

## OVERVIEW

These guidelines are designed to support you as a volunteer manager to understand your responsibilities and those of your volunteers relating to managing non-operational volunteers who are pregnant.

All volunteer managers and volunteers have a moral responsibility alongside the wider organisational legal responsibilities to create a safe environment for pregnant volunteers and their unborn child. Although this guidance is focused on volunteering, it references employment law as a model for best practice.

**Please note that for cases where expectant volunteers hold an operational role the manager should reference the policy PO1052 – Lifeboat Crew Reporting of Pregnancy (found on Horizon).**

The following areas will be covered:

- The law
- Preparation
- Implementation
- Review

## THE LAW

Health and safety requirements relating to new and expectant mothers at work are mainly contained in Management of Health and Safety at Work (MHSW) Regulations 1999 (UK) and Pregnancy at Work Regulations, which form part of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 (Republic of Ireland). With regard to volunteers, there is a legal duty on the organisation to assess the health and safety risks that volunteers are exposed to. Once the risks have been assessed, the volunteer manager is then required to put in place the appropriate health and safety measures to control those identified risks.

The risk assessment should include any risks to females of childbearing age who could become pregnant, and any risks to new and expectant volunteers. Once notified managers should immediately take into account any risks identified. If these risks cannot be avoided by taking any necessary preventive and protective measures, then managers must take action to remove, reduce or control the risk.

## PREPARATION

In order to ensure that a volunteer manager is in a position to take appropriate risk reduction measures, an expectant volunteer is requested to inform their volunteer manager, at the earliest opportunity, that they are pregnant. The

RNLI is unable to exercise a duty of care until the volunteer manager is informed of the pregnancy. Managers should make volunteers aware of the need to be notified should they become pregnant. A good opportunity to do this is during the induction process.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Once notified, volunteer managers in conjunction with the expectant volunteer should complete a **Non-operational Expectant Volunteer's Risk Assessment** in order to help keep the volunteer, unborn child and others safe.

Once the risk assessment has been carried out, the identified activities must be adequately controlled and documented. In most circumstances this can be achieved by reviewing the existing risk assessments for the planned activities and then cross-referencing these with the expectant volunteer's risk assessment.

As part of the process the volunteer manager should talk to the volunteer and agree removing or reducing exposure to, amongst other things; lifting, twisting, extremes of temperatures, vibration and certain chemicals.

Some volunteers will not see how they might put themselves, the unborn baby or others at risk by continuing to volunteer whilst expecting. In some situations, it may not be safe for the volunteer to continue in their role. As a volunteer manager, you will need to assess and discuss with the volunteer any implications for their continued volunteering and whether it is suitable for them to do so. You can use the **Non-operational Expectant Volunteer's Risk Assessment** to help with this. If it is not possible to make reasonable adjustments to the role it may be agreed for the volunteer to undertake a different role or take a break from volunteering.

The outcome along with a copy of the risk assessment should be confirmed in writing to the volunteer. Your volunteering adviser can help with wording if required. Volunteers should be given the opportunity to advise the RNLI if and when they wish to return to their role. Scheduling a review will ensure that the volunteer has the opportunity to discuss their future preferences.

## REVIEW

Volunteer managers should review the risk assessment at 12 and 24 weeks and at any other time when either the task changes or the volunteer notifies their volunteer manager of any issues.

## PROCESS FLOW

The flowchart below outlines the steps that should be followed, if you become aware that a volunteer (non-operational) is pregnant.

Volunteer manager (VM) made aware of a volunteer being pregnant. Agreements should be made regarding confidentiality, ie who will notify fellow volunteers and when.

The volunteer may choose to temporarily stand down from their role whilst expectant.

Should the volunteer wish to continue in their role, the VM should discuss with the volunteer potential risks and control measures relating to their role and this information should be captured on the **Non-operational Expectant Volunteers Risk Assessment**.

VM in conjunction with the volunteer determines whether the risks have been suitably mitigated in order for the volunteer to continue in their role whilst pregnant.

It may be appropriate to offer an alternative volunteering role whilst the volunteer is expectant. This role should also be risk assessed.

VM confirms outcomes to the volunteer in writing along with a copy of the agreed risk assessment.

The VM in conjunction with the volunteer, should review the risk assessment at 12 and 24 weeks of the pregnancy. The process should be documented on the risk assessment.

Post-birth the VM should meet with the volunteer to discuss any changes in circumstances and potential impact on future volunteering.

The volunteering adviser is available at any part of the process to offer support.