



## **VOLUNTEER POLICY**

Effective from: June 2014  
Designated person responsible: Chief Executive Officer  
Overall responsibility: IGG's Executive committee  
To be reviewed in: June 2016

## **Volunteering policy statement**

The Irish Girl Guides is dependent on volunteers and as a volunteer-led national youth organisation places great importance on their input in all aspects of the organisation. Membership of the Irish Girl Guides (IGG) is open to all girls over 5 years of age and women of all ages who are prepared to accept the Guide Law and Promise. IGG provides a non-formal educational programme in the Republic of Ireland that is dynamic and flexible while offering values-based training in life skills, decision-making and leadership. Our adult leaders all work in a volunteer capacity and are trained to implement our programme in which the needs of the individual girl are a priority. There are also opportunities for adult members to volunteer to be involved in other ways e.g. committee membership, administration, specific skill teaching.

IGG defines a volunteer as an individual who freely assists IGG without receiving any compensation for their time or services offered. IGG seeks to involve suitable adult volunteers who share the ethos and values of our organisation and have an interest in the development of girls and young women. IGG takes all reasonable steps to welcome and support our volunteers and value their contributions through training and clear policies and procedures.

IGG is a uniformed organisation and welcomes female volunteers of all backgrounds, ages, cultures, faiths and abilities (see IGG's Equality and Inclusion Policy) to work as Leaders and Unit Helpers with our different age groups:- Ladybirds, Brownies, Guides and Senior Branch.

Male volunteers can act as Unit Helpers. Many Units have a rota whereby a group of parents or other adult volunteers take it in turn to help at the weekly Unit meeting.

Volunteering with IGG is a rewarding way to help girls and young women to develop the best in themselves. IGG support its volunteers to develop new skills which are transferable to other areas of life.

## Definition of a Volunteer

Volunteering plays a significant role and makes a positive contribution to improving the lives of people, and to strengthening communities and civil society. Many volunteers may choose to be involved at a local level by supporting Guiding as a Leader in a local Unit for a particular age group. However, some may prefer to assist with financial management, property management, catering for events or by helping local Leaders with programme activities or administration tasks.

In addition, there is an opportunity to support Guiding in governance and management roles at local, regional and national levels. Examples of such volunteering roles include committee members, trainers, commissioners, fundraising, event management, special projects.

A volunteer Leader is responsible for the running of her local Unit with other Leaders. A Unit usually meets once a week for up to two hours with occasional weekend activities. A Leader is a female over 18 years of age who is willing to support Guiding and its values while agreeing to abide by its Conduct Guidelines for Leaders when she signs IGG's Agreement Form for Leaders.

Sustainable volunteering is a means of creating and supporting a network of people who volunteer together. In this way over-dependency and reliance on one volunteer should not occur so that continuation through a team volunteers can always take place.

### Leader-in-charge

Every Ladybird, Brownie or Guide Unit has at least one adult Leader who has completed her Leader warrant (IGG's leadership qualification). Leaders have overall responsibility for the Unit, although this is often shared between a team. Within each IGG Unit someone is appointed to be the Leader-in-charge of that Unit. The Leader-in-charge is responsible for the operation of the Unit. She must be over 19 years of age and must hold a Leader warrant. In addition to the time commitment involved, she must allow time for planning weekly meetings, outings etc.

An **Assistant Leader** (also a warranted position) helps to run an IGG Unit under the supervision of the Leader-in-charge of the Unit.

A **Unit Helper** is an interested person who does not wish to, or cannot (e.g. a father) become a warranted Leader. This includes someone who is on a parents' rota. They may be invited to attend Unit meetings, holidays or camps when additional help is needed. Unit Helpers are not Assistant Leaders and must not be left on their own or with other Unit Helpers to run the Unit.

They attend meetings occasionally i.e. "*now and then*", "*from time to time*", "*irregularly*", "*once in a while*" to help out. They should not feel obliged to attend every week or take part in programme planning, District meetings and other extra activities. There is no limit to the number of Unit Helpers who may help at a Unit meeting.

Volunteers should be valued primarily for their individual contributions, enthusiasm and commitment, as well as for the experience and skills they can bring. The role of volunteers and paid staff often exist alongside each other and are both complementary and mutually dependant.

## **Benefits of Volunteering with the Irish Girl Guides**

- Being part of a local, national and international network
- Having an opportunity to meet, mix and socialise with women from all walks of life
- Learning a wide variety of new skills e.g. leadership, event planning, mentoring, first aid, teamwork, and the protection of children and young people
- Further developing one's confidence and capacity and contributing to maintenance of a positive self-image
- Feeling a part of the community and contributing to its ongoing development
- Meeting new people and building a network while being valued in the community
- Engaging in new activities in a fun and enjoyable atmosphere
- Being able to relate, listen to and understand young people
- Having a tolerance of diversity

## **Rights of Volunteers**

Volunteers should

- Receive adequate information and a clear role description of what is expected of them and understand what they are doing and how it fits into the bigger picture
- Have access to adequate and appropriate support and supervision from a trained individual
- Be respected by paid staff and other volunteers and acknowledged in terms of recognition and feedback on their work
- Be reimbursed for the out of pocket expenses incurred through volunteering work
- Have an awareness of and access to all of the organisation's policies and procedures
- Be able, where possible to attend appropriate forums to contribute to discussions and where appropriate take part in making decisions regarding organisational aims and objectives
- Be able to develop and enhance their skills and have access to suitable training and development opportunities
- Have their personal details kept in an appropriate and confidential manner within the organisation
- Work in as safe an environment as possible

## **Responsibilities of Volunteers with the Irish Girl Guides**

As a Leader with the Irish Girl Guides you are expected to

- Accept and abide by the Promise and Law and the policies and procedures of the Irish Girl Guides
- Successfully complete the IGG screening process which includes Garda Vetting
- Wear official uniform
- Plan and carry out, after the necessary training, effective programmes for your Unit
- Work towards the attainment of your Warrant (a licence to be a recognised Leader in IGG)
- Attend on-going trainings
- Help the girls to become responsible members of the community, giving them help, support and opportunities for development
- Be familiar with records that must be kept (Unit membership/programmes/finance)
- Participate as much as possible in District/Area meetings and projects
- Agree to the organisational policy on volunteering along with any other relevant policies and guidelines and implement them to the best of your ability
- Respect confidentiality
- Respect the rights of others in the organisation
- Be reliable, honest and mindful of the Irish Girl Guides' good name
- Treat everyone you meet when representing IGG with courtesy and respect
- Communicate information appropriately

## **Responsibilities of the Irish Girl Guides**

IGG has the responsibility to

- Ensure the volunteering experience is a rewarding one
- Listen to volunteers
- Ensure equal access and not to discriminate
- Define clear, meaningful roles for volunteers
- Have policies and procedures for volunteers
- Provide all necessary information to volunteers
- Provide training where necessary
- Recognise the roles volunteers play and contributions they make

- Provide appropriate insurance cover
- Inform volunteers of all relevant organisational policies and protocol
- Provide adequate support and supervision where necessary
- Reimburse out-of-pocket expenses incurred in their role as volunteers
- Provide a safe working environment
- Have a system of rewarding its volunteers

## **Volunteer Recruitment and Selection**

### **Screening process for new Leaders**

Adults wishing to become Leaders in the Irish Girl Guides must complete a screening process.

The local Commissioner/Regional Development Officer will meet with the applicant to ensure that she:

- has the personal character to set a high standard of behaviour
- understands the aims and methods of IGG and intends to adhere loyally to its rules and policy
- is willing to undertake further training and work towards the attainment of her warrant
- has a particular interest in girls of the relevant Branch age
- is willing to undergo the IGG screening process

The prospective new Leader will be provided with a “*Leader Pack*” containing all the forms and booklets appropriate to the IGG screening procedure for Leaders. The Commissioner / Regional Development Officer will then explain the steps of this confidential process.

While the process is underway, applicants may help with a Unit strictly under the supervision of a warranted IGG Leader. Until the screening process is complete, applicants must never have unsupervised access to children. Please note that prospective Leaders cannot attend a residential event until they have successfully completed the full screening process including Garda Vetting.

## **Volunteer Management Procedures**

Volunteer Leaders and other volunteers in a Guiding locality work with and are managed by the District Commissioner, who is a qualified Leader of adults and a volunteer. The District Commissioner works with the District Team and is responsible to the Area Commissioner who, in turn, is responsible to the Regional Commissioner, both of whom are also volunteers.

The Regional Commissioner is supported by, and is responsible to, the Chief Commissioner and the Executive Committee. The Regional Commissioner leads a team that is responsible for the growth of Guiding in the geographical locality and ensures the management of Guiding in that region. She is supported in this work by the Regional Development Officer who is a paid staff member.

Whatever volunteer role is taken on, the person concerned will get support from their Regional Development Officer (RDO), local Commissioner, other Units in their District and other Leaders in their Unit.

Volunteers who work on national committees are managed by the Chairmen of those committees and work alongside staff and volunteers.

## **Volunteer Training Development**

### Overview of training for the volunteer Leader

Training is essential for an IGG Leader to gain knowledge, understanding and skill in their particular role in Guiding and to carry out their responsibilities more effectively. Any event designed to help adult members learn is described as training. Such events can be called many different names e.g. workshops, trainings, seminars, conferences. They can be given by Trainers, Commissioners, Outdoor Advisors, experienced Leaders, outside experts (e.g. first aid) or a combination working together as a team.

The District Commissioner should ensure that the new Leader receives relevant training; should monitor her progress towards getting a warrant; and should ensure that she is happy and has adequate support.

There are many training events organised throughout the year. It is important that volunteer Leaders attend trainings when they are available to get new ideas, learn new skills and keep up to date. Sometimes the most important part is the tea/coffee break when they have a chance to swop ideas, have queries answered and have problems discussed.

Each of the seven IGG Regions organises a Regional Conference each year, usually in October / November. Trainings are also organised at District/Area/Regional level. A National Conference is usually held every two years.

All national training events are advertised in IGG's Leaders' magazine, Trefoil News. Ladybird, Brownie and Guide Branch hold a joint training day/weekend (Branch Day/Weekend) usually in February and Senior Branch often run an event alongside this, taking in some of the sessions. Senior Branch Committee also hold a weekend event in November every year and a Lightweight Training around Easter. The Adult Training and Outdoors Committee (ATOC) and International Committee also hold events which are advertised in Trefoil News and promoted in the Regions.

Experienced Leaders can be asked to help with fireside trainings of new Leaders or to give demonstration meetings in their Units. Leaders may also be asked to help at other trainings by presenting an item on a subject with which they are especially familiar or have a basic interest in. Such a Leader may then be invited or may volunteer to start working towards her Basic Trainer Bar.

### Warrant

A warrant is a licence to be a recognised Leader in IGG. There are two stages in the process of gaining a warrant – Assistant Leader Warrant and Leader Warrant. You must be an enrolled member of IGG to hold a warrant. The scheme is based on a period of service with a Unit, and everything the volunteer does as a Leader in her Unit and as a member of her District forms part of her pre-warrant training.

The same requirements for the Assistant Leader warrant apply to Ladybird, Brownie, Guide and Senior Branch Leaders. It is anticipated that this warrant will be gained after a few months of involvement. The Assistant Leader's warrant is subject to periodic review.

To qualify for the Leader warrant, a longer period of commitment is required, more experience must be built up and the ability to accept full responsibility for all aspects of the Unit's activities must be demonstrated. The Leader must also be recommended by her Commissioner after a review has been carried out.



The requirements for both the Assistant Leader and the full Leader Warrants are outlined in “*Welcome to Guiding*”. This free publication also includes notes to help with the completion of the various parts and a chart for ticking off the relevant parts as they are achieved.

When the warrant certificate is issued, this warrant is held by the adult Leader and is transferable from one Unit to another. If a change of Branch is involved, the parts specific for the new Branch must be completed.

Further details on training opportunities for the warranted Leader, training opportunities for Commissioners and FETAC certification within IGG are outlined in the “*Handbook of the Irish Girl Guides*” which is also available on IGG’s website [www.irishgirlguides.ie](http://www.irishgirlguides.ie)

## **Volunteer Supervision and Evaluation**

As outlined under the heading of Volunteer Management Procedures, whichever role a volunteer takes on, the person concerned will receive support from their Regional Development Officer (RDO), local Commissioner, other Units in their District and other Leaders in their Unit.

As a volunteer-led organisation, IGG operates on a basis of trust. At the same time, it is run in a professional manner and the “*Code of Ethics and Good Practice*” embodies the values and principles that underpin the organisation. In general, there is an implicit understanding that difficulties should be sorted out informally and confidentially.

However, if a member’s conduct or performance is considered to be in breach of IGG’s standards, policies and/or procedures, it may be necessary to invoke formal procedures and take disciplinary action.

Please refer to the section on “Procedures to be followed in the event that it may be necessary to take disciplinary action against a member of IGG” in *Irish Girl Guides Code of Ethics and Good Practice* for details of these.

## **Volunteer Support and Recognition**

Volunteers with the Irish Girl Guides

- are respected and valued
- are trained and supported in whichever volunteer role they have chosen to take on
- are covered by IGG's insurance policies while at Guiding events and activities
- are reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses incurred in their role as volunteers
- are recognised and rewarded for their commitment
- are encouraged to take an active interest in the future of the organisation

Volunteers' service is recognised in a variety of ways ranging from informal thank you letters to the presentation of badges and certificates acknowledging length of service.

## **Policy review and evaluation**

IGG's Volunteer policy should be reviewed every two years.