

## Introduction

### Aim of Anam Cara

Our aim is to facilitate and provide support and understanding to families throughout Ireland, who have experienced the death of a child, regardless of age of how they died.

### What we do

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

1. Website/Message Forums	5. Information Packs and Video Resources
2. Group Support Meetings	6. Telephone Information Line
3. Bereavement Information Evenings	7. Lending Library at the groups
4. Family Remembrance Events	8. Signposting to other organisations/services

### How we work

Anam Cara is essentially a volunteer based organisation. Volunteers also play an essential role in the development and support of the organisation through fundraising, administration and other key supports.

## Communication

Communication is a priority for Anam Cara to ensure all our volunteers, stakeholders and collaborators are informed on developments and activities throughout the regions.

A policy is in place on ensuring effective communication through Anam Cara. In particular our website, bi-annual newsletter and monthly CEO updates ensure all volunteers and supporters are up-to-date on the activities taking place across the organisation.

## Categories of Volunteer

### Who can help us?

1. Bereaved parents, some way into their own journeys, who are prepared to volunteer for our frontline services for newly bereaved parents in their locality. Volunteer activities include;
  - Co-facilitate with the Anam Cara Professional co-facilitator at the local Anam Cara Group
  - Moderate on Message Forum/Private Facebook Group
  - From time to time contribute content to the website and media articles.
2. Bereaved parents or extended family members, friends, colleagues and neighbours who are prepared to help with;
  - Fundraising
  - Anam Cara Awareness Campaigns
  - Administration
3. People with specific skills;
  - Bereavement Professionals
  - PR /Marketing
  - IT/Web Development
  - Accounts

### Anam Cara Groups

Anam Cara Groups are located throughout the 32 countries and facilitate parents evenings and/or Bereavement Information evenings. The focus is on peer support, however each group will also have Anam Cara Information packs and details about other support services in the community. The groups are co-facilitated by a volunteer parent and a professional facilitator. Each group meets monthly between September and June. The following set of core values are adopted to ensure that meetings are safe and comfortable for everyone attending.

1. Show consideration for everyone's grief, our common thread is that we have experienced the death of a precious son or daughter
2. Provide a safe, comfortable place where you can simply listen or be listened to.
3. Individuality of grief – There are no road maps, everyone copes in their own unique way
4. We are here to offer support to each other, rather than tell one another what to do
5. Respect people of any or no religious/spiritual beliefs
6. Confidentiality – What we talk about is confidential unless it indicates someone is in danger of harm

### Becoming a Volunteer

Anam Cara, as a provider of services and support to bereaved parents throughout Ireland, undertakes all reasonable steps to ensure that people who offer themselves as volunteers are suitable for and able to fulfil their role as volunteers.

All volunteers must have a commitment to Anam Cara and our aims as a national organisation and must have an understanding of our core values.

To ensure the integrity of Anam Cara and its values, we may seek references from employers or other persons and, as necessary Garda Clearance.

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 volunteers' right to privacy and confidentiality. In turn we ask our volunteers to be responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all privileged information to which they may be exposed to while volunteering with Anam Cara

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

#### **Our commitment to our Volunteers**

Anam Cara appreciates that volunteers are giving up personal time to assist and would always try to facilitate their requirements

Volunteering times will be negotiated with the volunteer and will be flexible. In general the time commitment involved would not be expected to exceed 4 hours per month.

All volunteers will be treated equally and fairly and 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.

All personal information in relation to our volunteers will be treated with the same level of confidentiality as staff records.

We 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 that the continued well-being of volunteers is ensured.

Volunteers may at any time decide to terminate their relationship as a volunteer. Notice of such decisions should be communicated at the earliest opportunity to enable the organisation to make alternative arrangements.

Similarly any voluntary services is at the discretion of Anam Cara and may at any time and for stated reasons be terminated.

### Recruitment

For bereaved parents who wish to volunteer to help facilitate Anam Cara frontline services, the application is currently made through Central Office.

Anam Cara will from time to time seek volunteers through our website. Parents will be invited to an information 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 centres 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 and potential to contribute.

Where references are required, Anam Cara will seek the volunteers' 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 values as an organisation.

### Training and Development

Anam Cara understand 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.

Anam Cara also facilitates two review workshops each year to ensure the organisation continues to meet the needs of our bereaved parents and volunteers.

#### 1. Induction Training

For each volunteer category Anam Cara will facilitate Induction Training.

All parents who volunteer for Anam Cara's front-line service will receive induction training prior to taking on their roles as volunteer co-ordinators. This is to ensure they feel confident within their

## Anam Cara Volunteer Policy

Anam Cara group 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 co-facilitator.

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

### **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. Self Care**

To ensure the wellbeing of our bereaved volunteers who offer their time and are delivering Anam Cara front-line support services, we will organise regular self-Care sessions (Reflective Space) with a suitably qualified professional to ensure they are supported in their role. We expect our volunteer parents to attend these self-care session. Our volunteer co-facilitators guidelines will have more details.

### **4. Training and review Workshop**

In June and December each year Anam Cara will facilitate a Service Quality Review Workshop. This 1 day workshop will incorporate training elements for our volunteers and professional co-facilitators, along with reviewing the previous 6 months activities across the organisation.

Feedback from the group co-facilitators and parents attending the Anam Cara throughout Ireland will be considered at the review workshops along with suggestion on how Anam Cara can improve our services or deliver on the organisation's strategic goals. Together all stakeholders will agree the action points for the next 6 months to ensure continuous improvement.

### **5. Other Training**

Anam Cara, from time to time, will be in the position to offer external courses with accredited organisations. We also encourage our volunteers to try out new roles in the organisation.

### **6. Volunteer Support and Feedback**

Anam Cara undertakes to provide the support required to encourage and empower our volunteers to make a meaningful contribution and gain significant benefits from their voluntary work.

If you have any queries regarding this Volunteer policy, contact [c.curley@anamcara.ie](mailto:c.curley@anamcara.ie) or call us on 01 4045378/085 2888 888