



IRFU (Ulster Branch) Volunteer Policy

'Join the team'



'Remember that just as rugby is a team sport on the pitch it is also a team sport off the pitch.'

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Approved by:

Name: 

Position: HONORARY SECRETARY

Date: 29/4/2014

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Position: DOMESTIC GAIN CHAIRMAN

Date: 29/4/2014

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Section 1 Welcome

Whether you are a current or potential volunteer, a staff member or someone with an interest in volunteering welcome to the **IRFU (Ulster Branch) Volunteer Policy – ‘Join the team’**.

We believe that it is vital that volunteers feel valued and supported in whatever role they choose to become involved and we aim to achieve this through the development, application and regular review of good practice, policies and procedures for involving volunteers.

Section 2 Introduction

1. Background of the IRFU (Ulster Branch)

The IRFU (Ulster Branch) is 1 of 4 primary branches of the IRFU. It is responsible for the provision of Rugby Union within the Province of Ulster. This includes promoting, fostering, developing and administering all aspects of the game in line with the core values of the IRFU – **Respect, Integrity, Inclusivity, Fun and Excellence**¹.

In addition to Ulster Rugby, the Ravens, the academy and youth teams there are over 50 affiliated clubs, and approximately 180 affiliated schools and further education colleges. This equates to about 31,000 registered players across all ages and well over 1000 volunteers.

2. Definition of a Rugby Volunteer

A rugby volunteer is an individual who freely chooses to commit time and energy to the furtherance of the game of rugby without expectation of payment. They bring a diversity of skills, experience and knowledge and carry out a wide range of roles contributing to the success of rugby from grassroots to governance.

3. Join the Team – become part of our family

Volunteerism is the foundation on which rugby is built. Many of our activities and affiliated clubs could not survive without the involvement of passionate and dedicated volunteers who bring together a vast range of knowledge, skills and experience for the good of the game. Therefore we want to continue to attract and involve a diverse range of individuals who will act as champions for the dynamic and evolving game of rugby in Ulster.

¹ From Grassroots to International Success: One Island, One Passion, One Goal – Strategic Plan for Irish Rugby 2013-2017

We recognise that volunteers are vital in upholding the core values of the IRFU and we place great importance on the contribution that they make to all areas of our sport. We understand that people have different motivations for volunteering and we hope to offer the opportunity for individuals to develop personally and professionally by creating a wide variety of innovative and rewarding volunteering activities.

Our aim is to become a world class rugby region and we believe that volunteers are crucial to helping us achieve this. By joining the team we hope that they will enjoy a world class experience as well as feeling that they belong to our rugby family.

4. Scope of the Policy

While the IRFU (Ulster Branch) recognises the considerable contribution that volunteers make to the game of rugby in Ulster and has put in place a range of support mechanisms for those volunteers, the scope of this policy is solely with regard to volunteers who are specifically recruited and directly managed by the IRFU (Ulster Branch).

Section 3 Principles

This Volunteering Policy is underpinned by the following principles.

The IRFU (Ulster Branch):

- 1.** values the distinct contribution that volunteers can make and will not use volunteers to replace staff.
- 2.** recognises that volunteers are an important part of our organisation, bringing a unique perspective to our work that should complement and enrich the work done by staff.
- 3.** believes that volunteering within our organisation should be a beneficial experience for the volunteer and the organisation.
- 4.** aims to ensure that staff and volunteers across the organisation work positively with volunteers and where appropriate, actively seek to involve them in their work.
- 5.** acknowledges that volunteers want to participate in satisfying roles where they may develop personally and professionally depending on their motivations for volunteering.
- 6.** recognises that volunteers are giving freely of their time and that they deserve high quality support and management to ensure that they have a positive volunteering experience.
- 7.** values difference and strives to create a diverse and inclusive volunteer base.

Section 4 Policy Statements

The following statements outline the organisation's position on key aspects of volunteering. More detailed information can be found within specific policies and procedures referred to in the statements.

1. Recruitment & Role Matching

The IRFU (Ulster Branch) is committed to equality of opportunity and believes that volunteering should be open to all regardless of age, gender, disability, ethnic origin, race, colour, nationality, parental or marital status, religious belief, class or social background, sexual preference, political belief or offending background (providing that the offending background is not relevant to the role and does not create a risk to vulnerable groups).

While volunteer opportunities will be promoted mainly online the IRFU (Ulster Branch) will endeavour to promote opportunities in other ways so as to ensure that they are accessible to all members of the community.

A clear role description will be developed for every new volunteer role so that prospective volunteers can find out about the role and the key tasks involved. As part of this we will highlight the type of skills and experience that we feel would enable someone to carry out the role successfully.

Prospective volunteers will be asked to complete a registration form and participate in a selection process appropriate to the role for which they have registered. This enables IRFU (Ulster Branch) to try to match volunteers to a role that is suitable for them. All volunteers who are successfully matched to a role (other than turn up, take part volunteering activities) will be offered the role subject to the receipt of satisfactory references and where appropriate, a satisfactory Access NI check. All personal information received from a volunteer, or about a volunteer, will be used in a confidential manner to help us to manage our volunteer recruitment and role matching processes.

Individuals who are not successfully matched to a role are welcome to ask for feedback. If there is a more suitable role available, or subsequently developed, the IRFU (Ulster Branch) will try to make sure people are aware of it should they wish to register.

For further information, refer to:

- Equality Policy
- Volunteer Recruitment & Role Matching Policy and Procedures

2. Involving Young Volunteers

The IRFU (Ulster Branch) is keen to promote volunteering amongst young people (under 18 years old). However we want to ensure that all young people who want to volunteer are matched to appropriate roles for their age and level of maturity and that they have the full support of their parents. As such we will actively seek parental consent for all young people who have registered for an appropriate volunteer opportunity.

For further information, refer to:

- Volunteer Recruitment & Role Matching Policy and Procedures

3. Starting the Volunteering Relationship the Right Way

The IRFU (Ulster Branch) hopes that all volunteers have a great experience when volunteering with us, right from the start. All volunteers will receive induction training appropriate to their role to welcome them to the organisation, their role and any relevant practical arrangements.

For all roles (other than turn up, take part volunteering activities) volunteers will receive a Volunteer Agreement. This sets out what volunteers can expect from the IRFU (Ulster Branch) in terms of support and development as well as what we want from volunteers as ambassadors of our organisation and our sport. The agreement is binding in honour only and is not intended to be a legally binding contract of employment. The agreement may be cancelled at any time at the discretion of either the volunteer or the organisation.

Every volunteer will have a named support person whose contact details will be contained within the Volunteer Agreement. If a volunteer is involved in more than one role they will receive an agreement for each. It is important that the support person and the volunteer are in contact on a regular basis and any questions or concerns that they may have are raised with their support person as soon as possible.

All volunteers will have a settling in period that is appropriate to their role, the nature of the tasks involved and the frequency of their involvement. This enables both the volunteer and the IRFU (Ulster Branch) to decide if the role is suitable for them. During the settling in period volunteers may be given more direct support to help build their confidence or understanding of the role. At the end of the settling in period there will be a review at which point there are a number of options: the volunteering relationship will continue; the volunteering relationship will continue with changes; the volunteer may be signposted to a more suitable role; or the volunteering relationship may end.

For further information, refer to:

- Volunteer Management Policy and Procedures
- Volunteer Problem Solving Policy and Procedures

4. Insurance

The IRFU (Ulster Branch) takes its responsibility to protect volunteers from harm seriously. The IRFU has in place Public/Products Liability and Employers Liability which automatically extends to incorporate volunteers acting on behalf of the IRFU and Branches while carrying out their role or engaged in another authorised volunteering activity as requested by a member of the IRFU (Ulster Branch) staff.

However for roles in strength, conditioning and fitness it is advisable, due to the nature of the tasks involved, for volunteers to arrange their own professional indemnity and personal accident insurance.

In addition, anyone using their own car in connection with their voluntary work must inform their insurance company to ensure adequate and continued cover.

As the organisation does not insure personal possessions against loss or damage volunteers are advised to leave all valuables at home or in a secure place, ensuring that they keep any necessary personal items on them at all times.

5. Health and Safety

The IRFU (Ulster Branch) is committed to safe and responsible volunteer practices. During the planning stage of recruitment all new volunteer roles will be assessed to identify any possible risks to the volunteer, organisation or anyone who will be working with the volunteer as part of their role as well as looking at any mitigating factors or ways in which the risks can be reduced.

As part of induction, volunteers will be made aware of and have access to the organisation's health and safety policy. Further to this they will be encouraged to think about how to look after their own health and safety as well as that of other people they may come into contact with during the course of their volunteering.

For further information, refer to:

- Volunteer Recruitment & Role Matching Policy and Procedures
- Volunteer Management Policy and Procedures
- Health & Safety Policy

6. Expenses and Equipment

The IRFU (Ulster Branch) recognises that the reimbursement of reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred by volunteers carrying out their role is important. While we strive to apply this consistently across the organisation to enable equal access to volunteering not all areas of volunteer involvement are in a position to reimburse expenses at this time. We aim to address this as budgets are reviewed and new funding streams applied for.

The availability of expenses, the type of expenses that will be reimbursed and the process to be followed to claim them will be explained to volunteers in various ways including the role description, induction and supervision. All claims for expenses must be submitted to the Volunteer Manager or named support person in an agreed timescale using a claim form with receipts evidencing expenditure included.

The IRFU (Ulster Branch) will endeavour to provide appropriate facilities, equipment and resources to enable volunteers to carry out their role.

For further information, refer to:

- Volunteer Recruitment & Role Matching Policy and Procedures
- Volunteer Management Policy and Procedures

7. Training and Development

The IRFU (Ulster Branch) is committed to the ongoing development of highly skilled, motivated and knowledgeable volunteers with the confidence to grow in their role or to move to different roles within the organisation, should they wish.

As such, volunteers will be made aware of and have access to all of the organisation's relevant policies, including those relating to volunteering, health and safety, child welfare/safeguarding and equal opportunities. Where it is felt that further training in these or other role related areas is appropriate we will endeavour to arrange this in a timely manner.

For further information, refer to:

- Volunteer Management Policy and Procedures

8. Diversity and Equal Opportunities

The IRFU (Ulster Branch) recognises the value of creating diversity across the organisation including amongst its workforce, paid and voluntary. We understand that by involving people from different backgrounds we are likely to benefit from fresh ideas and approaches and be more inclusive to the whole community.

In support of our commitment to equality of opportunity in volunteering we are happy to discuss adaptations, where possible, to our volunteer roles that would enable people from under-represented groups to register for an opportunity. Anyone who wishes to discuss their individual circumstances should contact the Volunteer and Policy Development Officer.

For further information, refer to:

- Equality Policy
- Volunteer Recruitment & Role Matching Policy and Procedures

9. Raising the Profile of Volunteering

The IRFU (Ulster Branch) would like to be able to take photos/videos of volunteers 'in action' at various events and develop case studies about volunteer involvement. This will help to raise the profile of volunteering and the variety of work that the IRFU (Ulster Branch) undertakes. In order to do this, volunteers will receive a consent form and further information about how the photos/videos/case studies are likely to be used.

We hope that volunteers will be proud of their volunteering and keen to promote it. However we respect personal choice and if an individual is not happy to have their photo/video taken or to be involved in a case study, for whatever reason, we will do our best to ensure that this does not occur. It is important that a volunteer who feels this way takes personal responsibility for highlighting this to the IRFU (Ulster Branch) staff or photographers at events and does not intentionally put themselves in the position whereby they would be in a photograph that could then not be used e.g. where a volunteer group shot is requested.

For further information, refer to:

- Volunteer Recruitment & Role Matching Procedures
- Volunteer Management Procedures

10. Confidentiality

The relationship between volunteers and the IRFU (Ulster Branch) is deemed to be confidential in nature. This means that where volunteers may become aware of, as part of their role or incidentally, information that is regarded as confidential they must ensure that this is not disclosed to anyone who is not entitled to receive such information.

During induction, volunteers will be made aware of and have access to the organisation's position on confidentiality and what is covered under this.

The IRFU (Ulster Branch) takes seriously its responsibility to keep safe any personal information that it receives from a volunteer, or about a volunteer, at any stage during their relationship with us. All information received will be used in a confidential manner to help us to manage our volunteer recruitment, role matching and management processes as described in the volunteer registration form.

All staff involved in volunteer recruitment or management will be expected to adhere to developed standards regarding the storage, use and retention of volunteers' personal information.

For further information, refer to:

- Volunteer Recruitment & Role Matching Policy and Procedures
- Volunteer Management Policy and Procedures

11. Intellectual Property Rights

The IRFU (Ulster Branch) acknowledges that volunteers can bring great creativity to the organisation. For all original work produced by an individual during the course of their volunteering, their intellectual property rights are deemed to have been transferred to the organisation.

This means that all documents (any form of written word including emails), photos or videos created by a volunteer while carrying out their role remains the property of IRFU (Ulster Branch) and may not be used outside of this relationship by the volunteer without prior permission from the Volunteer Manager, named support person or Volunteer and Policy Development Officer. This is irrespective of whether or not the volunteer uses their own equipment or that provided by the organisation.

12. Supporting the Ongoing Volunteering Relationship

Every volunteer will have a named support person whose contact details will be contained within the Volunteer Agreement. This may be the same person who was named as the Volunteer Manager within the role description or it may be someone different. As many of our volunteering programmes are spread across the entire Province the Volunteer Manager will be the person with overall responsibility for the programme while the support person will ideally be someone who is based locally, and therefore more accessible, to the volunteer.

The support person will provide practical support and guidance and should be able to answer any questions that the volunteer has about the tasks involved in the role. The support person will arrange supervision sessions with the volunteer to discuss progress, recognition of achievements, changes to the role, and training needs as well as dealing with any problems or issues that may arise.

Supervision sessions may be done individually or as a group depending on the nature of the role or the issues involved.

We welcome feedback from volunteers about any aspect of their volunteering experience. While we hope that volunteers feel comfortable in expressing their views informally the IRFU (Ulster Branch) will also seek to gather formal feedback from volunteers in a variety of ways which may include, supervision, surveys, volunteer meetings and suggestion boards

For further information, refer to:

- Volunteer Management Policy and Procedures
- Volunteer Problem Solving Policy and Procedures

13. Problem Solving

We hope that any issues or concerns can be dealt with informally through the volunteer's support person. However if there is a complaint made about or by a volunteer we will take this seriously and take appropriate measures to resolve it. If it is deemed that the matter is not resolvable due to the nature of the complaint we may ask an individual to leave. If a criminal offence is suspected the matter is likely to be handed over to the police.

For further information, refer to:

- Volunteer Management Policy and Procedures
- Volunteer Problem Solving Policy and Procedures

14. Ending the Volunteering Relationship

We understand that the volunteering relationship may come to an end for a variety of reasons. In some instances the role will have been time limited, the volunteer's personal circumstances may have changed or they may want to try something new and sometimes the relationship just doesn't work. However the relationship ends, we hope that volunteers enjoy their experience with the IRFU (Ulster Branch).

In most instances staff will be happy to provide references for volunteers for up to a year after the volunteering relationship has ended. Reference requests should be directed to the Volunteer Manager or named support person and they will be expected to adhere to developed standards for writing references for volunteers.

We would like to gain feedback at the end of a volunteering relationship so that we know what went well, what not so well and understand why the relationship has ended. This will help us to make improvements and to review our roles, policies and procedures for involving volunteers.

This feedback will be gathered in different ways depending on a number of factors including the role, number of volunteers involved and length of time volunteering. Volunteers are also welcome to provide feedback in a format that suits them, this should be addressed to the Volunteer and Policy Development Officer.

For further information, refer to:

- Volunteer Management Policy and Procedures