an annual volunteer forum open to every volunteer.

**Confidentially**

In order to meet our duty of care to you as a volunteer and ensure we are continually providing a quality volunteer experience, Oxfam maintain a personal file on each volunteer which includes: contact details and other relevant personal information; details of the application and selection process; agreements made; hours contributed; records of support and supervision activities; training undertaken and any complaints or grievances made or received. This information will be recorded in computerised records in addition to some information held in hardcopy for localised use. All such information is treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998 NI/1998 AND 2003 ROI).

**Expenses**

Oxfam does not want you to be out of pocket and will reimburse you for your lunch and travel expenses.

**Lunch expenses** can be claimed when you volunteer more than five hours in a day on the production of a receipt. A maximum of £5/€7 per day can be claimed, and it cannot include alcohol or personal shopping. Tea, coffee and juice are provided during your volunteering.

**Local Travel costs** from your home to and from your nearest volunteer location will be fully reimbursed. If you are travelling by public transport you need to produce a train or bus ticket. If you are travelling by your personal car, you will be reimbursed at a standard rate of 26p/33c per mile. If free parking is not available, car parking may be reimbursed at the discretion of the manager. You will need a car park ticket to claim this.

Claims for **other expenses** such as postage and stationery will be claimed in the same way.

Oxfam's policy is not to provide expenses for the care of volunteers' dependants i.e. children or elderly relatives.

Claims should be submitted on a Volunteer Expenses Form accompanied by a receipt.

### **Fair and open recruitment and selection**

Oxfam is committed to open and diverse recruitment of volunteers. Oxfam will strive to widely promote opportunities, while making recruitment materials accessible to all individuals on request. Oxfam implements a fair, effective and open process in the recruitment and selection of volunteers. All information received in this process is treated confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation.

Oxfam apply a range of role appropriate selection tools in order to place volunteers in suitable roles. These typically include; volunteer application forms, informal interview, risk assessments, I.D. and reference checks. We believe this will also provide a good opportunity for potential volunteers to become more informed about the role they are applying for and determine if it is a good fit for them.

Additional selection measures may be applied should a volunteer role description state e.g. Garda Vetting/AccessNI Checks.

Individuals that are unsuccessful in the selection process will be offered the opportunity for feedback. Where available they may be offered alternative roles within the organisation or redirected to another external organisation.

### **Induction, training & resource**

You will be provided with the training and guidance required for you to carry out your volunteering. You will be encouraged to develop in your volunteering role.

All volunteers will receive a volunteer welcome agreement which sets out both what you can expect from Oxfam and what we ask of you, including a written description of the volunteer role you have agreed to. You will receive an induction on commencing your volunteer role including information on the aims and work of Oxfam, as well as tailored training on the purpose and responsibilities of the role you are accepting.

Oxfam operates a settling in period for volunteers taking on new roles. The duration may vary depending on the volunteer and the role. This is to provide an opportunity for both you as a volunteer and Oxfam to assess if the arrangement is satisfactory. During this time volunteers are given additional support, with a review meeting held at the end of the settling in period.

### **To be supported**

You will be supported to develop skills whilst volunteering with Oxfam and where mutually agreed, will have the opportunity to progress to other roles with greater responsibility.

With regard to paid opportunities within Oxfam, you can apply for any vacancy at any time.

Your designated Volunteer Supervisor will provide initial training, day to day support and supervision, as well as identify continued training requirements; they will be the first contact for issues or complaints and authorisation of expense claims.

Your Volunteer Supervisor will be named in the volunteer welcome agreement you receive prior to volunteering, including contact details.

## **YOU WILL VOLUNTEER AN ENVIRONMENT THAT IS SAFE, HEALTHY AND SUPPORTED.**

### **Health and Safety Policy**

Oxfam is responsible for providing and maintaining a safe and healthy environment for volunteers, in accordance with health and safety laws in both Ireland and Northern Ireland and the organisation's policy and procedures. You are required to co-operate with the organisation to help achieve the required standards of health and safety. When volunteering in Oxfam, you have a duty to take reasonable care of yourself and others who could be affected by what you do, or fail to do.

### **Safeguarding Policy**

Oxfam are committed to practice which promotes the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults (adults at risk) and protects them from harm as outlined in the Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults (adults at risk) policy.

We wish to ensure that all children, young people and vulnerable adults (adults at risk) can participate in an enjoyable and safe environment in which they can volunteer.

Staff and volunteers in this organisation accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause harm to children, young people and vulnerable adults (adults at risk) and to establish and maintain a safe environment for them. We are committed to reviewing our policy, procedures and practice at regular intervals.

The Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults (adults at risk) Policy is available on the Get Involved section of the Oxfam website, in all Oxfam buildings or by request from

[irl-volunteer@oxfam.org](mailto:irl-volunteer@oxfam.org) .

### **Smoke Free Policy (includes the use of e-cigarettes)**

The aim of this policy is to protect all employees, customers and visitors from exposure to second-hand smoke and to comply with smoking legislation.

It is the policy of Oxfam Ireland that all areas of our premises are smoke-free (including vehicles).

We display smoke free signs at all entrances where we feel it is necessary. This will inform all persons of our intention.

Smoking is restricted to designated areas where applicable.

### **Dealing with difficulties and complaints**

Oxfam aims to create an environment in which you can enjoy your volunteering, to ensure the relationship between Oxfam and you is of mutual benefit. There may however be occasions when a volunteer has a complaint about Oxfam or about their volunteering. Oxfam encourages everyone to resolve difficulties informally and at a local level to restore the relationship so that everyone concerned is satisfied. If this is not possible, Oxfam has a formal Resolving Differences Procedure.

Volunteers who behave in a way which does not meet Oxfam Ireland's standards or policies, or who are suspected of gross misconduct may have their offer of volunteering withdrawn by their volunteer supervisor.

In the case of gross misconduct, as specified in the Resolving Differences Policy, the informal process may be bypassed and the subject of the complaint approached formally which may result in withdrawal of Oxfam's invitation to volunteer. Where a criminal offence is suspected the matter will be handed over to the police.

Oxfam's Policy and Procedure on Resolving Differences is available on the Get Involved section of the Oxfam website, in all Oxfam buildings or by request from [irl-volunteer@oxfam.org](mailto:irl-volunteer@oxfam.org)

### **You are free to stop volunteering**

As a volunteer, you may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to end your relationship with Oxfam. You are requested to inform Oxfam in advance of your intention to end the relationship and to give reasons for this decision. We ask on leaving that you complete an Exit Questionnaire so we can continually reflect and improve on the volunteer experience we offer.

Oxfam may also, at any time, for relevant reasons, decide to end your relationship with the organisation.

## WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

Oxfam requests you to carry out your volunteering within the terms agreed, within the law and the organisation's policies and procedures.

Oxfam request that you volunteer when you say you will and provide as much notice as possible if you are unable to fulfil your volunteering commitment, to allow us to make alternative arrangements. Oxfam will ask you to inform your manager of any change in your health, social or professional condition (for example if you have a new job or are unemployed), as well as any problems or complaints you have with Oxfam or a colleague which may affect your volunteering.

### **Oxfam requests you to act within its Code of Practice**

As an Oxfam volunteer you may be authorised to act as a representative of the organisation; you have an important role to play as an ambassador for the organisation. As a volunteer you are required to ensure that your conduct is in keeping with the organisation's beliefs, values and aims.

Oxfam's Volunteer Code of Practice is available in all Oxfam buildings, on the Get Involved section of the Oxfam website or by request from [irl-volunteer@oxfam.org](mailto:irl-volunteer@oxfam.org)

### **Review of the Volunteer Policy**

The Volunteer Policy is reviewed every 3 years or earlier where adjustment is required due to changes in legislation or organisational position. Volunteers and staff are invited to send comments and suggestions about the Volunteer Policy to [irl-volunteer@oxfam.org](mailto:irl-volunteer@oxfam.org)

**Policy Written:** October 2017

**Policy Review date:** September 2020

**Written by:** Volunteer Coordinator & Head of Human Resources

**Signed-off:** Oxfam Ireland Senior Management Team, November 2017

**Questions & Feedback:** [irl-volunteer@oxfam.org](mailto:irl-volunteer@oxfam.org)