

Date: February 2022
To: Fundraising and Communications Sub Committee
Subject: **Volunteer Policy**
Signed: Aideen Stapleton

Objectives of Update

This policy clearly defines the role of volunteers at Vita and ensures that there are clear procedures in place to recruit, support and supervise volunteers, demonstrating that Vita acts properly, always, in the pursuit of its mission.

The policy is aligned with the guidance given by the Charities Regulator in its *Guidelines for Charitable Organisations on Fundraising from the Public, Charities Governance Code Toolkit, Sample Volunteer Recruitment Policy, and Sample Volunteer Code of Conduct*¹ and address all points outlined in Principle 3: Leading People of the Charities Governance Code.

The Policy will be reviewed at intervals not exceeding 2 two years by the Communications & Fundraising subcommittee, sooner if legislation, best practice, or other circumstances indicate that this is necessary.

Version Control

Version no.:	Date	By (Name, Position)	Details of changes	Reviewed and approved by: (name and Position)
1	June 2018	Kevin Gregory, Head of Finance	n/a	
2	February 2021	Ciara Feehely (Head of Communications and Fundraising) and Judith O'Connor (Head of Finance and Governance)	n/a	
3	February 2022	Aideen Stapleton (Office Administrator) reviewed by Neil Munday (Head of Finance and Governance)	Reviewed and updated policy to incorporate all current guidance from Charities Regulator and to ensure policy meets the requirements of Charities Governance Code Principal 3	Approved By Board 31/03/2022
4	Jan 2024			

¹ <https://www.charitiesregulator.ie/en/information-for-charities/guidance-for-charities>



Vita Volunteer Policy

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Introduction:

Vita, formerly Refugee Trust International, was founded in 1989 by the late Fr. Kevin Doherty. His aim was to bring help and hope to refugees in Africa and other stricken areas of the world where people had been displaced, disadvantaged, and damaged by war, conflict, flood, famine and all manner of man-made and natural disasters.

That work survives him, and today Vita is an Irish international development agency, with field offices in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Our vision is to forge long-term global partnerships which bring an end to extreme poverty, reduce vulnerability, and create permanent independence by building sustainable livelihoods.

Vita is a registered charity (No.20024192), and a company limited by guarantee which is governed by a voluntary board of directors.

Vita offers limited opportunities for volunteering, however, there are times when we value the skills and experience that volunteers bring to Vita, and how those skills can enhance our programmes and the ambitions of the communities we serve.

Purpose:

The purpose of this Volunteer Policy is to define the role of volunteers at Vita and ensure that there are clear procedures in place to recruit, support and supervise volunteers, demonstrating that Vita acts properly, always, in the pursuit of its mission.

Scope

This policy applies to the voluntary directors and any other type of volunteers at Vita. The Vita Chairperson, Chief Executive Officer, Executive Team, and all Country Directors will apply the procedures set out in this policy to recruit, support, and supervise all volunteers.

Definition of a Volunteer

Volunteers in Vita may be involved at all levels in the organisation. A volunteer is someone who, without payment or other material benefit, raises money or engages in an activity for the charity.

All volunteers are subject to this Policy and other role specific policies detailed below.

The volunteer roles in Vita may include:

➤ **Voluntary Directors/Trustees**

Vita is governed by a board of voluntary Directors. Working together and with the senior management team, they direct Vita's aims and objectives, oversee governance and compliance and bring with them a wealth of knowledge, expertise, and experience.

➤ **Experts and Mentors**

A small cohort of highly skilled mentors have assisted Vita in delivering impact and achieving results across a range of programmes. These volunteers often travel to programme areas to mentor the Vita team members, work with Vita partner communities, and engage with Vita's stakeholders. Their role and activities while in country are clearly defined by a Terms of Reference for the trip.

➤ **Dublin office support**

From time to time a Volunteer may be required to provide additional support or expertise to a Dublin based team. Their role and responsibilities will be clearly defined in advance by the supervising member of the Executive. At all times, Vita will ensure that an employer / employee relationship is not established.

➤ **Fundraising Events**

There are two types of fundraising volunteers. A fundraiser will be fundraising 'on behalf of' Vita where they have been appointed by the charity to act on its behalf. The charity will have a deeper relationship with this type of volunteer and so will have more control over the way the fundraising is undertaken.

As part of fundraising activities, Vita invites individuals from corporations and organisations to participate in events such as the Great Ethiopian Run to fundraise 'on behalf of' Vita. All volunteers are bound by this policy and Code of Conduct while

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representing Vita during fundraising activities while in Ireland or in country participating in an event.

Vita recognises that there are volunteers who will fundraise ‘in aid of’ Vita, who may act independently and without the prior knowledge of Vita. In these instances, Vita will follow up and encourage them to ensure that Vita is aware of future fundraising events so that they can be supported and help ensure that fundraising guidelines are being followed.

As a rule, Vita does not encourage in country volunteerism unless there is a specific reason or skill requirement. We do not accommodate volunteers performing tasks in country that could be managed locally. However, we do occasionally work with international volunteers who perform tasks in country.

Recruitment of Volunteers

As an international NGO, in so much as Vita works with Volunteers, we welcome volunteers from a diverse background and promote equality and inclusion.

We provide a volunteer recruitment process, which is free from any unlawful discrimination. For some volunteer roles, specific selection criteria may apply to determine the suitability of a volunteer candidate to a particular role. Selection criteria are based on the relevant skills, qualifications, and experience of volunteer candidates.

Recruitment and Selection

Directors are recruited following a specific Board Recruitment process and volunteer experts are recruited via a network and approached upon confirmation of expertise in specific areas/skillsets and interest in supporting Vita’s work.

Depending on the role to be filled, our recruitment and selection process may include the following stages:

- Preparing a Volunteer Role Description
- Preparing and placing a volunteer recruitment advertisement
- Agreeing selection criteria
- Meeting volunteer candidates
- Shortlisting applicants against agreed selection criteria
- Notifying interview candidates and unsuccessful applicants
- Interviewing of candidate volunteers by a suitably briefed interview panel
- Assessing candidates against agreed selection criteria
- Offering a volunteer role to the successful candidate(s)
- Notifying unsuccessful candidates
- Verifying relevant educational qualifications of successful candidate(s)
- Checking employment or other references with referees nominated by a successful volunteer candidate
- Ratification of appointments by the board of charity trustee where required

Reference Checks

References checks and any verification of educational qualifications, which involves contact with third parties will only take place once Vita forms a clear view that it would like to recruit a candidate volunteer for a specific role. Vita will always request the permission of the candidate volunteer in advance of checking references or qualifications.

Code of Conduct

Vita is committed to ensuring that a person's involvement with the organisation is a positive and pleasant experience. Vita therefore asks all volunteers to commit to a Code of Conduct that promotes a positive environment. Vita's voluntary Board of Directors are bound by the *Code of Conduct for Directors of Vita*. Where volunteers operate outside these codes of conduct, they may be asked to discontinue volunteering for the organisation.

- The Volunteer Code of Conduct is included below as Appendix 1.
- The Directors' Code of Conduct is included below as Appendix 2.

Support from Vita for Volunteers

Before a volunteer commences their role, they will be invited to an induction to meet their supervising member of the Executive/ Vita contact person.

As part of their induction, the volunteer will be provided with a detailed role description. The role description specifies the responsibilities and tasks involved in the volunteer's role, Vita's expectation as to the way these responsibilities and tasks will be carried out and any other relevant information applicable to the role. The volunteer will have an opportunity to voice any queries they may have about their role.

In addition, the volunteer will be provided with information about:

- The vision, mission, and organisational structure of Vita
- How their role fits within the broader purpose of Vita
- The supports available to volunteers in Vita including key contacts, information about the volunteer's supervisor/line manager and communication channels within Vita
- The type of commitment expected of volunteers
- The space, equipment, and facilities necessary for the volunteer to carry out their role
- Vita's Code of Conduct for Volunteers; see Appendix 1 & 2
- Details of Vita's grievance and disciplinary procedures
- All other relevant policies and procedures of Vita

Volunteers have access to support and supervision throughout their volunteering period by the supervising member of the Executive. Difficulties that arise will be dealt with in a fair, open and efficient way and in line with Vita's grievance and disciplinary procedures.



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Volunteers can also raise a complaint or provide feedback via Vita's complaints procedure.

Specific training may be provided as required for specific roles, such as Board Members. Volunteers are briefed on the sensitivities around some aspects of the work, as well as Vita's values regarding preserving the dignity and privacy of those individuals and communities we serve. Volunteer Experts/Mentors will receive all relevant policies and information in a comprehensive Travel Pack along with a clear Terms of Reference for the volunteer period.

Fundraising volunteers will be advised whether the objective of their fundraising is for a general or specific purpose so that funds are not inadvertently restricted in error by the actions of the volunteer. Additional training will ensure that all fundraising activities protect people's privacy, that no pressure is placed on donors to donate.

The health and safety of all Vita staff and volunteers is important to Vita and all volunteers should be made aware of and given access to the Health and Safety policy, risk assessments relevant to their role and be made aware of emergency procedures. Health and safety is everyone's responsibility. Vita will ensure that adequate insurance cover is provided for volunteers, and that the volunteers follow any conditions in that cover.

Volunteers may be reimbursed for expenses incurred, in line with Vita's Expenses Policy procedures and by prior arrangement only. Expenses forms are available from the Head of Finance and Governance or relevant Vita contact person. Volunteers will be advised that should they receive funds on behalf of Vita, all funds are forwarded to the charity to receipt and no expenses are deducted from the money raised. Such expenses are reimbursed through the expenses policy.

Upon completion of a voluntary position or activity, all fundraising collateral and other materials will be returned to Vita so that volunteers only have access to such material as and when they are volunteering. If requested Vita will arrange an exit interview process to review volunteers' activities, achievements, and share feedback.

Confidentiality

Vita respects the right to privacy and confidentiality of our volunteers. Vita may from time to time while administering its business and exercising its legal rights and performing its legal obligations in connection with the recruitment of volunteers, need to process both personal data and special categories of personal data. Vita will process such data in accordance with the applicable data protection legislation including the General Data Protection Regulation and implementing legislation. Such data will be collected and processed fairly and lawfully and will include such measures as ensuring that Vita retains accurate and up-to-date data, retained only for as long as is necessary for the purpose for which it was collected, deletes or amends a volunteer's details upon request of the volunteer and will prevent unauthorised access to or disclosure of such data. Further details in relation to what personal data is collected in relation to volunteers or prospective volunteers, and the purposes for which

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such data may be used are set out in Vita's Data Protection Policy, (which may be amended or updated from time to time).

Any confidential information that a volunteer becomes aware of through their volunteer work with Vita should remain confidential. All volunteers are subject to the same requirements under data protection regarding personal and/or sensitive information.

Photographs can be a valuable tool for recording volunteering activities. Vita will ensure permission is sought before publishing any images containing volunteers and store images securely in compliance with the applicable data protection legislation including the General Data Protection Regulation.

Compliance with this policy:

Vita is fully committed to achieving the standards contained within the *Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising*, *Charities Regulator Guidelines for Charitable Organisations on Fundraising from the Public* and the *Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messaging*. The supervising member of the Executive/ Vita contact person for individual volunteers will brief the volunteer on these documents and ensure that they have access to the texts.

This Policy should also be read in conjunction with the following associated Vita policies:

- Protected Disclosures (Whistleblowing) Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Fraud Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Expenses Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- **Board Policy (in draft)**
- Data Protection Policy

If Board members or senior staff have reason to believe that a person subject to this policy has failed to comply with it, they will investigate the circumstances.

For questions about this policy, please contact a member of the management team or the Company Secretary.

Thank you:

Vita highly values the commitment and dedication of volunteers who give up their time and expertise to help achieve Vita's mission. Thank you for your valuable contribution to our work.

Appendix 1: Vita Volunteer Code of Conduct

Vita is committed to ensuring that a person's involvement with the organisation is a positive and pleasant experience. Vita therefore asks all volunteers to commit to a Code of Conduct that promotes a positive environment.

Where a volunteer is found to be in breach of the standards outlined in this Code of Conduct or any of Vita's other policies and procedures this may result in the volunteer's position being terminated. Notwithstanding the foregoing, volunteers should note that Vita may terminate a volunteer's position without cause. Volunteers acknowledge that no employment relationship is created in the context of their role with Vita.

Volunteers should maintain the highest standards of behaviour in the performance of their duties by:

- Fulfilling their role as outlined in their written **volunteer role description** to a satisfactory standard
- Acting honestly, responsibly and with integrity, treating others with fairness, equality, dignity, and respect
- Performing their role to the best of their ability in a safe, efficient, and competent way and that their actions always enhance the charitable purpose and reputation of Vita
- Acting in a way that is in line with the purpose and values of the charity and that enhances the work of the charity
- Following the charity's policies and procedures as well as any instructions or directions reasonably given to them
- Disclosing that they are volunteering with Vita (when asked or approached on Vita business) so that they can distinguish themselves from an employee or a third party agent with respect to the knowledge base.
- Have a general knowledge about the aims and objectives of the charity and be able to inform donors/enquiries of where supplementary information can be found, advise donors of the purposes that funds are being raised, and whenever in doubt to directing any questions to the volunteer's supervisor. Queries regarding Vita's policies, procedures, support, or supervision should be directed to the volunteer's supervisor
- Raising concerns about possible wrongdoing witnessed by the volunteer during the volunteer's role with Vita via the Protected Disclosures Policy
- Meeting time and task commitments and providing sufficient notice when they will not be available so that alternative arrangements can be made
- Always communicating respectfully and honestly
- Observing safety procedures, including any obligations concerning the safety, health, and welfare of other people in line with training provided to volunteers
- Reporting any health and safety concerns
- Addressing any issues or difficulties about any aspect of their role or how they are managed in line with Vita's grievance procedures
- Declaring any interests that may conflict with their role or the work of the charity (e.g., business interests or employment). If any doubt arises as to what constitutes a conflict

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of interest, volunteers may seek guidance from Vita's Head of Finance and Governance

- Keeping confidential matters confidential
- Exercising caution and care with any documents, material, or devices, containing confidential information and at the end of their involvement with Vita returning any such documents, material in their possession
- Seeking authorisation before communicating externally on behalf of Vita
- Disclosing the fact that they have been charged with, or convicted of a criminal offence by prosecuting authorities (or given the benefit of the Probation of Offenders Act 1907 as amended) to Vita's Head of Finance and Governance.² For the avoidance of doubt, volunteers are not required to disclose the fact or details of 'spent convictions' under the Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016 (as amended) to Vita.

Volunteers are expected NOT to:

- Bring the charity into disrepute (including through the use of email, social media and other internet sites, engaging with media etc.)
- Seek or accept any gifts, rewards, benefits, or hospitality in the course of their role
- Engage in any activity that may cause physical or mental harm or distress to another person (such as verbal abuse, physical abuse, assault, bullying, or discrimination or harassment on the grounds of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, or membership of the Traveller community) or exploit any relationship with a donor, another volunteer or employee for personal benefit or misuse their position for personal gain
- Be affected by alcohol, drugs, or medication which will affect their abilities to carry out their duties and responsibilities while volunteering
- Provide a false or misleading statement, declaration, document, record or claim in respect of Vita, its volunteers, employees, or charity trustees or permit others to do so.
- Engage in any activity that may damage property
- Act in a manner which is inconsistent with these and other charitable guidelines.
- Take unauthorised possession of property that does not belong to them
- Engage in illegal activity while carrying out their role
- Improperly disclose, during or after their involvement with Vita ends, confidential information gained during their role with Vita

² In seeking information from volunteers about criminal convictions (or the fact that they have been charged with an offence or given the benefit of the Probation of Offenders Act 1907 (as amended)) charities should comply with data protection law and be aware of the limitations on the circumstances in which it is possible to process such information (e.g. see section 55 of the Data Protection Act 2018). It is also important that charities have due regard to the provisions of the Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016 (as amended). If a charity has any doubt about its rights and responsibilities in this regard, it should obtain legal advice.



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The board of charity trustees will review the Code of Conduct for Volunteers at an interval of not more than 2-years or as appropriate. The Head of Fundraising and Communications is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented effectively. All other staff and volunteers, including charity trustees, are expected to facilitate this process.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Last Review Date: March 2022 Next Review Date: January 2024

Appendix 2: Code of Conduct for Directors of Vita (RTI)

The Constitution of Vita (RTI) is the organisation's governing document and is made up of the Memorandum and Articles of Association. The Memorandum sets out the objects for which the organisation was established and the Articles provide the Directors with the powers by which these objects are to be carried out. This Code of Conduct will therefore be guided by, and will reflect the powers of the Directors contained in that Memorandum & Articles.

1. As a Director you will be expected to have a good understanding of, and be sympathetic with, the aims and objectives of Vita, to act in accordance with the Memorandum & Articles at all times and ensure that the Charity complies with all applicable laws and the requirements of any regulatory bodies.
2. Directors must abide by any equality, diversity, safeguarding, health and safety, bullying and harassment policies and any other policies agreed by the Board.
3. As a director you must act with honesty and integrity, exercise good judgement, make decisions in the best interests of Vita and its beneficiaries and avoid conduct which could damage or undermine the reputation of Vita.
4. Directors will be expected to avoid conflicts of interest, and where they do find themselves conflicted they should declare that fact and not take part in any relevant decision-making, in accordance with the conflict of interest policy.
5. Directors will be expected to follow agreed upon procedures when claiming reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred in connection with the performance their duties.
6. Directors have an obligation to not accept any gifts or hospitality received in connection with their role in Vita above the value of €50.00. All gifts should be declared to the Board.
7. Directors will aim to attend all Board and sub-committee meetings, having spent due time reading and digesting board papers to ensure they are both fully conversant with, and actively engaged in, the work of Vita.
8. Directors will be expected to play an active role in Board and sub-committee meetings, contributing positively, listening carefully, challenging sensitively and avoiding conflict.
9. Directors are jointly and severally liable for their decisions, therefore decisions should be taken as a team together. Directors should thereafter ensure that decisions are recorded accurately in the minutes, and that they are communicated to staff, beneficiaries and funders in an appropriate manner.

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10. Directors are accountable to a range of interested stakeholders for their actions and as such decision-making and governance issues should be as transparent as possible, except for where confidentiality is required.
11. Directors must ensure that any information of a confidential nature remains inside the confines of the Board meeting.
12. Directors will at all times uphold the values on which the organisation was founded namely, accountability to all of our beneficiaries, partners and donors and will work considerately and fairly with all employees; providing leadership and fostering a culture of respect.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Last Review Date: 14 May 2020 Next Review Date: April 2022