



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK 2021



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A Very Warm Welcome To You!

Thank you for choosing to volunteer at the London Irish Centre (LIC).

Your commitment, time and enthusiasm are hugely appreciated. Volunteering remains central to the ethos of the LIC and the delivery of many of our services. You make a huge difference to what we can do and the quality of services we provide. Thank you for getting involved.

You are also our representatives in the local community to promote Irish community and culture, letting people know that we are here and what we can do for them. We aim to make sure that those who give up their time to support our work feel valued, useful, and proud to be part of the LIC.

This handbook can be used as a reference throughout your time volunteering with us. And of course, LIC staff are always available to help and advise.

Thank you once again for getting involved and volunteering with the LIC.

Paul Knowles
CEO



About The London Irish Centre



Vision

Our vision is to be the **Irish Heart of London**. We are a warm, welcoming, Irish organisation in a global city. Proud of our past, but taking a creative, modern approach to the future.

Our Mission

Our mission is to empower and enrich lives through Irish community and culture. We do this through excellent services, a high-quality culture programme, and welcoming you to our iconic home in Camden Square.

Values

Our organisational values are to be welcoming, compassionate, inclusive, creative, community-centred and sustainable. These values provide guidance and sit across all areas and levels of our work.

1 Welcoming:
Offer a warm, friendly Irish welcome to all

2 Compassionate:
Bring kindness and care to everyone we work with

3 Inclusive:
Celebrate diversity in Irish culture, heritage and identities, and in the wider community we serve

4 Creative:
Listen to, cultivate, and explore new ideas and solutions

5 Community-centred:
Keep community service and connections at the heart of our work

6 Sustainable:
Support environmental and organisational sustainability

What We Do

Often big cities present personal challenges; loneliness, lack of sense of community or logistical hurdles can make it difficult to know where to go or who to turn to. Ireland is regularly referred to as the land of a thousand welcomes, and here at the London Irish Centre we aim to bring that welcoming spirit to everything we do.

The LIC has served the Irish community in London since it was first established in 1954 and we continue to offer a range of services to people within the Irish community, some of whom have attended the Centre for many years. Our heritage is important to us, but we are also focused on present and future needs.

Aligned to our core values, the LIC is sensitive and responsive to the needs of all people, and we want to extend our services to other communities as part of an inclusive, multicultural approach with the aim of building resilient and cohesive neighbourhoods.



“I was very struck by the appreciation and gratitude of people when delivering to them, particularly on special occasions like Christmas and Easter”

What It Means To Be A Volunteer

Volunteers play an integral role in the smooth delivery of our services and work across the whole organisation.

All our volunteers are vital to our service delivery and we welcome volunteers from a variety of professions and backgrounds with a wide-ranging level of skills. We aim to match your commitment as a volunteer by working towards an environment of mutual respect between all parties, which recognises the invaluable contribution our volunteers make to the work of the LIC.

In order to do this, we have created an environment where we aim to listen to you, hear your points of view and, where practicable, make changes that will allow us to remain a dynamic organisation for the attraction of volunteers.

What Is A Volunteer?

A volunteer is anyone who, without compensation or expectation of compensation, performs a task at the direction of and on behalf of the LIC under their own free will. Volunteers can be involved in every level of the organisation.



Why Do We Involve Volunteers?

- ✓ To assist us to accomplish our mission
- ✓ To increase our involvement with the local community
- ✓ To enhance connections within our community
- ✓ To benefit from the skills and experience of our volunteers
- ✓ To offer volunteers new skills and experiences
- ✓ For volunteers to become advocates for LIC in local communities
- ✓ To offer an opportunity for people to give back to the community

The Amazing Work of Our Volunteers

Volunteers are an integral part of delivering a wide range of services to our community. The LIC service delivery stats below provide you with an insight into the difference and impact volunteers can have when assisting LIC staff deliver our services across a twelve-month period.



203
volunteers



4,583
hours given by our
volunteers



250,000
people viewed more than
70 LIC events online



Over 5,000
meals delivered to those
in need and struggling
financially



4,341
face to face advice sessions
were provide by our advice
services



£363,596
in essential benefits
claimed with LIC staff
assistance



70
befriending pairs created
to reduce loneliness and
isolation



Over 3,000
client check-in calls



7,200
more Irish books available
to the public in the Library

Why Volunteer?

Whether it is to make new friends, gain new skills, share expertise, or retain a connection with the Irish community, people volunteer with us for many reasons.

Benefits Of Volunteering At The LIC

- ✓ Meet likeminded people
- ✓ Learn about and/or retain a connection to Irish community and culture
- ✓ Share your skills and expertise
- ✓ Develop new and existing skills such as: being part of a team and contributing to your local community
- ✓ Flexible volunteering, with weekday, weekend and some evening opportunities
- ✓ Gain a behind the scenes experience of working at the LIC

Expectations

At the LIC we believe that volunteering is a two-way process. We are grateful for the time and support that you are providing the LIC but equally we want this to be a fulfilling and enjoyable experience for you.



"Meeting Mary after chatting for the last few months was such an amazing feeling. I feel like I've known her for years and she is now like a family member to me. We have developed such a gorgeous friendship and age never ever mattered or played a factor! We both share so much in common and keep each other going with our stories and experiences! We both got to exchange our favourite gifts and it brought me so much joy being able to see her smile when she saw me!"

While Volunteering With Us You Will:

- ✓ Receive a role description, induction and training appropriate to your role
- ✓ Be assigned a line manager who is your LIC staff point of contact for your role
- ✓ Read and sign our volunteer agreement which includes a description of the arrangement between the LIC and you in relation to your voluntary role
- ✓ Complete tasks as agreed in your volunteer role description
- ✓ Ask if unsure about something or what to do to stay safe whilst volunteering
- ✓ Meet time and other commitments as agreed but when unable to do so, provide reasonable notice so another volunteer may fulfil your role responsibilities
- ✓ Be able to change your mind or decline a volunteering activity without feeling pressured
- ✓ Contact the volunteer manager with any concerns or issues you feel you cannot raise with your line manager
- ✓ Follow and comply with the policies and procedures of the LIC

"I've lived in London 35 years and have always been single and I've kept my worries/concerns to myself. I didn't hear about the London Irish Centre until a few years ago, but since I've got involved, I'm much more at ease and I know there's a support network for me and people who'll be there if I want to talk about my worries"



Our Policies And Procedures

As a volunteer, you need to be aware of, understand and comply with our policies. This is to ensure that volunteers, staff and service users are kept safe and treated in accordance with the law and our charity's ethos. All policies and procedures can be found within the Volunteer Hub located at londonirishcentre.org/volunteer

1. Volunteering Policy

This policy sets out the principles for voluntary involvement at the LIC and forms the foundation for good volunteering management practice across the organisation. It will continue to be kept under annual review to ensure that it remains a live document; appropriate to the needs of LIC and its volunteers, and in line with relevant legislation, good practice advice and case law.

2. Health and Safety Policy

This policy should act as a guide to how to conduct yourself on the LIC site, as well as highlighting key aspects of our Health and Safety Policy which are relevant to your volunteer role.

3. Data Protection Policy & Internal Data Privacy Policy

These policies outline key aspects of the LIC approach to managing personal data. To learn more about our privacy policy visit londonirishcentre.org/privacy-policy/

4. Social Media Policy

The LIC encourages interaction with our social media channels, its followers, and other organisations from our volunteers. This policy refers to all digital media channels, Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat and emerging channels.

5. Expenses Policy

This policy outlines how expenses may be claimed by volunteers.

6. Virtual Events Policy

COVID-19 has made online events more popular than ever – from a health perspective, they are the safest way to gather while COVID-19 transmission remains a risk and whilst the UK government

“I love being part of the LIC. It gives me so much connection to home and I love the warm welcome and friendly volunteers. It makes me feel less homesick and gives me a sense of fulfillment”

guidelines for social distancing remain in place. However, there are still risks associated with a virtual event that warrant your consideration. This policy outlines key points to note for volunteers when assisting LIC staff with virtual events.

7. Problem Solving Policy

At the LIC we value and respect our volunteers. To ensure volunteers are treated fairly and consistently should a problem arise this policy outlines our problem-solving procedure.

8. Safeguarding Policy

The LIC is committed to ensuring that vulnerable people who use the centre's services are not abused and that working practices minimise the risk of such abuse. This policy outlines what to do if you feel that someone is being treated unfairly or if someone confides in you that they are being hurt or threatened.



Volunteering FAQs

What should I do if I am ill or cannot fulfil my volunteer role?

Please contact your line manager asap (ideally a minimum 24 hours' notice) so they can organise cover for your role responsibilities.

How can I make comments or suggestions about the LIC?

You can speak with volunteer manager at any time, and you can also contact info@londonirishcentre.org and you will be connected with the relevant LIC employee.

Where can I find information about LIC services?

Details for [all services](#) and how to access are included on the LIC website, londonirishcentre.org

Where can I find volunteer policies and the volunteer agreement?

Details for all policies are available with the volunteer hub on the LIC website, londonirishcentre.org/volunteer

Is it possible to hold more than one volunteer roles at LIC?

Yes, it is, please speak with the volunteer manager.

Where should I log my volunteer hours?

Login to your account on betterimpact.com within your profile, click on the 'Hours' tab.

Why do I need to log my volunteer hours?

LIC staff will use volunteer hours as part of the information gathering process to apply for funding and government grants to ensure consistency and continuity of our services.

What do I do if I am not happy in my role?

Often some adjustments can be made which will improve the situation for you. Talk to you line manager first. If that does not help, then speak to the volunteer manager.

How do I register to become a Volunteer?

All LIC volunteers and contacts are required to register on betterimpact.com This website is a volunteer contact management system helping volunteer managers in non-profits, charities and governmental organizations manage their volunteer information and data. As a volunteer, you will be asked to create an account which will enable you to log your volunteer hours, receive news, new role alerts and other volunteer announcements from the LIC.

Some Do's And Don'ts For Volunteers

Do think about why you want to volunteer.

Do adhere to all government pandemic guidelines regarding masks and social distancing.

Do make sure you know who you are accountable to and who you can go to for advice.

Do use this opportunity to find out as much as you can about LIC; you are one of our main advocates as a volunteer.

Do keep to the arrangements you have made as part of your volunteer role. If you cannot keep an appointment or commitment, please do let LIC staff know as soon as possible.

Do enjoy your time volunteering with us and tell us how we can make it better.



Don't over commit yourself.

Don't discuss personal details of any sort outside your volunteering role; confidentiality is important to us all.

Don't keep worries or concerns to yourself. Speak to your line manager or volunteer manager. We are here to help!

Don't accept money as payment from someone you have helped while volunteering. Explain that they can [donate](#) to the LIC if they wish to do so.

Don't leave volunteering without telling anyone first. If you don't feel that volunteering is providing the experience you want, speak to your line manager or volunteer manager; they may be able to find a solution.

What We Do

The LIC has served the Irish community in London since it was first established in 1954 and we continue to offer a range of services to people within the Irish community. Our heritage is important to us, but we are also focused on present and future needs.

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Click below to find out more about the services we offer at the London Irish Centre

Information & Advice Service

Health & Wellbeing

Culture & Heritage

Legal Support

Hardship Grants

Digital Inclusion

Befriending Service

Education

Community Fridge

O'Donovan Library

The Shop

Social Groups

Find out more about our services by visiting www.londonirishcentre.org/our-services

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