



# East Belfast Community Development Agency

## VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



This handbook is designed to give you as the prospective volunteer useful and relevant information about our service. It's a way of making sure that we provide a good service but that you also receive information to help you find a suitable placement organisation and have a positive all round volunteering experience.

## **Table of Contents**

		<b>Page No.</b>
<b>1.0</b>	Welcome	<b>3-4</b>
<b>2.0</b>	Volunteer Recruitment and Selection	<b>5</b>
	<b>2.1</b> <i>Why we have a Recruitment and Selection procedure</i>	<b>5</b>
	<b>2.2</b> <i>Equal Opportunities Statement</i>	<b>5</b>
	<b>2.3</b> <i>Advertising</i>	<b>5</b>
	<b>2.4</b> <i>Commitment</i>	<b>5</b>
	<b>2.5</b> <i>Application</i>	<b>5</b>
	<b>2.6</b> <i>Interview and Placements</i>	<b>5</b>
<b>3.0</b>	Training and Support	<b>6</b>
	<b>3.1</b> <i>Our commitment to you</i>	<b>6</b>
	<b>3.2</b> <i>Training</i>	<b>6</b>
	<b>3.3</b> <i>Volunteer support</i>	<b>7</b>
<b>4.0</b>	Quotes from Previous Volunteers	<b>8</b>
<b>5.0</b>	Volunteer Expenses	<b>9</b>
	<b>5.1</b> <i>Our Policy relating to Volunteer Expenses</i>	<b>9</b>
<b>6.0</b>	Insurance and Checks	<b>10</b>
	<b>6 1</b> <i>Complaints and Procedures</i>	<b>10</b>
<b>7.0</b>	Problems with volunteer work / Withdrawing as a Volunteer	<b>11</b>
	<b>7.1</b> <i>Problems with Volunteer Work</i>	<b>11</b>
	<b>7.2</b> <i>Withdrawing as a Volunteer</i>	<b>11</b>
<b>8.0</b>	Conclusion	<b>12</b>
<b>9.0</b>	Acknowledgements	<b>12-13</b>

## **1.0 Welcome**

Welcome to the EBCDA Handbook on Volunteering. This information pack has been designed for all prospective volunteers who are recruited for placement within the East Belfast Area by the project. It outlines who we are, why the project was established and what we do. The Handbook also provides information on your role as a recruited Volunteer, guidelines for volunteers, training and support provided and a copy of our policies.

While we have endeavoured to include all the information and advice required by our Volunteers it is by no means an exhaustive source of information. All Volunteers are therefore welcome to, and indeed encouraged to approach the Volunteer Development Worker for clarification on any point or if they require any further information and advice.

The mission of EBCDA is as follows

**East Belfast Community Development Agency  
exists to provide resources, support and  
capacity building programs for community groups  
that are based on partnership,  
equal opportunities and sustainable outcomes.**

The mission is defined by recognition of the changing environment of East Belfast and of the strengths of EBCDA. This mission will be conducted within the framework of a set of common values that inform its work and we envisage that this will mean:

- Greater awareness that the principles of community development are fundamental to successful regeneration in East Belfast.
- All those living in areas of recognised disadvantage having equal access to a wide range of development opportunities.
- All relevant agencies and organisations are involved in promoting community participation and consultation in developing policy and practice.
- The availability of comprehensive capacity building programmes for communities in East Belfast.

### **Background of EBCDA**

Established in 1970 as East Belfast Youth Council and then in 1973 as East Belfast Community Council. The name was changed again in 1989 to East Belfast Community Development Centre then in 1996 we merged with East Belfast Development Agency, who had been promoting and supporting community businesses, to form East Belfast Community Development Agency seeking to develop the best of the work of those two organisations. Despite the name changes over the years the Agency has always had the support and development of the community in East Belfast at the forefront of all the work it has done.

In 2010 East Belfast Community Development Agency will celebrate 40 years of supporting the community sector in East Belfast. Today, EBCDA exists in a very different world to what it did 40 years ago, but we are confident that our experiences to date and our skills and knowledge base will help move us and the community sector in East Belfast, into a bright and successful future

## **Funding**

This project is funded by the Belfast Regeneration Office.

## **Location**

We are based at  
269 Albertbridge Road  
Belfast BT5 4PY  
Telephone 028 90 451512 / [info@ebcda.org](mailto:info@ebcda.org) / [www.ebcda.org](http://www.ebcda.org)

## **Management and Staff**

EBCDA has 10 full time staff. Michael Briggs Director , is the Volunteer Development Worker's (VDW) line manager.

## **Confidentiality Statement**

The Project will treat all information with the strictest confidence. It will only be shared with the project, funders and the placement organisation in relation to the placement applied for. It will not be passed onto third parties unless written permission is given by the volunteer. The information given will also be stored in a secure location with access only by the VDW and line manager when required.



## **2.0 Volunteer Recruitment and Selection**

### **2.1 Why we have a Recruitment and Selection procedure**

Our recruitment and selection procedures are designed not to alienate potential volunteers but to ensure that the quality of service provided by EBCDA. While our recruitment and selection procedures may at first seem rather daunting they are not intended to deter you. The recruitment and selection procedures also protect you the potential volunteer, to ensure that you are selected for a volunteering position that best suits your needs, skills and abilities.

If you have any difficulties with the application process or indeed any element of the Recruitment and Selection procedure please do not hesitate to contact the Volunteer Development Worker on 028 90 451512.

### **2.2 Equal Opportunities Statement**

EBCDA operates an Equal Opportunities Policy and aim to recruit volunteers from all sections of the community. We believe that everyone has the right to volunteer and should have equal access to positive volunteering opportunities without experiencing unfair discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, ethnic origin, disability or class. Volunteers' placements will be made solely on the basis of skills, interests and abilities.

EBCDA has no upper age limit for volunteers. We appreciate the contribution that older volunteers make as long as there is an agreement between the volunteer and Coordinator that they are fit and able to do their voluntary work. The organisation also welcomes younger volunteers who are aged **18** years and over.

### **2.3 Advertising**

EBCDA will actively advertise to recruit volunteers through the Volunteer Bureau, local community groups, churches, appropriate agencies, community newsletters, posters, presentations, events and the media to insure that a diversity of volunteers is achieved within the project.

### **2.4 Commitment**

It would be beneficial to the project if all volunteers are willing to make a commitment to the organisations they are recruited to. We do, however, recognise that some volunteer roles will require less or more commitment than others. These will be agreed with the volunteer and the organisation they are placed in.

You have approached EBCDA to volunteer so we would ask you to think carefully about how much time you have to give on a regular basis i.e. weekly and on a long-term basis. Be realistic and take into account any other commitments you might have. If you can only commit yourself for a short period of time, say so, as this may affect the type of work you are able to undertake and also helps us talk to the organisation you are recruited to about realistic times you can commit to.

We would ask that you start your voluntary work slowly e.g. one day or one half day per week initially. When you have settled in and find that you have extra time to devote you can always approach your organisation to extend your voluntary work.

### **2.5 Application**

Everyone who is interested in being placed by EBCDA in a volunteer placement will be asked to complete a short application form. You will be asked by the organisation you are placed in for character references and Access NI checks will be carried out if you are working with children or vulnerable adults. This enables the organisation to have a better understanding of you as a person and is not designed to be intrusive but to help both sides to decide on the suitability of both the placement and you as a potential volunteer to fulfil that role.

### **2.6 Informal Meeting and Placements**

The Volunteer Development Worker will have an informal meeting with all potential volunteers. The decision to place or not to place a volunteer will be based on that meeting. If the Volunteer Development Worker has no suitable placements within the local East Belfast area they will try and place you elsewhere in an area of your choice.

## **3.0 Training and Support for Volunteers**

### **3.1 Our Commitment to You**

EBCDA is committed to developing, promoting and supporting volunteering in East Belfast. We appreciate the time, effort and commitment that volunteers give to local Community Projects and their contribution to the community in East Belfast.

### **3.2 Training**

To ensure the quality of EBCDA placements and in order to fully equip Volunteers with the necessary skills, knowledge and training, the Volunteer Development Worker will endeavour to keep in touch with the volunteer throughout the length of their placement and bring to their attention any training which may benefit their role in their organisations.

EBCDA will regularly review the provision of ongoing training and further training for volunteers. All volunteers are encouraged to provide feedback on training provided and to suggest additional training, which they feel may be of help.



### **3.3 Volunteer Support**

EBCDA will provide regular opportunities for all our volunteers to meet with the Volunteer Development Worker. The following activities are planned in order to achieve this:

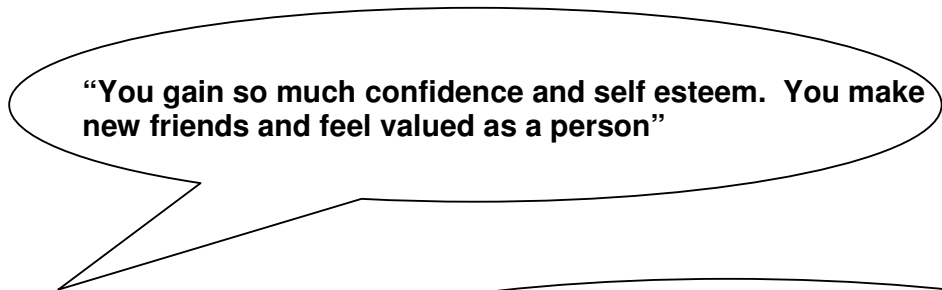
- Regular one-to-one meetings with the Volunteer Development Worker
- Placement Visits

These will be carried out if appropriate for the volunteer.

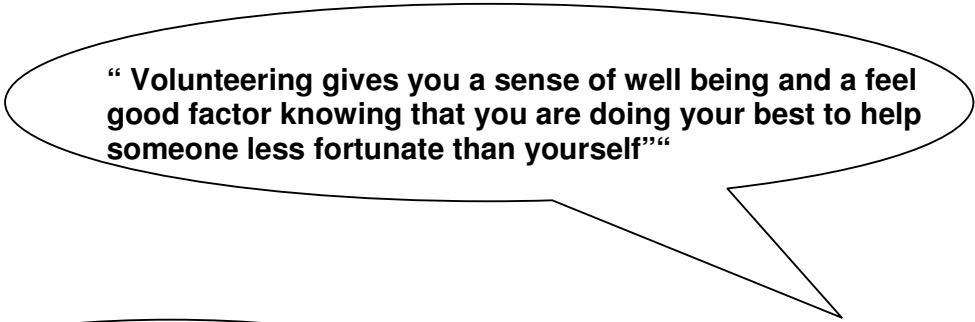
All volunteers are encouraged to suggest other ways in which EBCDA can improve support given to volunteers. We recognise that every volunteer is different and we will tailor support to meet your needs. If you ever have any problems in regard to your voluntary work, no matter how small or trivial they may seem, remember you can always ring or call in to speak to the Volunteer Development Worker. Their role is to advise you, and to help make your volunteering experience more worthwhile and rewarding. If the appropriate staff member is not available either leave a message or ask to speak to the Receptionist.

#### **4.0 Quotes from Previous Volunteers**

These quotes are from real life volunteers who are currently volunteering in local groups and projects in the East Belfast Area. They go to show how volunteering can be a very positive experience and worthwhile getting involved with.

A large, horizontal speech bubble with a tail pointing towards the bottom left. It contains a quote in bold black text.

**“You gain so much confidence and self esteem. You make new friends and feel valued as a person”**

A large, horizontal speech bubble with a tail pointing towards the bottom right. It contains a quote in bold black text.

**“ Volunteering gives you a sense of well being and a feel good factor knowing that you are doing your best to help someone less fortunate than yourself”**

A smaller, horizontal speech bubble with a tail pointing towards the bottom left. It contains a quote in bold black text.

**“Helping your Community”**

**We will help you to have a positive experience of volunteering as these volunteers are continuing to have in their placements.**



## **5.0 Volunteer Expenses**

### **5.1 Our policy relating to volunteer expenses**

EDCDA will endeavour to encourage placement organisations to pay volunteers expenses. EBCDA however **will not** pay any expenses as the placement organisation will be responsible for any payment made in relation to expenses incurred during the volunteer placement.

#### ***Out-of-pocket expenses***

All claims for volunteering expenses should be made to the placement organisation, but for your information here is a definition of out-of-pocket expenses. They can include:

- Travel to and from the place of volunteering (public transport or the most economic form of transport must be used).
- Travel that has been agreed during your voluntary work.
- Meals taken while volunteering.
- Care of dependants during volunteering including childcare.
- Postage, phone calls etc.

Your placement organisation will inform you of their policies regarding out of pocket expenses and what is available to you from their organisation when you volunteer for them.

#### ***A brief guide to Volunteering expenses and Social Security Benefits***

The rule of thumb is that:

- Volunteering will not effect a person's entitlement to benefits as long as they are only receiving the reimbursement of genuine out-of-pocket expenses.
- There is no limit to the amount of hours a person can volunteer when they are receiving benefits as long as they are still deemed to be available for work should the DSS want to contact them.

Volunteers who receive benefits should talk to their local Social Security Office or the East Belfast Independent Advice Centre (Tel. 9096 3003) before they begin volunteering to find out exactly what impact volunteering will have on their benefits, as each individual case will be different. EBCDA will provide all volunteers with the necessary information to do this and ensure that they have written documentation to back up what they are saying.

## ***A brief guide to Volunteering expenses and taxation***

There is no tax liability for genuine out-of-pocket expenses. The Inland Revenue advises that expenses must be reimbursed at a reasonable level and that an expense form is completed and receipts submitted for all claims.

## **6.0 Insurance and Checks**

### ***Public liability and personal accident Insurance***

While carrying out voluntary work on behalf of the placement organisations project, Volunteers are not covered by EBCDA insurance in respect of public liability and personal accident. However their placement organisation will be responsible for the volunteers insurance in regards to public liability and personal accident. Volunteers should be aware of the organisations policies and procedures regarding insurance.

### ***Motor insurance***

EBCDA will not be responsible for any car insurance. **It is the responsibility of the volunteer to inform their insurance company of the use of their car for volunteering purposes.** The placement organisation will inform the volunteer of their policy with regards to car usage and out of pocket expenses.

### ***Vetting and Barring Scheme***

New legislation will be introduced in July 2010 which will require all volunteers wishing to work with Children and vulnerable adults to be registered with AccessNI and the Information Safeguarding Authority (ISA). EBCDA will be responsible for helping volunteers become registered with the scheme. **Please note Volunteers cannot start their role until they have successfully been checked and registered as to start the role before this is a criminal offence.** Until then normal checks via Accessni will be carried out on volunteers wanting to do a role which involves Children or vulnerable adults.

## **6.1 Complaints and Grievances**

We hope that our volunteers will not have any cause to complain. It is however useful to know that if you have a problem the following steps should be taken:

1. Any problem should be raised in the first instance with the Volunteer Development Worker. This meeting should take place as soon as possible and certainly within **one week** of a request for such a meeting.
2. If the outcome of this meeting is unsatisfactory the matter may be taken to the Line Manager.
3. If the outcome is still unsatisfactory then a final approach may be made to the EBCDA Committee and their decision is **final** on the problem being dealt with.

## **7.0 Problems with Volunteer work / Withdrawing as a volunteer**

### **7.1 Problems with volunteer work**

Volunteers who constantly have problems in relation to completing their work and with aspects of their behaviour will be asked to meet with the Volunteer Development Worker, where the problems they are having can be discussed with a view to helping the Volunteer improving their role. If the problem cannot be satisfactorily resolved and should the problems continue, the Volunteer Development Worker will meet again with the volunteer and also with the Director to find out why there has been no improvement in work/behaviour.

If after an agreed period, the problems haven't been resolved a final meeting will be called between the Volunteer Development Worker and the Director who will make a decision on the appropriate action to be taken. The action decided upon will then be explained to the volunteer. A letter will be sent to the volunteer, in writing, within seven days of the meeting taking place to confirm the outcome of the meeting.

The exception to this is when it is proven that a volunteer has been involved in gross misconduct, in this instance the volunteer will be asked to leave immediately. A letter explaining the reasons for dismissal will be sent to the volunteer within seven days. The following are considered as gross misconduct:

- Stealing, (including unauthorised removal or possession or misuse of property or that of our clients, volunteers or staff);
- Alcohol or substance abuse;
- Violence or threats of violence;
- Health and safety offences causing serious injury or which endangers lives;
- Serious breaches of volunteer guidelines.

Any appeal should be sent in writing to EBCDA committee.

### **7.2 Withdrawing as a Volunteer**

Every volunteer has the right to withdraw from their role of volunteer. Anyone no longer wishing to volunteer will be invited for an informal chat with the Volunteer Development Worker and the placement organisation. This will enable us to gain valuable feedback from the volunteer, to address any problems that may have motivated the resignation, or to identify ways in which volunteer services could be improved. Those volunteers who have volunteered regularly for a period of five months or more will be given a written reference if requested.

## **8.0 Conclusion**

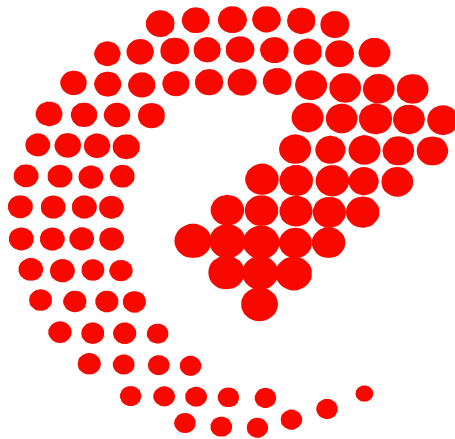
We hope this handbook has made a few things clearer for you. If you have any queries about the content please contact the Volunteer Development Worker on **028 90 451512**. We hope you enjoy your volunteering and remember you are a valuable resource to local community organisations.

Thank you for showing an interest in the project and we look forward to having you working along side us.

## **9.0 Acknowledgements**

EBCDA would like to thank the following organisations for their help and for the information, which they provided for this Volunteer Handbook:

- *The Volunteer Development Agency*
- *Voluntary Services Belfast*



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