



# Volunteer Policy

January 2009

## Mission Statement of NAYD

*NAYD is the development organisation for youth drama and youth theatre in Ireland. Established in 1980, NAYD supports youth drama in practice and policy and supports the sustained development of youth theatres. NAYD advocates the inherent value and the unique relationship between young people and theatre as an artform.*

## Policy Statement

We recognize that in order to achieve our goals we need to involve volunteers in our work too.

We regard volunteers as a valuable resource and encourage them to get involved at all levels of the organisation and within all appropriate activities. We aim to support volunteers to the best of our abilities and to act quickly and fairly if any difficulties arise.

NAYD involves volunteers in the running of the organisation and in programmes as it values and understands the unique and invaluable role that volunteers play and the experience and expertise they bring to the work. This document lays out a set of guidelines for those engaged in volunteering on a day-to-day basis within the organisation as well as those involved in the governance and running of the organisation. A separate Board Induction document also exists and clearly outlines the role and responsibilities of individual Board members.

## Procedural Guidelines

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on all aspects of volunteering within NAYD. It does not constitute a binding contract. It supplements other NAYD policies and procedures, as well as our mission statement and our handbook.

## Responsibility

The NAYD Director is responsible for ensuring that the policy and procedures in this document are implemented efficiently and effectively. All other staff and volunteers (including the voluntary Board of Directors) are expected to facilitate this process.

## **Eligibility**

NAYD will consider involving anyone as a volunteer. Individuals must, however, be able to demonstrate a commitment to the aims of the organisation and may only be placed if their needs as volunteers match the needs of the organisation.

## **Relationship with Paid Staff**

Volunteers are appointed to enhance the capacity of paid staff. Clear roles should be established between paid staff and volunteers to foster mutually beneficial and complementary relationships.

## **Working Conditions**

Volunteers are treated as full-members of the NAYD team. They are treated as equally and fairly as paid staff and are included in the organisations functions and decision-making processes wherever practical. Volunteers are provided with appropriate work sites and have access to the space, equipment and facilities necessary to volunteer effectively and comfortably.

## **Working Times**

Working times are negotiated between NAYD and the volunteer and are as flexible as the tasks allow. Voluntary time commitment is never expected to match that of full-time paid staff, but unscheduled absences can create organisational problems. When expecting to be absent, a volunteer should inform NAYD as soon as possible, so that alternative arrangements can be made.

## **Appropriate behaviour**

Volunteers are expected to work within the policies and procedures of NAYD and adhere to its ethos.

## **Representation of NAYD**

Volunteers must seek prior approval from NAYD before undertaking anything that might affect the organisation. This includes, but is not limited to, statements to the press, joint initiatives with other bodies and agreements involving financial or contractual obligations.

## **Confidentiality**

NAYD respects the volunteers right to privacy and confidentiality. In turn, volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of privileged information to which they are exposed to while volunteering within NAYD.

## **Service**

Any voluntary service is at the discretion of NAYD. The organisation, may at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate a volunteer's relationships with the organisation. Similarly, volunteers may at any time and for any reason, decide to terminate their relationship with NAYD. Notice of such decisions should be communicated at the earliest opportunity, preferably in writing.

## **Role descriptions**

Like paid staff, volunteers require a clear and accurate description of the tasks and responsibilities they are expected to undertake. It is vital that any potential volunteers understand the specialist nature of an organisation such as NAYD in terms of practice and in the responsibilities of working with young people. Prior to any volunteer assignment or recruitment effort, a role description must be developed for each voluntary opportunity. This must include a title of the volunteering role, starting and finishing dates, hours and place of work, name of supervisor and tasks to be undertaken. If appropriate, a brief person specification may also be drawn up. A copy of this should be given to the volunteer prior to commencement of the work and should be used in any review and evaluation.

## **Recruitment and Selection of volunteers**

For specific roles and projects, volunteers may be recruited and asked to submit applications. Applications will be short-listed where appropriate and selected candidates will be asked to attend for an informal chat to assess their interest and suitability. All unsuccessful applicants are thanked for applying and encouraged to re-apply for future volunteering opportunities.

## **Checks for suitability**

References are always taken up. Other checks such as Garda Vetting will also be carried out. Volunteers will be told in advance of the intention to make checks. If they refuse permission and cannot provide an acceptable reason, they will not be considered.

## **Induction**

All volunteers receive induction when they begin voluntary work with NAYD. This consists of a general introduction to the organisation as well as specific orientation on the purposes and requirements of the volunteering role.

## **Lines of communication**

Lines of communication should operate in both directions and should exist formally and informally. Volunteers must have access to all appropriate materials and information relevant to their task and role. Volunteers must be consulted on all decisions that would substantially affect their volunteering conditions.

## **Supervision**

Each volunteer must have a clearly identified supervisor who is responsible for the day-to-day management of that volunteer.

## **Dismissal**

Volunteers who do not adhere to the organisations procedures or who fail to perform their volunteer assignments satisfactorily may be subject to dismissal. No volunteer's involvement will be terminated in writing until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with NAYD. Grounds for dismissal include, but are not limited to, the following: gross misconduct, being under the influence of drugs/alcohol, theft, misuse of materials and/or equipment, breaches of confidentiality, failure to comply with NAYD policies and procedures and failure to complete duties satisfactorily.

## **Concerns ad Grievances**

If volunteers are not satisfied that issues relating to their volunteering are being handled appropriately, they are entitled to have their concerns reviewed by the Board of NAYD.

## **Support**

NAYD endeavours to provide the support necessary to encourage and empower volunteers to make a meaningful contribution and gain significant benefits from their voluntary work.

## **Recognition**

Volunteers provide a unique service to NAYD, the benefits of which are difficult to quantify. It is essential that their efforts are recognized and rewarded. NAYD staff are responsible for thanking all volunteers informally on a regular basis for the valuable contribution they make to the organisation.

## **Expenses**

Volunteers give their time and skills free of charge so it is essential that NAYD offers to reimburse any out-of-pocket expenses they may incur in the course of undertaking voluntary work for the organisation.

## **Insurance**

Insurance is provided by NAYD to cover all volunteers working on behalf and at the direction of the organisation.