

Introduction

Our Organisation's Aim:

Anam Cara's aim is to facilitate and provide support services and understanding to families who have experienced the death of a son or daughter.

Who we serve:

Bereaved parents and siblings throughout the 32 counties of Ireland who have experienced the loss of their child or sibling, regardless of age or how they died.

What we do:

Anam Cara offers a number of specific support services for bereaved parents and families through our:

- 1. Group Support Meetings**
- 2. Bereavement Information Evenings**
- 3. Family Social Events**
- 4. Creative Events**
- 5. Signposting to other organisations**
- 6. Website**
- 7. Private Message Forum**
- 8. Bereavement Programme**
- 9. Telephone Information Line**
- 10. Lending Library**
- 11. Remembrance Events**

How we work:

Anam Cara is essentially a Volunteer based organisation. Our services are carried out almost entirely by bereaved parents and siblings, and our organisation is run by people who operate on a voluntary basis. The success of what we do is due largely to the commitment and dedication of our Volunteers at all levels.

We endeavor to provide a high standard of service by adhering to a set of core values that govern everything we do:

The Organisation's Core Values are:

- 1. To respect each other's grief - no one's grief is greater than another's, no one's loss less than another's.**
- 2. Not to judge - don't judge others by their actions or words.**
- 3. To listen and be listened to - all of us at Anam Cara need support, be there for each other.**
- 4. No personal recommendations or "shoulds" - everyone copes/survives in different ways.**
- 5. To journey on - while still remembering and talking about our wonderful children and what they mean to us.**
- 6. To show consideration for each other's beliefs - both religious and spiritual.**
- 7. Inclusivity - no matter how old your son or daughter was, how they died, or how long ago their death occurred.**
- 8. Confidentiality - all conversations or communications are private and confidential.**

What Volunteering at Anam Cara means:

Our Volunteers are the very heart of Anam Cara and provide the essential peer support newly bereaved parents need in the early days of their loss. It is impossible to quantify the invaluable service they give to our organisation and Anam Cara would like to state how much we appreciate them giving up their time to help others.

With regard to the Volunteers who assist the organisation through their own proficiency around fundraising, administration, IT/website development, etc, we also want to extend our sincere gratitude for their support.

The qualities and characteristics of the Anam Cara Volunteer are key to our organisation's success. Every Anam Cara Volunteer will need to have a deep understanding of the vision and core values of our organisation.

Communication

Communication is a priority for Anam Cara to ensure all our support centers and Volunteers are informed on developments and activities throughout the regions. A policy is in place which clearly outlines how we will encourage effective communication throughout Anam Cara.

Our website, ezine and weekly CEO updates, will play a key role and ensure all Anam Cara Volunteers and supporters are up to date on the activities taking place across the organisation.

We would also encourage Anam Cara Volunteers around the country to let us know what is happening in your area.

Categories of Volunteer

Who can help us?

1. Bereaved Parents, some way into their own journeys, who are prepared to volunteer for our front line services for newly bereaved parents in their locality. Volunteer activities include:
 - Liaise at our Local Support Meeting
 - Moderate on Message Forum
 - Contribute content to the website and media articles
2. Bereaved parents or the non-bereaved, extended family members, friends, colleagues and neighbours, who are prepared to help with:
 - Fundraising
 - Anam Cara Awareness Campaigns
 - Administration duties
3. People with specific skills:
 - Bereavement Professionals
 - PR/marketing
 - IT, web design
 - Accounts

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on all aspects of volunteering at Anam Cara. However, it complements other Anam Cara documentation and procedures, as well as our definition of volunteering, our mission statement, and our values and ethos as a voluntary organisation that offers services and support to bereaved parents and their families at a very difficult time in their lives.

The Anam Cara Service Quality Panel and our Regional Coordinators are responsible for ensuring that the policy and the procedures in this document are applied as outlined to ensure the well being of all Anam Cara Volunteers.

1. Eligibility

Anam Cara, as a provider of services and support to bereaved parents throughout Ireland, undertakes all

reasonable steps to confirm that those who seek acceptance, as Volunteers, are suitable to undertake the tasks that are allocated to them.

All Volunteers must be able to demonstrate a commitment to Anam Cara and our aims as a national organisation. They must have an understanding of our core values and how we operate our front line services.

With reference to our categories of Volunteer eligibility

1. *Bereaved parents, ideally who are 18 months – 2 years into their journey and have already been a recipient of Anam Cara support*
2. *Non bereaved people – who have an interest in the work we do and would like to help us extend our services and who may have particular abilities which are needed in the organisation*
3. *People with specific skills set - Appropriate qualifications will be required in particular for professionals working in the area of bereavement care.*

To ensure the integrity of Anam Cara, the values and attitudes of our Volunteers need to be consistent with the ethos of our organisation. Anam Cara may seek references from employers or persons of standing within the community and where appropriate a Garda check to guarantee this.

1.1 Working Conditions

All Volunteers will be treated equally and fairly and we will be treated as full members of the team. We endeavour to ensure that the conditions under which Volunteer activity takes place are of a safe and suitable standard to enable the activity to be carried out effectively and comfortably.

We will welcome feedback at any time from our Volunteers in order to enhance our services and to ensure the Volunteer experience with Anam Cara is positive and their continued well being is ensured.

1.2 Volunteering Times

Volunteering times will be negotiated between Anam Cara and the Volunteer and are flexible. Anam Cara appreciates that Volunteers are giving up personal time to assist us and we would always try to facilitate the requirements of the Volunteer. In general the commitment would not be expected to exceed 2 hours per week or 8 hours per month.

1.3 Policies and Procedures

Volunteers are expected to work within the policies and procedures of Anam Cara and adhere to our values and culture. As representatives of the organisation, they are responsible for presenting a positive image of Anam Cara at all times.

Anam Cara respects the Volunteer's right to privacy and confidentiality. In turn, we would ask our Volunteers to be responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all privileged information to which they are exposed while Volunteering with Anam Cara.

All information in relation to our Volunteers will be treated with the same confidentiality as staff records.

1.4 Representation of Anam Cara

Volunteers must seek prior approval from the CEO before undertaking anything that might affect the organisation. This includes, but is not limited to, any interviews with the media, comments on website forums, initiatives with other professional bodies or agreements involving contractual or financial obligations.

1.5 Anam Cara Services

Volunteers may at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate their relationships with Anam Cara. Notice of such decisions should be communicated at the earliest opportunity to give the organisation an opportunity to replace Volunteers or make the appropriate arrangements.

Similarly, any voluntary service is at the discretion of Anam Cara. Anam Cara may, at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate a Volunteer's relationships with the organisation.

2. Recruitment

2.1 Role descriptions and Specifications

Before any Volunteer assignment or recruitment endeavor, a role description will be made available to the Volunteer outlining Anam Cara's expectations and specifications of the activity.

2.2 Application Process

For our Bereaved Parents who wish to Volunteer to help facilitate our front line services, the application process is currently made through Central office.

Anam Cara will from time to time seek Volunteers through the website or private message forum. Parents will be invited to the Training and Development workshop, where details of the role and responsibilities will be outlined.

For other activities and roles, Anam Cara will recruit non bereaved Volunteers using publicity avenues that are suitable for the roles that need to be filled. Volunteers may also apply personally or come via the local Volunteer centers that Anam Cara collaborates with.

In all instances, applications will be shortlisted and Volunteers invited to attend an informal discussion with Central Office, to clarify their interest in and potential to contribute.

Where references are required, Anam Cara will seek the Volunteer's most recent employer. If this is not possible, the reference will be sought from a suitable person within the community.

A specific role description will be made available to all Volunteers at Anam Cara when undertaking an activity.

Volunteers will be required to sign a Volunteer code of conduct and a declaration that they have not been engaged in activities which would be in conflict with Anam Cara's ethos or core values as an organisation.

3 Training & Development

Anam Cara understands the importance of the well being and continuous development of all our Volunteers. For that reason we have developed a clear training and development path appropriate to the different categories of Volunteer.

3.1 Induction Training

For each Volunteer category Anam Cara will facilitate induction training.

All parents who Volunteer for Anam Cara's front-line services will receive induction training prior to taking on their role as Liaison Parents. This is to ensure they will feel confident within their own groups and until they feel

comfortable in their role, they will have the support of an experienced Volunteer who has been working in this role as well as the support of the professional group facilitator .

Other Volunteers helping out with various activities within Anam Cara will have an Anam Cara member to help coordinate and support them throughout the activity.

Volunteers working as bereavement professionals will also attend an induction session facilitated by professionals already working in this area.

3.2 Additional Training

Anam Cara will arrange appropriate additional training for any of our Volunteers around the tasks they are undertaking for the organisation. From time to time there may be other training offered to Volunteers to help develop their role with the organisation.

3.3 Self Care

To ensure the wellbeing of our bereaved Volunteers who offer their time and are delivering Anam Cara front-line support services, we organise regular Self Care Sessions (Supervisory) with professional bereavement therapists to ensure their continued well being. We expect parents to attend these Self Care sessions. Please see our Liaison Parent's guidelines for further details.

3.4 Further Development

For those who are interested in further developing their role at Anam Cara, from time to time we will be in the position to offer external courses with accredited organisations.

We also encourage that our Volunteers try out new roles in the organisation every 2 -3 years.

4. Volunteer Support & Feedback

Anam Cara undertakes to provide the support required to encourage and empower Volunteers to make a meaningful contribution and gain significant benefits from their voluntary work. Support forms part of the regular 'Self Care' sessions which give our bereaved parent Volunteers a safe setting in which to express themselves and discuss their feelings around their own journey and grief with a professional bereavement therapist.

Anam Cara is committed to best practice across our support services, for this reason we will closely monitor and evaluate all our activities, seeking feedback from both our parents who avail of the services and Volunteers who deliver them.

All feedback will be assessed and where possible applied to ensure we concentrate on continuous improvement as an organization.

If you have any queries regarding this Volunteer policy, contact Sharon Vard at s.vard@anamcara.ie or call us on 01 4045378.