



**Belong To** LGBTQ+  
Youth Ireland

## Volunteer Policy

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*Belong To LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland*

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## Revision History

<b>Revision</b>	<b>Date of Release</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Volunteer Policy v1.0	Dec 2017	Initial Release
Volunteer Policy v.1.1	Dec 2024	Review and updates

## 1. INTRODUCTION

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Belong To opened its doors as a youth service in 2003 to provide a safe space for LGBTQ+ young people to find support and acceptance. Thanks to our supporters, our staff team, our volunteers, our Board, our funders, our partners, and most importantly, the LGBTQ+ young people we work with, we have grown to become the leading national LGBTQ+ youth organisation in Ireland.

Since 2003, Belong To has grown from a youth project into a unique national services and advocacy organisation with and for LGBTQ+ children and young people. Youth services, which inform our research, education work, and a development approach, enable us to provide solution-based advocacy at an institutional and public level.

### Our Vision

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Our vision is a society where LGBTQ+ young people are equal, safe and thriving.

### Our Mission

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Our mission is to empower LGBTQ+ young people, through youth work, education, changing attitudes, and research.

### Our Values

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- **Welcoming**  
We are mindful of people's wellbeing and strive for our spaces and interactions to be joyful and fun while ensuring they are safe and respectful.
- **Trustworthy**  
We are transparent in our work, how we operate and in our governance.
- **Rooted in experience**  
We work as equals with LGBTQ+ young people. What we say and do is informed by their lives, experience, and the challenges they face.
- **Courageous**  
We challenge and speak out about the causes and effects of prejudice, discrimination, homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia on LGBTQ+ young people and what must change.

- **Inclusive and diverse**

We seek to create a sense of belonging and to reflect and include the diversity of LGBTQ+ young people, and are mindful of intersectionality. We work in community and solidarity for human rights and social justice.

- **Strategic**

We make deliberate choices about where we focus our work and energy to make maximum impact on where we lead and where we partner with others.

## **2. WHAT IS VOLUNTEERING?**

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Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, the environment, or individuals outside (or in addition to) one's immediate family. It is unpaid and undertaken freely and by choice.

## **3. VOLUNTEERING WITH BELONG TO**

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Belong To has welcomed volunteers since its beginnings in 2003. As the organisation has grown and expanded its activities, so too have the numbers of volunteers grown, and volunteers now provide invaluable support across most areas of the organisation.

Most volunteers who have offered their time and skills to Belong To have wanted to get involved in the community, learn new skills, give something back, and/or find new ways to challenge themselves.

Our Board of Directors is comprised of a team of expert volunteers with wide-ranging skills and experience in the areas of governance, finance, human resources, law, community activism, public relations, communications, advocacy, campaigning, fundraising, LGBTQ+ rights, equality, human rights, youth work, and child safeguarding. We also benefit from the skills and experience of further volunteers who sit as external members of our Board Committees.

Third level students on placement from youth work or similar study programmes have played a strong role in volunteering with the organisation. Young people in the service who train to be Peer Educators also play a pivotal role in facilitating the peer groups, as do our regular youth group volunteers who are crucial to Belong To being able to deliver high quality youth work in these groups.

Belong To is also supported by its corporate partners, whose staff regularly volunteer their time and share their expertise with Belong To in areas such as communications, ICT and data management.

Volunteering therefore plays a vital role in Belong To being able to deliver LGBTQ+ youth work and other services to LGBTQ+ young people throughout Ireland.

## **4. OUR VOLUNTEERS DATABASE**

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We maintain a database of everyone who volunteers with Belong To, and everyone who has expressed an interest in volunteering with Belong To. When volunteering opportunities are not available, those interested in volunteering with us can still sign up to join this database by filling out a form that outlines their skills, experience and areas of interest, and when relevant volunteering opportunities arise, we will contact suitable individuals in the database.

All data we capture is stored securely in line with our [Privacy Policy](#).

## **5. WHAT VOLUNTEERS CAN EXPECT FROM BELONG TO**

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### **To be valued**

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Volunteers are at the core of Belong To; they are highly valued and important to what we do. We have been involving volunteers since first established, to allow us to meet our aims and extend capacity to improve the lives of LGBTQ+ young people. Volunteers are involved at every level of the organisation in roles which complement but do not replace the work of paid staff. Staff and volunteers work in partnership to maximise Belong To's work. All staff are encouraged to consider the involvement of volunteers where this can bring new approaches and be effective in extending their capacity.

### **Diversity and Inclusivity**

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Belong To is committed to promoting equality and diversity, providing an inclusive and cooperative environment in which all individuals volunteering for, and working on behalf of, the organisation feel respected and able to give of their best. We are committed to providing equal access to quality volunteer opportunities. It is our objective to ensure you are volunteering in a place that is inclusive, safe and free from discrimination, bullying and harassment.

## **To be protected by Belong To's insurance policy**

As a volunteer, you are covered by Belong To's Employers Liability Insurance in accordance with the requirements of the Employers Liability (Compulsory Insurance Act). However, **there is no insurance cover for personal effects or personal possessions**. Belong To recommends that volunteers do not bring large sums of cash or any personal valuables with them.

Volunteers using their cars in connection with their volunteer role must inform their own insurance company to confirm adequate and continued cover.

## **To be recognised and appreciated**

Belong To is committed to recognising and showing appreciation to its volunteers, both formally and informally.

Belong To each year promotes Volunteers' Week (usually end of May). In addition, Belong To regularly nominates volunteers for external awards, both locally and nationally.

## **To be included**

Our volunteers are part of the Belong To team and, as such, are included in some team events throughout the year, such as the Christmas party. We also organise regular get togethers of volunteers, whether socially or as part of ongoing training.

## **To have a voice and be heard**

Belong To will seek your views on its work as well as on your volunteering and will keep you up to date with its activities. As a volunteer, Belong To is committed to listening to you and to taking your view into account when making decisions. We encourage informal consultation between volunteers and staff on a daily basis and you should speak to the Volunteer Coordinator in the first instance. You can also email us at [vm-volunteering@belongto.org](mailto:vm-volunteering@belongto.org).

Furthermore, Belong To formally consults with volunteers on matters of policy, its activities and the way in which the organisation is run at least annually.

## **Confidentiality and Privacy**

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In order to meet our duty of care to you as a volunteer and ensure we are continually providing a quality volunteer experience, Belong To maintain a personal file on each volunteer which includes: contact details and other relevant personal information; details of the application and selection process; agreements made; hours contributed; records of support and supervision activities; training undertaken and any complaints or grievances made or received. This information will be recorded in computerised records for use by relevant staff only. All such information is treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR.

For more information, see our [Privacy Policy](#).

## **6. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION**

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Belong To aims to appeal to a wide and diverse audience of potential volunteers through advertising in the LGBTQ+ community and various external arenas, such as Volunteer Ireland and Activelink. Corporate partners can also be targeted by directly emailing existing Belong To contacts in our database.

Sometimes we will seek volunteers for new opportunities from within our existing pool of interested individuals who have signed up to hear from us. Other times, we will issue public calls for volunteer opportunities that will follow a formal application and recruitment process. Which avenue we choose will depend on the nature of the opportunity and the needs of the organisation.

### **Advertisement of Volunteering Opportunities**

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Where Belong To opts for a formal public recruitment process, opportunities will normally be advertised with Volunteer Ireland, Activelink, GCN, on the Belong To website, and through Belong To's social media channels. A volunteer role description and application form will be made available.

### **Recruitment**

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The public recruitment process will involve an application form to be completed and emailed to Belong To, followed by formal interviews with clear criteria for selection outlined. This enables the organisation to best assess those applicants most suited to the role(s) available.



## **Reference Checks**

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Applicants for volunteer roles may be required to name and provide contact details for 2 referees who have agreed to be contacted by Belong To. Belong To will directly email referees to check that they agree with the applicant's suitability following successful interview.

## **Garda Vetting**

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Depending on the nature of the role, volunteers may be required to undergo Garda Vetting before commencing volunteering with the organisation. The Designated Liaison Officer will lead on the Garda Vetting process and will provide any necessary guidance to prospective volunteers.

## **7. INDUCTION TRAINING**

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Depending on the nature of the volunteering role – particularly whether it is short term or long term, or involves working directly with young people or not – you may be required to complete an induction programme. Our induction programme for volunteers is regularly reviewed and updated, but any induction is likely to include:

- The history, culture and structure of Belong To
- Health and Safety
- What is volunteering?
- What is Youth Work? – Theory and Practice
- Responsibilities of volunteers
- Expectations of volunteers
- Code of conduct
- Maintaining confidentiality
- Data protection
- Boundaries
- Social media
- Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults
- Children First training
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment Policy.

## **Youth Engagement Volunteer Handbook**

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For our Youth Engagement Volunteers, a Handbook has been prepared that will be provided during the induction process. This Handbook provides all the information our Youth Engagement Volunteers need about our youth

groups, our team culture, our codes of conduct, health and safety, and more.

## **8. TRIAL PERIOD**

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Following successful induction and Garda vetting, if required, there may be a trial period for new volunteers. This will depend on the nature and duration of the volunteering role. If a trial period applies, this will be made clear, as will the duration of the trial period.

During the trial period, a representative of Belong To will monitor suitability and performance, and will be available to discuss any issues that arise.

## **9. OTHER TRAINING**

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For those volunteering with Belong To long-term, training and development opportunities will be offered. Volunteers will be consulted to identify any skills gaps or specific trainings that they wish to pursue, and these will be explored subject to an assessment of cost, relevance and availability.

## **10. EXPENSES**

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There is no budget for the reimbursement of travel or other expenses, although where travel outside of Dublin is required for an event or activity, travel expenses would normally be factored into the budget for that event or activity so that volunteers are not out of pocket.

## **11. HEALTH AND SAFETY**

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Belong To prioritises the health and safety of all staff, volunteers, service users and visitors. During induction, all volunteers will be provided with a copy of the organisation's Health and Safety Policy and will receive basic health and safety training.

Where deemed appropriate, some volunteers may be requested to pursue further training in areas such as fire marshal training or first aid.

## **12. CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**

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All volunteers must sign a confidentiality agreement in order to protect the organisation and its service users.

## **13. VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT**

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Depending on the role, new volunteers may be asked to sign a Volunteer Agreement. This is not a contract, but the basis of understanding between the volunteer and Belong To.

This document will set out the expectations of both parties in relation to the time commitment, the duration of the role, attendance at training, and adherence to the organisation's policies and procedures.

## **14. ENDINGS AND EXIT INTERVIEWS**

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When a volunteer's role comes to an end, a representative of Belong To will seek to meet with them to conduct an exit interview. This will be an opportunity for the volunteer to provide any final feedback or suggestions before their time with the organisation ends.

Belong To will commit to providing a reference for volunteers, subject to satisfactory completion of their Volunteer Agreement.