

Background

Volunteer Now is the lead organisation for promoting and supporting volunteering across Northern Ireland. We build recognition for volunteering and celebrate the contribution volunteers make. We provide access to opportunities and encourage people to volunteer. We also deliver some volunteer led services in the community. We are funded by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust to deliver a volunteer transport service for looked after children and young people in Ards and North Down. We are funded by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust to deliver volunteer befriending, transport and shopping services for older isolated people living in Belfast. We are a resource for volunteer involving organisations providing support on involving volunteers, governance and safeguarding. Volunteer Now is contracted by the Strategic Planning and Performance Group, DoH to deliver adult safeguarding training across the region. We sit on the Interim Adult Protection Board Training and Development Subgroup and the Local Adult Safeguarding Partnerships.

Adult Protection Bill

Volunteer Now welcomes the introduction of the Adult Protection Bill. Whilst most of the Bill applies to statutory organisations and their staff, there are parts which have relevance to voluntary and community organisations, their staff and volunteers. Volunteer Now has included below some comments and issues for consideration.

Clause 38 Ill treatment or neglect: care worker offence

(3) 'Care worker' means (b) a volunteer who provides health or social care for an adult.

Volunteers are recruited by local Health and Social Care Trusts – some roles are based in hospital, day care centres and supported housing, and some are based in the local community.

Many voluntary and community organisations are contracted/commissioned by the Department of Health to deliver volunteer led services in the community.

And as Volunteer Now is, other organisations commissioned/contracted by local Health and Social Care Trusts to deliver services to people in the community also involve volunteers.

Some examples of the volunteer roles include:

- meeter and greeter volunteer
- activities volunteer
- day centre volunteer
- meal time volunteer
- visiting volunteer
- Emergency Department refreshment service volunteer
- laundry service volunteer, in peoples own homes,
- cardiac investigations delivery driver
- breastfeeding peer support volunteer
- bereavement comfort call volunteer
- volunteer driver
- volunteer befrienders
- volunteer shopper
- volunteer counsellors
- listening ear volunteers

Considerations:

- Which volunteer roles are regarded as ‘providing health and social care for an adult’?
 - Does the nature of the volunteer role determine this?
 - Does the nature of client group receiving the voluntary service determine this?
 - Does the location of the volunteer role determine this?
 - Do volunteers in organisations contracted/commissioned by the Department of Health and/or Health and Social Care Trusts fall into this definition?
- If a ‘volunteer who provides health care or social care for an adult’ is regarded as a ‘care worker’, might this have further implications for the volunteer, such as the need to register with the NI Social Care Council?

(c) an individual, who, as paid work, supervises or manages persons mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b) providing such care or is a director or similar officer of an organisation which provides such care.

Considerations:

- Depending on which volunteer roles are regarded as ‘providing health and social care’ this clause could include managers and coordinators working/volunteering within the voluntary and community sector.

(4) (a) ‘a volunteer’ means a person who volunteers for a body whose activities are not carried out for profit.

Considerations:

- This language is unclear.
 - ‘Volunteering is defined as “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 by choice.” *Join in, Get Involved: Build a Better Future Volunteering Strategy for NI, 2012*

For example, ‘A volunteer is a person who gives of their time freely’ would be clearer language.

Clause 39 Ill treatment or neglect: care provider offence

(2) ‘Care provider’ means ‘a body corporate or unincorporated association which **provides or arranges for the provision of health care or social care for an adult**’

Considerations:

- Are voluntary and community organisations contracted/commissioned by Department of Health and/or HSCTs regarded as ‘care providers’?

Volunteer Now would welcome the opportunity to discuss these considerations and explore them further through engagement with the voluntary and community sector. It is crucial that the sector understand the legislation and how it applies to their organisation, staff and volunteers.

Contact:

Ruth Mulholland

Safeguarding Manager

Volunteer Now

