Volunteer Code of Conduct Policy

1. Purpose

To provide a Code of Conduct which is applicable to all RNLI volunteers, whatever their role. It is not an exhaustive list, but sets out clear expectations of the conduct required of all volunteers by the RNLI.

2. Scope

2.1 Who does this policy apply to?

All persons engaged in volunteering for the RNLI in any voluntary role.

2.2 Who uses this policy?

Any staff or volunteers who manage other volunteers; all volunteers must be aware of the Code of Conduct.

2.3 When does this Code of Conduct apply?

This Code of Conduct applies to all volunteers when:

- carrying out volunteering activities (including when attending events, training and other RNLI volunteer activities over multiple days) for the duration of the event, including socialising in the evening where applicable.
- travelling to and from any RNLI volunteering activity, including when responding to a pager.
- being identifiable as an RNLI volunteer, this includes:
  - when carrying out volunteering activity
  - when wearing RNLI branded clothing
  - when known in the community as an RNLI volunteer.

3. Code of Conduct

At the heart of our policies is the ‘Volunteer Commitment’. This statement outlines the spirit in which the RNLI and volunteers will act together to achieve the RNLI’s objectives. The Volunteer Commitment can be found in Appendix 1.

All volunteers must:

Role and Policy

- Have read, understood and agree with the Volunteer Commitment.
- Have read and be familiar with their volunteer role description.
- Have read and be familiar with the generic Volunteer Handbook (and related induction materials).
- Accept RNLI policy and the authority of those entrusted by the RNLI to manage RNLI activities and accept decisions that are taken.
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- Be aware of and comply with the generic and role specific RNLI policies and procedures.
- Follow all reasonable requests by staff or volunteers who support and manage their volunteer role activities.
- Participate in any necessary training related to the role and maintain any relevant competency based training.
- When reporting RNLI activities via social media, ensure the Guide to Social Media for RNLI Volunteers has been read and understood, any appropriate training has been undertaken and at all times, that social media content promotes and protects the reputation of the RNLI.

RNLI Property and assets (resources)

- Recognise that all public monies received belong to the RNLI and must be processed in line with issued policy and guidance.
- Report any loss or damage to personal or RNLI property to their volunteer manager whilst volunteering.
- Return all property belonging to the RNLI on or before the last date of their volunteering.
- Respect, maintain and care for any property belonging to or paid for by the RNLI.

Safety, Health and Environment

- Carry out their volunteer role activities with due care and diligence for themselves and others.
- Be aware of Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) guidance seeking clarification if necessary.
- Wear any protective clothing/equipment provided for their volunteer role.
- Immediately report all injuries, incidents, near misses and accidents which occur whilst volunteering for the RNLI by updating the relevant database or reporting to their volunteer manager.
- Notify the organisation immediately of any illness or change in health relevant to the role, by advising their volunteer manager.
- Comply with any health assessment/s and or health surveillance activities required in line with their voluntary role/s.
- Ensure the welfare of young people and vulnerable adults at all times making sure they are adequately supervised within their area of responsibility – see Safeguarding Policy & Procedures.
- Only bring children, vulnerable adults and other people when participating in volunteer activities at locations, including lifeboat stations, with the specific authorisation from their volunteer manager.
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- Seek approval from their volunteer manager before bringing pets to volunteer activities and locations including lifeboat stations.
- Minimise waste production and disposal by using RNLI resources responsibly.

Behaviours

- Uphold the RNLI Values and Behaviours.
- Act within the law at all times. This includes complying with the Road Traffic Act, adhering to drink or drug related regulations and speed limits. In relation to operational volunteers, these are equally applicable when responding to a call out.
- Maintain the trust and confidence of the RNLI and their colleagues at all times.
- Uphold the reputation of the RNLI and set a positive example to other volunteers.
- Be courteous and respect other people’s views, interests and uniqueness.
- Behave in ways that value diversity and promote inclusion – see the *Inclusion and Equality Policy*.
- Challenge inappropriate behaviour, discrimination and/or unfair treatment appropriately.
- Discuss any problems or issues in a reasonable, constructive manner without aggression.
- Ask for guidance and support when they don’t understand.
- Be reliable and considerate to their team.
- Take responsibility for their own actions and acknowledge when mistakes are made.
- Speak up and use appropriate channels when providing feedback and views.

Volunteers must not:

- Act outside the spirit of the *Code of Conduct* and the *Volunteer Commitment*.
- Participate in any form of inappropriate behaviour or act in any way that brings the organisation into disrepute when volunteering, when wearing RNLI clothing or when identifiable as an RNLI volunteer.
- Put the health, safety or wellbeing of themselves or others at unnecessary or unassessed risk.
- Ignore policies, procedures or standards.
- Bully, harass or unlawfully discriminate against anyone.
- Tolerate disrespectful behaviour towards each other, supporters or members of the public. (This is underpinned by equality legislation and RNLI Policy.)
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- Falsify records, expenses or defraud or attempt to defraud the RNLI in any manner.

- Smoke when on RNLI property, afloat, ashore or when actively supporting events. The definition of smoking includes all tobacco based products as well as all forms of electronic cigarettes. (In extraordinary circumstances smoking may be permitted on ALBs at sea, at the discretion of the coxswain and in accordance with current RNLI policy and guidance.)

- Carry out volunteer duties when in an unfit state due to the influence of alcohol, or other drugs or substances.

- Be in possession of firearms or any offensive weapon whilst undertaking volunteer activities.

- Carry out private trading on RNLI premises or use the RNLI ‘brand’ or equipment to promote private trading.

- Participate in RNLI volunteering activities whilst signed off sick from paid employment, unless express permission from the RNLI has been given.

- Damage or misuse RNLI property, money or assets.

4. Breaches of the Code of Conduct and Volunteer Commitment

Breaches of the Code of Conduct and/or the Volunteer Commitment will be addressed using the Volunteer Problem Solving Policy at either stage 1 or stage 2 depending upon the nature and seriousness of the breach.

A serious breach will go straight to stage 2 of the Problem Solving Policy; this may be as a result of one significant incident which in itself requires formal action to be taken, or, this stage can be invoked following a number of incidents which together make it necessary to take formal action. A serious breach can result in an immediate end to the volunteer agreement.

5. Responsibility

All staff and volunteers referred to within the scope of this policy are required to be familiar with the terms of this policy.

It is the responsibility of the volunteer manager to ensure that this policy is included within the RNLI induction when a volunteer first commences with the RNLI.

Individual volunteers, staff members and managers are required to keep within the spirit and intent of the policy. Any queries on the application or interpretation of this policy must be discussed first with the relevant volunteer manager in the area concerned.

5.1 Who can change or adapt this policy?

The Volunteering Development Team has the responsibility for ensuring the maintenance, regular review and updating of this policy. Revisions, amendments or alterations to the policy and supporting appendices can only be implemented following consideration and approval by the Volunteering Development Manager in close liaison with senior management.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Volunteering Development Team at the first meeting of the year.