

DOWN SYNDROME IRELAND
POLICY ON
SAFEGAURDING CHILDREN &
VULNERABLE ADULTS



VOLUNTEER PACK

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HISTORY & OVERVIEW OF DOWN SYNDROME IRELAND

Down Syndrome Ireland (DSI) is a national charity supporting people with Down syndrome and their families.

Mission Statement:

DSI is dedicated to being the primary source of information and support to people with Down syndrome, their families and the professional community, working towards an improved quality of life for our members along with a respect and acceptance of people with Down syndrome as valued members of Irish Society.

Down Syndrome Ireland provides a nationally recognised voice for people with Down syndrome and their families. DSI provides information and advice, influences policy, raises public awareness and works towards the improvement of education and services for children and adults with Down syndrome.

Our Values

- **Non-judgemental:** DSI fosters a spirit of respect and understanding toward all the people we meet and with whom we work.
- **Person Centred:** DSI places the needs of the person with Down syndrome at the centre of our work and delivers information, advice and support to the community connected by Down syndrome in a caring positive manner.
- **Accountable:** DSI is accountable to the community connected by Down syndrome and conducts the business of the organisation in an effective, non-discriminatory, transparent and equitable manner.
- **Collaborative:** DSI works actively with our local branch network and the professional community who are committed to furthering the understanding of Down syndrome.

- **Empowerment:** DSI believes in the empowerment of people with Down Syndrome at local, national and European level as a means of influencing the perceptions of Irish society towards Down Syndrome

DSI was founded in 1971 as a support group for parents and carers of people with Down syndrome. However, since then, the remit and profile of the organisation has evolved significantly. A professionally staffed national office has over the last decade developed alongside the organisation's voluntary committees.

The national office of DSI includes a team of specialists, a fundraising department and a members support / administration department. The DSI team provide both direct and indirect services to members, professionals and the wider public.

The team of specialists are referred to as the '*National Resource Team*' and comprise the following expert services:

- Counselling/ Psychotherapy/ Drama Therapy
- Early Intervention
- Education
- Independence
- Medical

DSI thanks you for deciding to become a volunteer and we look forward to your participation in the organisation.

FACTS ABOUT DOWN SYNDROME

What exactly is Down syndrome?

Down syndrome is a common congenital chromosomal anomaly. It is found worldwide.

Down syndrome occurs when there is one extra copy of chromosome 21 in the body.

- Down syndrome is present at birth
- The extra chromosome 21 material may affect the physical development and learning abilities of people with Down syndrome
- Down syndrome is a lifelong condition
- People with Down syndrome may share certain physical characteristics.
- Each child also inherits family traits and consequently can be more like their family than anybody else.
- Like any other child, children with Down syndrome vary in their abilities and achievements.

How many people in Ireland have Down syndrome?

It is estimated that there are approximately 7,000 people in Ireland with Down syndrome. One baby with Down syndrome is born out of every 546 births.

How should a person with Down syndrome be referred to?

DSI promote the use of person first language at all times.

When referring to an individual, always describe them as a person with Down syndrome. The correct terminology is capital “D” for Down and small “s” for syndrome e.g. *Joe Bloggs* is a person with Down syndrome.

References to “a Downs” / “Down syndrome person” are no longer in use.

What are the usual health effects of having Down syndrome?

Children with Down syndrome have increased risk of certain health issues:

- Congenital heart defects
- Susceptibility to infection
- Hearing, vision, thyroid and respiratory problems
- Obstructive digestive and neurological problems and leukemia

The life expectancy of persons with Down syndrome is increasing, thus, the importance of life-long living and learning needs to be supported.

DOWN SYNDROME IRELAND CODE OF CONDUCT BASICS

In order to support Down syndrome Ireland policy and procedures, it is necessary that the following code of conduct be applied as a minimum standard for all those who work with people with Down syndrome

- People with Down syndrome will be treated with courtesy, respect and dignity.
- Volunteers will always engage with people with Down syndrome in an open manner and care will be taken not to show favouritism.
- There will be an adequate ratio of volunteers to people with Down syndrome at all times. Volunteers should not work alone with people with Down syndrome.
- Care will be taken to ensure that when working with mixed gender groups, volunteers of mixed gender will work in pairs.
- Volunteers will not consume alcohol while having responsibility for or in the presence of people with Down syndrome in their care.
- The use of drugs or illegal substances by volunteers is strictly prohibited. Under no circumstances should volunteers give alcohol, tobacco or drugs to people with Down syndrome.
- Volunteers will not be permitted to use inappropriate language or make sexually suggestive comments either to each other or to people with Down syndrome.
- Volunteers will not undertake any task of a personal nature with people with Down syndrome except in the case of medical necessity when the welfare of the person with Down syndrome depends on it.
- Volunteers will not give their personal details to people with Down syndrome.
- Personal details of people with Down syndrome will be held only by designated / lead volunteers.
- The right to privacy of people with Down syndrome will be respected at all times.
- Where DSI activity involves the use of computers, an email and internet policy will be put in place.
- Permission will be sought by parents/guardians for the taking and use of photographs.

- There will be a clearly defined structure in place for people with Down syndrome to raise any concerns.
- For any given volunteering event DSI will have a designated person assigned to whose immediate attention all concerns and or / complaints can be brought.
- The designated person will respond promptly to all child protection / vulnerable adult concerns and liase with the required authorities.
- All concerns, complaint will be followed through in a timely and efficient manner in accordance with guidelines.
- DSI have a specific code of conduct for all away trips including overnight stays, day trips and incentive events. This code of conduct will be made known to all volunteers, people with Down syndrome and parents/guardians.
- A code of conduct including an anti-bullying policy will be drawn up in direct consultation with people with Down syndrome.

CODE OF CONDUCT BASICS FOR PEOPLE WITH DOWN SYNDROME

It is important that people with Down syndrome know the limits and boundaries appropriate to their own behaviour and that of others. Therefore, a code of conduct specific to their own conduct must be drawn up in direct consultation with people with Down syndrome. Language that the group can comprehend must be used. DSI adhere to 'easy-to-read' guidelines. It is imperative that people with Down syndrome contribute to the formation of their own code of conduct.

Key Elements:

- People with Down syndrome will be aware of the code of conduct that volunteers must adhere to.
- The code should reflect the dignity and rights of each person with Down syndrome and it should encourage respectful behaviour.
- People with Down syndrome with respect the fact that volunteers will not work alone with them.
- People with Down syndrome will treat each other and their volunteers with courtesy, respect and dignity.
- People with Down syndrome will not be permitted to consume alcohol while participating in DSI activities.
- Inappropriate language or sexually suggestive comments will not be permitted.
- Physical contact will be of an appropriate nature at all times.
- A strict anti-bullying policy will apply at all times. The following whilst not exhaustive is a list of some examples of bullying:
 - Name Calling
 - Fighting/kicking/punching
 - Making suggestive / sarcastic comments / Intimidation
 - Threatening
 - Ignoring / Excluding
 - Damaging property
 - Spreading rumours
 - Sending abusive text messages

Role Description

DSI welcomes volunteers from all walks of life and backgrounds. Volunteers are not required to have any previous experience in volunteering or indeed in the area of disability. To become a volunteer in the organisation candidates are required to be over the age of eighteen.

DSI is committed to ensuring that every volunteer is involved in meaningful activity while volunteering for the organisation. In order to achieve this, it is important that each volunteer is clear about their role and what is expected of them. Therefore every volunteer will be given a role description at induction stage. This document will also outline the activities they will be involved in and the specific tasks entailed in the activities. Where appropriate the role description may also include the times and locations of the activity. The organisation aims to ensure that the volunteer's specific skills, expertise and interests are utilized and matched to the work of the association in each region. As the work of the organisation develops, volunteers may be asked to become involved in new activities. Volunteers may also identify activities/ programmes that they would like to become involved in as their knowledge and insight into the organisation grows. Both the volunteer and a designated member of staff will agree changes in a person's role description.

Rights of DSI Volunteers

- To be given meaningful work to do
- To know what is expected from them
- To be offered appropriate training
- To be appreciated and have their voluntary contribution recognised
- To receive supervision and support
- To benefit from their contribution
- To know who to go to if they have a concern
- To be reimbursed for approved out-of-pocket expenses incurred when volunteering
- To learn from their experience
- To be made aware of policies and procedures relevant to their role
- To be treated fairly and not to experience discrimination

- To have safe working conditions, including insurance cover
- To be informed about and be given the opportunity to play an active part in the organisation as a whole
- To be clear about the volunteer recruitment process and how decisions are made
- To be able to say no and to leave their voluntary role without feeling guilty.

Volunteer support, training and development

Volunteers are not paid for their involvement with DSI but the organisation is committed to providing support and development opportunities for all volunteers. DSI will provide opportunities to receive training during your time with the organisation. Some of the training will be mandatory, including induction training, while other additional training opportunities will be optional.

Induction training

Every volunteer will be provided with induction training. Induction training will provide you with an opportunity to learn more about the organisation and familiarise you with your volunteer role. Induction training will include:

- History and Structure of DSI
- Principles and Values of DSI
- Disability Awareness Training
- General Health and Safety
- Introduction to DSI policies and procedures

During induction training you will have the opportunity to meet members of DSI, fellow volunteers and staff.

Optional training

Opportunities for optional training may also be provided during your time as a volunteer. These training opportunities may be provided for volunteers only or in conjunction with staff. As well as being applicable to your volunteer role, this training may be beneficial to other roles in your life e.g. work, education etc.

One-to-one support

A nominated member of staff will facilitate one-to-one support sessions. Support will be provided to a volunteer at least once in the first six weeks of starting and at least once every six months after that. Both the volunteer and staff member can arrange support sessions more regularly if they require. These 'support sessions' will provide an opportunity for reflection and feedback between the volunteer and the support person. It is an opportunity to reflect on your learning, to clarify any areas of concern and to assist you in making decisions relevant to your role. If necessary, amendments to your role can be agreed through this process. It is important to note that this process will provide support and develop your skills.

General Information

Health and safety

According to health and safety legislation, DSI has a duty of care to its volunteers by ensuring a safe and healthy working environment. All volunteers have an individual responsibility to protect their own health and safety, as well as that of their colleagues and people with Down syndrome. Detailed information on aspects of health and safety are outlined in DSI's Health and Safety Statement.

Accidents/Incidents

All accidents or incidents that occurs in the course of your volunteering must be reported to a DSI member of staff immediately, and an accident /incident form filled in. These can be obtained from the DSI office manager.

Confidentiality

During the course of your volunteering you may have access to confidential information regarding DSI and its members. This information must not be disclosed to third parties during or after volunteering for the organisation. Any breach of confidentiality will be considered gross misconduct and may result in you being asked to discontinue volunteering. See appendix one for the full DSI confidentiality statement.

Welfare Concerns

If you have any cause for concern regarding the welfare of a person you are supporting, you must report it to a DSI member of staff. This concern may be based on a person's comments or behaviours, an observation or on information you have received from a third party. DSI's aim is to support the person in difficulty, as well as the staff and volunteer working with this person. Reporting your concerns to staff provides the organisation with the opportunity for appropriate support to be put in place.

Mobile Phones

Volunteers who have access to a mobile phone are requested to limit making and receiving personal calls to break times.

Smoking

Smoking is prohibited in all DSI premises and vehicles. Smoking is allowed only in approved external locations, during approved rest periods or breaks.

Alcohol

Volunteers must adhere to the DSI code of conduct in regard to the consumption of alcohol.

Speaking to the media

Before speaking to the media on behalf of DSI, volunteers must obtain permission from their respective member of DSI staff to whom they report. The volunteer must act in good faith and not engage in any action or statement that may significantly affect or obligate DSI.

Retaining personal records

DSI retains information on all service users, volunteers and staff. The information retained relating to volunteers is as follows; your application form, information relating to your application, references, Garda clearance, medical information [where relevant], record of training you have undertaken including induction training, and any other information relevant to your volunteering with DSI. You are entitled to view any information retained and to ask for amendments to be made where it is inaccurate. All information retained by DSI is done in accordance with Data Protection legislation. It is important that you notify a member of DSI staff of any changes in personal address or contact details. Your file will be accorded the same confidentiality as staff files.

Sexual harassment

DSI strongly disapproves of and will not tolerate acts of bullying and sexual harassment.

All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to ensure that bullying/ harassment does not occur at any level. DSI have outlined guidelines for any individual who feels that they have been harassed; these guidelines can be obtained from the office manager.

Insurance

DSI volunteers are covered by DSI insurance while engaged in activities sanctioned by the organisation. People using their own cars to provide transport for work purposes may in some instances have to come to an arrangement with their own car insurance company. A certificate of insurance and letter indemnifying DSI should be provided to the office a manager before using a privately owned car in the course of volunteering work. This should not attract any additional premium.

Expenses

A volunteer may receive out-of-pocket and other expenses. Expenses are refunded conditional on being approved in advance and being vouched for later by way of receipts, and formally submitted on a DSI claim form. An expenses form can be obtained from the office manager.

Equal Opportunities

DSI works to promote equal opportunities for people with Down syndrome, staff, volunteers and the general public. Everyone will be treated equally regardless of; gender, race, age, religion, marital /family status, traveler community, sexual orientation or disability.

Office Manager Contact Details:

Ms. Christina Riordan,
Office Manager
Down Syndrome Ireland

Email: christina@downsyndrome.ie
Phone: 01 4266515

CEASING VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT

The transitory nature of volunteering implies that a person's ability to volunteer and other commitments may change over time. It is advisable that the organisation is notified of such a situation in as timely a manner of possible should alternative arrangements need to be made in order to fill the respective role.

Once you have been a volunteer for a period of time, DSI will provide you with a written reference of your participation with the organisation.

Before you finish, DSI would appreciate it if you would provide some feedback on your experience with the organisation.

GRIEVANCE AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

DSI is committed to ensuring that a person's involvement with the organisation is a positive and pleasant experience. This applies to people with disabilities, volunteers and staff. DSI therefore asks all volunteers to commit to our code of conduct, which promotes a positive environment. Where volunteers operate outside this code of conduct, they may be asked to discontinue volunteering for the organisation.

The following behaviours are considered to be in breach of the Code of Conduct:

- Theft
- Corruption
- Misuse of telephone, email, internet and other facilities
- Viewing or downloading of pornography
- Criminal conduct
- Breach of confidentiality
- Assault, verbal abuse or threatening behaviour of service users, fellow volunteers, staff or the general public
- Abuse of alcohol and drugs
- Non-adherence to health, safety and hygiene standards
- All forms of bullying, sexual abuse and/or harassment and discrimination
- Lack of respect for people with disabilities, fellow volunteers, staff and the general public
- Adherence to good practice in regard to reliability and commitment
- Gross negligence.

DSI wants you to enjoy volunteering with the organisation. However, if problems arise in the interest of fairness DSI operates a grievance and disciplinary procedure. This procedure allows for the fair and speedy resolution of difficulties that may arise during a volunteer's involvement with DSI.

If DSI considers that a volunteer is unsuitable for their volunteer role based on their performance, conduct or non-adherence to DSI policy and procedures, it retains the right to ask the person to discontinue volunteering.

Details of DSI grievance and disciplinary policy and procedures are available from the office manager.

Appendix 1: Confidentiality Statement

Down Syndrome Ireland recognises the importance of ensuring peoples right to confidentiality is committed to keeping confidential all personal information about people with Down syndrome and their families. The only exception may be when welfare concerns arise in relation to a person with Down syndrome. In this situation information will be shared on a need to know basis in the best interest of the person with Down syndrome as follows:

- Information will only be forwarded on a 'need to know' basis in order to safeguard the child or adult.
- Giving information to appropriately designated persons and/or statutory authorities for the protection of the person with Down syndrome is not a breach of confidentiality.
- Primary carers have the right to know if personal information is being shared and a report is being made to the HSE unless doing so could put the person with Down syndrome at further risk.

Appendix 2: Recruitment Procedure

The procedures of recruiting personnel will include:

- To ensure that no person would be deemed to constitute 'risk' will be given a post of responsibility. Applicants will be required to complete the following forms:
 1. Application Form
 2. Declaration Form
 3. Garda Vetting Form

- Applicants will provide proof of identification by presentation of a photo I.D
- Applicants will submit the names of two referees who can provide references (not family members).
- An interview will take place by two members of DSI staff, one to be a member of the national resource team.

Appendix 3:

Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Working with Children

Code of Ethics and Good Practice

This code refers to all children enrolled in events run by Down Syndrome Ireland. In line with the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, a “child” is anyone under the age of 18 years.

Why we need a Code of Ethics and Good Practice

This code is drafted to emphasise the welfare of children in our care is of the utmost importance. As a family support organisation we must:

- Ensure that we provide a safe environment for children in our care and protect them from harm of all kinds
- Recognise that children have rights as individuals and responsibility to treat each other with dignity and respect at all times
- Have a policy in place for recruiting, training and screening potential volunteers and staff members who work with children
- Have in place a procedure for responding to accidents and complaints
- Have in place a procedure for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of abuse
- Have in place a procedure for the support of volunteers and staff members working with children

Good Practice for Leaders

- Make sure you are familiar with the Code of Ethics of Down Syndrome Ireland and Volunteer Policy
- Avail of Staff and Volunteer training and Children First training provided by Down syndrome Ireland.
- Be aware of your responsibilities both towards the children and other adults with whom you are working

- Take time to respond to the children in your care and listen to them
- Treat children with dignity and respect at all times
- There will be an adequate ratio of volunteers to children at all times.
- Volunteers will always engage with children in an open manner and care should be taken not to show favouritism
- Keep an accident and incident book if necessary
- Personal details of children will be kept by designated/lead volunteers
- The right to privacy of children should be respected at all times
- Permission will be sought from parents/guardians for the taking and use of photographs
- For any given volunteering event DSI will have a designated person assigned to whose immediate attention all concerns and/or complaints can be brought.
- The designated person will respond promptly to all child protection concerns and liaise with the relevant authorities.
- All concerns will be followed through in a timely and efficient manner in accordance with the guidelines.

Things You Should Not Do

- Don't allow rough horseplay or inappropriate physical contact
- Don't do things of a personal nature that the children can do for themselves
- Don't promise to keep secrets
- Don't permit bullying either physical or verbal
- Don't show favouritism
- Don't be left alone with a child, away from others. Where this is not possible, leave a door open and inform another Volunteer that the child will be alone in the room with you, and tell her/him the purpose of your one to one meeting. If possible give an idea of the length of time you expect to be together.
- Don't give your telephone number to children in your care
- Don't take a child alone in a car, however short the journey
- Don't take individual children to your own home
- Don't consume alcohol while having responsibility for or in the presence of children in their care
- Don't use inappropriate language to each other or to children in your care
- Don't use drugs or illegal substances as it is strictly prohibited.

Appendix 4: Recommended Supervision Ratios

Down Syndrome Ireland recommends the following ratios, however, local circumstances, the ages of the children, the experience of the volunteers and the staff should be taken into consideration. Safety, ability/disability and the nature of the activities being undertaken may require that these ratios be considerably lower. The national resource will advise in these circumstances.

Age	Volunteer: person with Down syndrome ratio
0-2 years	1:3
2-3 years	1:4
3-7 years	1:6
8 years +	1:8

Appendix 5:

DSI Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults Trainers

Ms. May Gannon,

Counsellor / Drama Therapist / Psychotherapist,
National Resource Team,
Down Syndrome Ireland

Email: mais@eircom.net

Phone: 087 960 7939

Ms. Gráinne Murphy,

Independence Officer / Speech & Language Therapist,
National Resource Team,
Down Syndrome Ireland

Email: grainne@downsyndrome.ie

Phone: 087 253 5809

Appendix 6:
Accident/Incident Report Form

Injured Person

Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

Activity _____

Person in Charge _____

Circumstances

Date and Time _____

Location _____

Other Adults present _____

Full description of Accident _____

Nature of injuries suffered _____

Name and Address of Doctor/Dentist attended if applicable _____

Medical Expenses Incurred _____

Declaration

I/We declare the foregoing particulars to be true in every respect.

Signature _____

Date _____

Print Name _____

POLICY SIGN-OFF SHEET

This policy was prepared by:			
Name (Print):	Gráinne Murphy		
Signature:		Date:	21-07-09
Position:	National Resource Team		

This policy was approved by:			
Name (Print):	May Gannon		
Signature:		Date:	21-07-09
Position:	National Resource Team		

Policy Review:

This document was reviewed on the 9th May 2011 and the following changes made:

- Substitutions: The revised DSI mission statement (2010) replaced the original statement
- Additions: 'Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Working with Children' as prepared by May Gannon, National Resource Team was added to the appendices.
- Deletions: NIL
- Corrections: NIL

Name (Print):	Gráinne Murphy		
Signature:		Date:	09-05-11
Position:	National Resource Team		

Name (Print):	May Gannon		
Signature:		Date:	09-05-11
Position:	National Resource Team		

IMPLEMENTATION:
SAFEGAURDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

I have reviewed and approved the policy named above, with changes, additions, deletions and corrections agreed with the authors

I hereby approve the implementation of this policy with immediate effect.

Name (Print):	Pat Clarke		
Signature:		Date:	
Position:	Chief Executive		

Appendix 7:
DECLARATION

It is each volunteer's responsibility to adhere to the standards, guiding principles, and policies & procedures as outlined. We ask volunteers to sign the following declaration that they will abide by these and the code of conduct during their time as a volunteer with DSI.

Part A to be retained in booklet

Part B to be detached and returned to DSI.*

PART A To be retained by Volunteer

I hereby declare that I have read, understand and agree to abide by the standards, guiding principles and Policies and Procedures outlined in the DSI policy on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

Name (please print):

.....

Address:

.....
.....
.....

Date of joining DSI

..... / /

Signed:

Dated: / /

DECLARATION

It is each volunteer's responsibility to adhere to the standards, guiding principles, and policies & procedures as outlined. We ask volunteers to sign the following declaration that they will abide by these and the code of conduct during their time as a volunteer with DSI.

Part A to be retained in booklet

Part B to be detached and returned to DSI.*

PART B To be returned to DSI

I hereby declare that I have read, understand and agree to abide by the standards, guiding principles and policies and procedures outlined in the DSI policy on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

Name (please print):

.....

Address:

.....

.....

.....

Date of joining DSI

..... / /

Signed:

Dated: / /