



**Ógras Volunteer Policy
2023**

Policy Statement

Ógras is committed to providing a professional and efficient service in supporting volunteerism in Irish-language youth clubs and activities.

We recognise that to achieve our goals we need to involve volunteers in our own work. It is also essential that we present a model of good practice in volunteer management. 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. Irish will be essential in any recruitment of Volunteers carried out in the organisation. Volunteers who want to learn the language will be encouraged and supported. We value volunteerism because of the unique benefits including the example it shows to young people, how it builds stronger communities and the many different perspectives and sets of skills it brings to Ógras. Our policy reflects this purpose and values. During their work with the organization volunteers should not express opinions related to controversial politics, racism, religion, or ideology.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this internal document is to provide guidance on all aspects of volunteering at Ógras. It does not constitute a binding contract. It supplements other policies and procedures of Ógras, as well as our definition of volunteering, our mission statement, and our value base.

These procedures apply to all non-elected volunteers who undertake tasks on behalf and at the direction of Ógras.

1. Responsibility

The Stiúrthóir of Ógras is responsible for ensuring that the policy and the procedures in this document are implemented efficiently and effectively. All other staff and volunteers (including volunteer members of the Board of Directors) are expected to facilitate this process.

2. Eligibility

Ógras will consider involving anyone as a volunteer. Individuals must, however, 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. Anyone who has a conflict of interest with any area of the organisation will not be accepted as a volunteer.

3. Definition

A volunteer is someone who freely contributes time, skills, and service at the direction of and by agreement with Ógras, but is not paid nor expects to be paid. Those who work with young people are known as “Leaders” in the organisation.

4. Relationship with paid staff (Where applicable)

Volunteers are appointed to enhance the capacity of paid staff, not as a substitute for them. Conversely, Ógras does not accept the services of its paid staff as volunteers. Clear roles are established to differentiate between paid staff and volunteers to foster mutually beneficial and complementary relationships.

5. Working conditions

Volunteers are treated as full members of the Ógras team. They are treated as equally and as paid staff and are included in the organisations, functions, and decision-making processes wherever practical.

6. Working times

The Stiúrthóir of Ógras or the Development Offices and the volunteer negotiate the working times and are as flexible as the tasks allow. Voluntary time commitment is never expected to match that of full-time paid staff, but unscheduled absences can create organisational problems. When expecting to be absent, volunteers should inform the club/organisation as soon as possible, so that alternative arrangements can be made.

7. Appropriate behaviour

Volunteers are expected to work within the policies and procedures of Ógras and adhere to its ethos. As representatives of the organisation, they are responsible for presenting a positive image of Ógras to the outside world.

8. Representation of Ógras

Volunteers must obtain prior approval from Stiúrthóir Ógras before undertaking anything that might affect the organisation. This includes, but is not limited to, statements to the media, joint initiatives with other bodies, and agreements involving contractual or financial obligations.

9. Confidentiality

Ógras respects the volunteers right to privacy and confidentiality. In turn, volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of privileged information to which they are exposed to while volunteering within Ógras.

10. Records

Personal information about volunteers will be stored, accessed, and maintained in accordance with the requirements of relevant legislation.

11. Service at the discretion of Ógras.

Any voluntary service is at the discretion of Ógras. Ógras may, at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate volunteer's relationships with the organisation. Similarly, volunteers may at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate their relationships with Ógras. Notice of such decisions should be communicated at the earliest opportunity and in writing if possible, or by email

RECRUITMENT

1. Role descriptions and person specifications

Like paid staff, volunteers receive clear and accurate description of the tasks and responsibilities they are expected to undertake. Prior to any volunteer assignment or recruitment effort, a role description must be developed for each voluntary opportunity. This must include a title of the volunteering role, starting and finishing dates, hours and place of work, name of supervisor and tasks to be undertaken. The role description may be amended in joint agreement with the volunteer and the Development Officer. A copy of the final agreement must be given to the volunteer. Role descriptions must define a time limit (no longer than one year) for voluntary involvement, after which time they are reviewed, and updated if appropriate.

2. The role of the volunteer in recruitment

Volunteers are encouraged to recruit other volunteers locally in consultation with staff. The recruitment and selection procedures will be followed in this case.

3. Equality

Ógras seeks to reflect the diversity of the community it works in, and this diversity is to be welcomed, respected, and encouraged. All young people and adults will be welcome to join and participate based on who they are, regardless of background or other status and have equal opportunities to involve themselves appropriately in Ógras. Ógras ensures that no one will be discriminated against based on any of these matters, including

- Gender
- Marital Status
- Family Status
- Sexual Orientation
- Religion
- Age
- Race
- Member of the traveling community
- Disability
- Political Opinions

4. Applications

Volunteers are proactively recruited through promotional channels suitable for the roles that need to be filled. Volunteers can also send in an application at any time. Volunteers are recruited in accordance with Ógras' equal opportunities policy. All volunteers are required to complete an application form. This can be found on the Ógras site <https://www.ogras.ie/Volunteerwithogras> All candidates must undergo Garda Vetting & must achieved a satisfactory result before they can start as a leader with Ógras.

5. Interviews

Candidates are invited to attend an informal chat with a member of staff, to ascertain their interest in and suitability for the role. Written records of all interviews are kept.

6. Checks for suitability

References are always accepted. Other checks could also be carried out (for example, confirmation of professional qualifications). Volunteers are always informed in advance about the purpose of carrying out these checks If they refuse permission and cannot provide an acceptable reason, they will not be placed.

7. Appointment

Formal appointments are made only after the role description has been agreed and all necessary checks have proved acceptable. No placements are made unless the requirements of the volunteer and the volunteer's supervisor can be met.

8. Young People Volunteering

Young leader who are 15 years old or under 18 years will be supporting by an adult leader and working under the direction of the adult leader. The members should never be left under the leadership of young leaders.

Ógras can obtain Garda vetting for young leaders aged 16-17 with parental consent.

Ógras recognises the many varied and diverse roles young people fill in youth organisations today and in society in general. In addition, Ógras also recognises the special and specific issues involved in contact with young people (particularly under 18's) and will ensure the implementation of the necessary structures to protect both the young person and the organisation. This will include any necessary documentation including parental consent and the provision of proper adult supervision and support under the relevant Child Protection Guidelines.

TRAINING

1. Induction

All volunteers complete an induction course before they begin voluntary work with Ógras. This consists of a general knowledge of the organisation, as well as a specific orientation on the purposes and requirements of their volunteering role. This includes but is not limited to induction training for new volunteers, which covers child protection, insurance, health and safety and activities and ideas, optional leaders training, and additional training based on specific needs, such as challenging behaviour and games workshops. All volunteers are required to complete the Child Protection with Tusla Course - Children's First E-Learning Program and forward a copy of the certificate to Ógras' head office. Your Regional Development Officer can provide more information on the training available in your area. Ógras will strive to make the information sessions accessible and relevant to needs as appropriate. The implementation of training will be done in a supportive atmosphere. This training policy will be periodically reviewed and each training program will be assessed.

2. On-the-job training

Volunteers receive continuous and ongoing on-the-job training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their tasks well. The training must be appropriate for the demands of the position and the capabilities of the volunteer.

3. Additional training

Volunteers are actively encouraged to attend training courses, seminars, conferences, and so on, which would help them to perform their roles better and which would aid their personal development. Approval to undertake such training that has a cost must be given by the Stiúrthóir of Ógras and this will only be approved if sufficient funds are available. Priority is given to long standing volunteers and those who have received little or no training in the past. Ógras may also design specific courses based on needs identified by volunteers or staff.

4. Training information

If additional training was paid for by Ógras, any course or other materials belong to the organisation must be filed in the Ógras office. All volunteers are required to submit a short report outlining the content and usefulness of the course or meeting attended. Training information must be disseminated to relevant people within the organisation.

SUPERVISION

1 Lines of communication

Lines of communication should operate in both directions and should exist formally and informally. It is recommended that there be regular communication between a volunteer and Development officer. A volunteer will have access to any relevant material related to their job.

2. Supervisors

All volunteers will be supervised. The Stiúrthóir or the Development Officer have the supervisory role and all staff members are trained and instructed on how to involve volunteers effectively in the work of the organisation.

3. Corrective action

, Corrective action may be taken following evaluation sessions. Examples include the organisation of training for an identified training need, the reassignment of a volunteer, or the dismissal of a volunteer.

4. Dismissal

Volunteers who do not adhere to the organisation's rules or who fail to perform their volunteer assignments satisfactorily may be subject to dismissal. No volunteers' involvement will be terminated in writing until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with their supervisor. Grounds for dismissal 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 clients and co-workers, breaches of confidentiality, failure to abide by Ógras policies and procedures and failure to complete duties to a satisfactory standard.

5. Concerns and Complaints

If volunteers are not satisfied that issues relating to their volunteering are being handled appropriately, they are entitled to have their concerns reviewed by the management committee. The management committee will discuss the issue as soon as practical after receiving a written complaint, and take appropriate action. The chair of the management committee makes the ultimate decision.

6. Exit interviews

Wherever possible, informal exit interviews are held with any volunteers who are leaving the organisation, either because they have reached the end of their project, or are leaving for some other reason. Interviews are usually conducted with the volunteer's ex-supervisor and written records are kept. The session should ascertain why the volunteer is leaving, how they found the volunteering experience and what suggestions they offer to improve the way the organisation operates. All volunteers should notify the club and organisation before resigning from their job. At least one month's notice will be expected.

SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION

1.Support

Ógras endeavours to provide the support necessary to encourage and empower volunteers to make a meaningful contribution and gain significant benefits from their voluntary work. Support forms part of the regular supervision sessions and gives volunteers a safe setting in which to express themselves, let off steam and discuss how they feel about volunteering. The Stiúrthóir or the Development Officer will always try to be available to volunteers who require support in other areas that are affecting their performance. Ógras endeavours to provide adequate and appropriate facilities, equipment, and resources to enable volunteers to fulfil their roles.

2. Contact person

Each volunteer will be supported by member of staff, to guide and advise them in their role and will have regular access to that person.

3.Recognition

Volunteers provide a unique service to Ógras, the benefits of which are difficult to quantify. It is essential that their efforts are recognised and rewarded. Ógras staff are responsible for thanking all volunteers informally on a regular basis for the valuable contribution that they make to the organisation. The Stiúrthóir is responsible for ensuring that more formalised recognition takes place at key times.

4.Expenses

Volunteers give their time and skills free of charge, so it is essential that Ógras offers to reimburse any out-of-pocket expenses they may incur while undertaking voluntary work for the organisation. The costs of volunteering should never be allowed to discourage those on low incomes. Current rates and procedures for claiming expenses are agreed by the Board of Directors and communicated to all volunteers. Receipts must be provided to obtain reimbursement of expenses. It is acceptable for the club or Ógras to reimburse leaders for the cost of petrol for traveling to club/organisation events. Child care and loss of earnings are not covered.

5.Insurance

Insurance is provided by Ógras to cover all volunteers working on behalf and at the direction of the organisation. All volunteers are given information about the public liability insurance cover provided through membership of Ógras.

6. Health and Safety

Ógras volunteers must take care to ensure their own safety and the safety of the young people with whom they work with. Volunteers should be provided with copies

of relevant organisational health and safety procedures and receive appropriate support and training.

7. Child protection and other policies


Ógras has policies on Child Protection, good practice in working with young people, Tobacco Alcohol and Drugs, Integration, and other topics which all adult volunteers must implement.

Policy Review

Ógras will review this policy every three years, to ensure that it is up to date and in compliance with relevant legislation and guidelines.

Policy Created

Ógras	Date this policy was created: November 2023	Date this policy will be reviewed: November 2026
Acceptance of Policy		The Bord of Directors
Responsible for implementing the Policy		The Stiúrthóir & Ógras Staff
Responsible for reviewing the Policy		The Stiúrthóir /Chairperson of Ógras

Signature:  Stiúrthóir

Date: November 2023