



Christian Aid Ireland

Volunteering Policy

Introduction

Today over a billion people around the world live in extreme poverty.

Christian Aid Ireland has a vision – a world free from poverty – and we believe that vision can become a reality if people work together. Our work is inspired by our Christian faith and central to this is a belief in the infinite worth of every person. Working with people of all religions and none we seek to root out poverty by:

- speaking out against injustice
- campaigning for change
- bringing practical help to the world's poorest people

We know that we can only achieve our aims if we work in partnership with others and amongst our key partners are our volunteers. Every year in Christian Aid week around 90,000 people get involved in house-to-house collections and other fundraising activities. Thousands promote and support our work in their churches and local communities throughout the year. Specialist volunteers carry out tasks by agreement with Christian Aid Ireland staff. They give their time freely to run events, speak about Christian Aid Ireland's work, help out in offices, visit schools, get stories in the local media and extend and complement the work of paid staff in a range of other ways.

Christian Aid Ireland wants to support and encourage the involvement of volunteers in every possible way. Together we can bring an end to poverty.

1 Aim and scope of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance on how Christian Aid Ireland works with specialist volunteers, to ensure consistent good practice. This policy applies to those volunteers carrying out specific tasks for Christian Aid Ireland, by agreement with a member of staff. Please note that this policy does *not* cover volunteers for Christian Aid Week.

2 Principles for involving volunteers at Christian Aid Ireland

- Christian Aid Ireland recognises that volunteers contribute a huge amount of energy, enthusiasm, skills and commitment to its work.
- Christian Aid Ireland understands that volunteers should be given tasks that are meaningful and fulfilling.
- Christian Aid Ireland encourages the creative involvement of volunteers, and aims to widen its range of volunteering opportunities.
- Christian Aid Ireland aims to include a wide diversity of volunteers.
- Christian Aid Ireland seeks to ensure that volunteers are supported and feel valued in their role.

- Christian Aid Ireland will provide volunteers with the knowledge and resources they need to perform their role effectively.
- Christian Aid Ireland will treat volunteers as valued partners, and give them opportunities to contribute their opinions and ideas.
- Christian Aid Ireland will not introduce volunteers to replace paid staff.¹

3 Diversity

Christian Aid Ireland is firmly committed to creating a culture in which diversity and equality of opportunity are actively promoted. Christian Aid Ireland recognises the benefits of having a diverse community of staff and volunteers, and will seek to provide an environment where people with differing backgrounds, experiences and needs are able to contribute fully. As part of this commitment, we will monitor the diversity of volunteers.

4 Volunteer recruitment and selection

Opportunities

Christian Aid Ireland offers a range of volunteering opportunities through its offices across Ireland. Christian Aid Ireland does not recruit volunteers for its overseas country offices or to work with its partner organisations.

Internships

Christian Aid offers a 10 month full-time internship through the Collective, Christian Aid's programme of work with young people. Other opportunities to volunteer full time are not recognised internships and are limited to an initial period of three months.

Recruitment

Christian Aid Ireland uses a variety of recruitment methods to attract volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds. These include:

- Christian Aid Ireland publications
- local or national media
- Christian Aid Ireland's website and other websites
- volunteer centres
- exhibitions at festivals and community events
- links with places of worship
- publicity in schools, colleges and universities
- local supporter networks
- word of mouth
- professional bodies

Task descriptions

Christian Aid Ireland will provide applicants with written task descriptions outlining their volunteer role and any skills or experience required.

Application forms

Applicants for volunteering opportunities are asked to complete an application form. The Christian Aid Ireland team processing the application will aim to contact applicants within one week of receiving the form. If required, applicants may request help with filling in the application form.

¹ We also recognise that there may be situations (e.g. emergencies) where volunteers undertake tasks which at other times would be done by paid agency staff.

References

All applicants are asked to provide the names and contact details of two people (not relatives) who know them well and who are happy to provide a reference. One of these may be a member of Christian Aid Ireland staff. Volunteers should not start in their role or be given access to Christian Aid Ireland's IT systems until references have been received.

Disclosure

Anyone applying for a voluntary role that will bring them into regular contact with children or young people will be asked to complete an Access Northern Ireland disclosure form.

Christian Aid Ireland will not discriminate against applicants with previous convictions but will seek to treat them fairly taking individual circumstances into account.

Christian Aid Ireland will fully comply with the Access Northern Ireland Code of Practice on the correct handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of Disclosures and Disclosure information. For further information see Christian Aid's Child Protection Policy and *Guidelines for Involving Ex-offenders as Volunteers*.

Interviews

Applicants will be invited to attend an informal interview to find out more about the role and to help establish whether they and Christian Aid Ireland feel that the role suits them.

Volunteer agreement

When a new volunteer is taken on they will be given a volunteer agreement outlining both what they can expect from Christian Aid Ireland and their own responsibilities. This agreement is only voluntary and is not intended as a contract of employment.

Review period

When a volunteer starts a review date will be set. This is when the volunteer and their staff contact will discuss whether they and Christian Aid Ireland feel they are suited to their role. The length of the review period will depend on the frequency of the volunteering activity but should be within three months of starting.

Informal volunteering at events

Volunteers who help out at one-off events, for example as stewards, will not be required to go through a formal application process.

Unsuccessful applications

When an applicant is considered unsuited to a voluntary role they will be offered an explanation and, if possible, an alternative, more appropriate opportunity. If no suitable opportunity is available applicants may be referred to their local Volunteer Centre.

Younger volunteers

Young people under the age of 18 may volunteer with Christian Aid Ireland, providing that they have written parental consent and, following a risk assessment, that there is the capacity to give them adequate supervision.

Volunteers from outside the EU/EAA

Christian Aid Ireland welcomes applications from outside the EU/EAA, providing that they have a visa that permits them to do voluntary work in the UK/Ireland. Christian Aid Ireland is unable to sponsor volunteers under the UK Border Agency's points-based system or help with visa applications. We are not able to arrange accommodation or travel for volunteers from overseas. For further information see:

The Republic of Ireland Border Agency <http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/Home>

The UK border agency: [the UK Border Agency's website](#).

Friends and relatives as volunteers

If a potential volunteer is a friend or relative of a member of staff, they should go through the normal application procedure and be interviewed by a different member of staff. Help can be given with interviews if necessary.

3 Induction and training

Welcome pack

New volunteers will be given a volunteer welcome pack containing the following:

- task description
- volunteer agreement
- health and safety information
- expenses policy
- expenses claim form
- volunteering policy
- diversity monitoring questionnaire
- background information on Christian Aid Ireland
- information about their team
- other information relevant to the role

Volunteers may request large print versions of these documents.

Induction

Staff will work through an induction checklist with all new volunteers. In addition volunteers will receive a general introduction to Christian Aid Ireland, its approach to overseas development, and how their volunteering role contributes to its work.

Training

Volunteers will be given specific training to provide them with the skills and information necessary for their volunteering task, including health and safety information..

Access to IT

Volunteers working in Christian Aid Ireland's offices will be given an intranet username, password and an Outlook email address. The level of intranet permission granted will depend on the volunteering activity and will be at the discretion of the team or unit manager. Volunteers should comply with [Christian Aid's policies for computer users](#). All volunteers working on Christian Aid's intranet should complete relevant training and sign a confidentiality agreement (see point 10).

The accounts must be closed when the volunteer leaves Christian Aid Ireland.

Conferences and events

Volunteers will be encouraged to attend volunteers' conferences and local events that help further their understanding of Christian Aid's work.

Continuing training

Volunteers wishing to develop their volunteering role may attend additional relevant training opportunities at the discretion of their staff contact.

4 Supervision

Staff contact

All volunteers will have a named staff contact who will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the volunteer's work and will be available for consultation.

Supervision and reviews

The staff contact will offer on-going support and supervision. In addition they will arrange occasional review meetings to discuss the volunteer's progress and any problems. The frequency of the meetings will depend on the volunteer role, but it is recommended that all volunteers are contacted and/or given an opportunity to meet with their supervisor every three months.

Communication

Christian Aid Ireland will aim to consult and inform volunteers about plans and developments that affect their role. Where relevant, volunteers will be given the opportunity to attend and contribute to team meetings.

Volunteer-management training

Christian Aid Ireland will provide training in volunteer management. Staff with direct responsibility for managing volunteers are required to attend this training.

Exit interviews

When a volunteer leaves their position, Christian Aid Ireland will, where possible, conduct exit interviews. The aim of the interview is to find out why the volunteer is leaving, to thank them for their contribution and to ask for suggestions as to how Christian Aid Ireland could improve or develop its work with volunteers. A questionnaire is available as an alternative.

Dealing with problems

In the event of a problem arising either between volunteers or between a volunteer and a member of staff, Christian Aid Ireland will attempt to resolve the situation through informal discussion. Volunteers should in the first instance refer any problems to their staff contact, and if this does not result in a satisfactory outcome, to their staff contact's line manager.

Where the problem is between the volunteer and their staff contact, volunteers may refer to a secondary staff contact, whose name is given on their volunteering agreement. For more information see [Guidelines for Dealing with Problems](#).

Terminating voluntary posts

If it is not possible to resolve an issue through informal discussion, or in the event of serious misconduct, Christian Aid Ireland may decide to terminate the volunteering position. Under these circumstances the volunteer may appeal in writing to their head of team.

Unreasonable expectations

Volunteers may refuse to do any task that they feel unqualified to undertake or that they consider unreasonable.

5 Volunteer support and recognition

Expenses

Christian Aid Ireland volunteers will claim agreed out-of-pocket expenses. This helps Christian Aid Ireland to cost the work of its volunteers accurately. Before taking up their voluntary role, volunteers should be informed by their staff contact about what can be claimed. Details of this are on the volunteer expenses claim form. Procedures for claiming expenses should be explained as part of the volunteer induction process.

Managing risk

Christian Aid Ireland will carry out a risk assessment of all volunteer roles. Risk assessments will be updated annually. Volunteers may see a copy of the risk assessment document.

Health and safety

Christian Aid Ireland recognises its responsibility to provide a safe working environment and to protect the welfare of its staff and volunteers. Volunteers are required to take responsibility for their own health and safety and that of people working around them and should raise any concerns with their staff contact. Volunteers will be given information on health and safety procedures as part of their induction.

Insurance

All volunteers are covered by Christian Aid Ireland's employers' liability and public liability insurance whilst carrying out their duties for Christian Aid Ireland. Volunteers who travel by car in the course of

their volunteering are responsible for ensuring that their insurance policy covers them for voluntary activities.

Car usage

Volunteers who use their car as part of their volunteering (not just to travel to their local office) will be asked to confirm that they are qualified to drive and that their vehicle is in a roadworthy condition. They should also note the guidance on insurance. See 8.4 above.

References

Volunteers applying for work or a course of study may ask their staff contact to provide a reference.

Recognition

Christian Aid Ireland will seek to show volunteers that their contribution is recognised and valued. Appreciation may be expressed through occasional special events or activities, as well as on a day-to-day basis.

6 Equal opportunities

Christian Aid Ireland believes that volunteer participation should be based on the ability and willingness of the volunteer to contribute. There should be no discrimination on the ground of colour, race, nationality, citizenship, having transmittable diseases (e.g. hepatitis and HIV/AIDS), ethnic or national origin, gender, marital status, sexuality, age, disability, trade union membership, religious belief, offending background and gender reassignment. Nor should volunteers be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable. In turn, volunteers have a responsibility not to discriminate on any of these grounds and should not encourage, nor neglect to report, any harassment, discrimination or victimisation.

7 Confidentiality

Volunteers who have access to confidential information and Christian Aid Ireland's intranet are required to complete an on-line training course in data protection and sign a confidentiality agreement. Volunteers should not disclose any confidential information to which they have access to people outside the organisation. Failure to maintain confidentiality may result in the volunteer being asked to leave.

8 Data protection

Christian Aid Ireland will seek the permission of volunteers to keep their personal data. All such data will be kept securely and only for as long as is necessary.

9 Further information

The following documents are available on the Christian Aid intranet:

- [Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)
- [Statement of Health and Safety](#)
- [Child Protection Policy](#)
- [Guidelines for Staff and Volunteers Working Alone](#)
- [Data Protection Policy](#)

3 Policy review

This policy was first created and agreed by the Christian Aid Ireland directorate in January 2008. It was reviewed in March 2014 and is next due for review in March 2016.

4 Appendices

- [Involving Ex-offenders as Volunteers](#)
- [Guidelines for Dealing with Problems](#)
- [Volunteer Expenses Policy](#)

Volunteers may request copies of these documents from their staff contact.