**BRACKNELL YOUTH JUSTICE TEAM **

 **VOLUNTEERS POLICY**

### Introduction

Bracknell Forest Youth Justice Team (YJT) recognises the value of volunteers in contributing to its work with young people who offend and believes that volunteers should be given clear guidelines about their rights, roles and responsibilities. This document sets out the responsibility that the YJT has to its volunteers and outlines the standard of practice expected from them. The YJT will ensure volunteers have adequate knowledge about their role, responsibilities and rights.

## Health & Safety Procedures

It is the YJT’s responsibility to ensure that all reasonable steps have been taken to minimise the risk of harm to its volunteers from potentially hazardous situations. This includes risk to personal safety; disease related risk and risk from hazardous equipment. Although every effort will be made to ensure the personal safety of volunteers, it must be acknowledged that young people can be aggressive and volatile on occasions.

The YJT will ensure that:

1. volunteers receive written Health and Safety Guidelines in relation to their work
2. general advice, information and training are given about Health and safety issues in relation to their role
3. volunteers receive clear guidance about their role and responsibilities.

Volunteers must always follow the guidelines set.

# In the case of an incident, it should be reported to a manager at the YJT immediately, or the Emergency Duty Team outside of office hours.

# Equal Opportunities

The recruitment of all volunteers will operate within the principles of the Bracknell Forest Council’s, Children Social Care Equal Opportunities Policy.

Following completion of a formal application form, prospective volunteers will be interviewed and references will be taken up.

The YJT will provide:

1. full copies of the policy to all volunteers.
2. information on equal opportunities and anti discriminatory practice in relation to their role.

Volunteers must demonstrate their commitment to the Bracknell Forest’s Council’s Equal Opportunities Policy and apply the principles in their work with young people.

### Insurance

Volunteers will be covered by Bracknell Forest Borough Council’s public liability and employer’s liability insurance. If volunteers use their own car for voluntary work purposes, they must inform their insurance company in writing and ask for this to be added to their cover. This does not usually involve an additional premium.

### Safeguarding (Child Protection)

The YJT will ensure that all volunteers are aware of the Bracknell Forest Council’s Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. These procedures must be followed at all times. Induction training will cover Safeguarding policy and practice. Further training in this area will be offered at regular intervals and volunteers will be expected to attend.

### Induction, Training and Support

The YJT will:

1. provide an induction programme to enable volunteers to carry out their role to the expected standards
2. provide ongoing training sessions around specific issues related to the work of the team
3. respond to any training needs identified by volunteers.

Volunteers are expected to:

* attend all induction and ongoing training sessions
* raise areas of training need with the YJT Restorative Justice Co-ordinator.

The YJT recognises the need for volunteers to have ongoing support and supervision. Provision will be made for regular individual supervision with the YJT Restorative Justice Co-ordinator. The support from other volunteers can be invaluable so a forum is provided for volunteers to meet and share experiences.

**De-Registration of Volunteers**

### Grounds for suspension

Allegations or suspicion of the following activities will result in immediate suspension while the matter is fully investigated:

1. inappropriate physical and/or sexual contact with a young person
2. the committal of a criminal offence
3. attending an activity organised by the YJT whilst under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs

### Grounds for concern

The following matters will lead to further investigation:

1. not abiding by YJT policies and practice guidance
2. inappropriate disclosure of confidential information
3. not participating in supervision or support sessions
4. regular non-attendance at training sessions
5. indication of lack of commitment
6. failure to communicate with YJT.

**Confidentiality**

The YJT respects clients’ right to confidentiality. Therefore, volunteers should regard all information they have access to, or are given as a result of their volunteering, as being confidential to YJT unless advised otherwise. No information should be released to a third party without first seeking the agreement of the YJT. The right to confidentiality applies not only to written records, but also to video, film, pictures, or the use of names of clients’ families. All documents containing confidential information should be appropriately disposed of or returned to the YJT for shredding.

Personal information and details of each contact must be recorded. This information is only shared within the YJT, with the exceptions of situations listed below:

**Exceptions to Confidentiality:**

1. information may be released to other individuals or organisations with the written consent of the young person’s parent or carer
2. information regarding young people, their families and volunteers may be used in Youth Justice Team promotional materials if all relevant individuals have given permission
3. a young person either discloses, or is considered to be at risk of, physical, sexual, or emotional abuse
4. a young person discloses that they have committed a criminal offence
5. YJT receives information indicating that the young person, family member / carer or a volunteer may present a risk to self or others. In this case, necessary steps will be taken to protect the appropriate party. This may include a medical referral, referral to Children Social Care and / or informing the local police. All attempts will be made to inform and gain the consent of the relevant individual/s before confidentiality is breached.
6. Matters which fall within the criteria of section 115 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, i.e. it can be demonstrated that disclosure is necessary for the purpose of preventing crime and disorder as defined by the Act.

**Personal Disclosure**

Volunteers should not disclose personal details, or those of anyone else, to clients – e.g. home address, telephone number etc – unless given specific permission to do so.

Volunteers should not make inappropriate personal disclosures and / or statements about own views / beliefs etc, unless it is deemed appropriate by the YJT.

#### Information Security and Data Protection

All personal information (computerised or otherwise recorded) collected and held by the YJT is covered by the Data Protection Act. The Act requires all those using or collecting the information to abide by certain key principles.

Broadly, the Principles state that personal data must be –

1. obtained and processed fairly and lawfully
2. held for the lawful purpose described in the registration
3. used only for those purposes, and disclosed only to appropriate people
4. adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purpose for which they are held
5. accurate and where necessary, kept up-to-date
6. held no longer than is necessary
7. accessible to the individual concerned who, where appropriate, has the right to have information about themselves corrected or erased properly
8. safeguarded

Volunteers have the right to access their own personal records including application form, police check, supervision reports etc. Should you wish to see these records it can be arranged through the YJT’s Head of Service.

All volunteers are expected to undertake an Information Security and Data Protection training, usually available on-line, and refresher training as required by the service.

**Police Checks and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)**

Where volunteers will be working with young people under the age of 18, applicants will be asked whether they have any spent or unspent convictions. This is for everyone’s protection.

**DBS Check**

The DBS is an important government initiative. Its purpose is to help all types of organisations in England and Wales make more informed recruitment decisions. Without exception, All Bracknell Forest YJT Volunteers will be made subject to Enhanced DBS checks and Barred Lists before they engage in any activity with young people.

**Purpose**

The DBS achieves its purpose by providing a service called Disclosure. This is a carefully regulated one-stop shop service that enables organisations to gain access to important criminal and other information for recruitment and licensing purposes.

The DBS helps organisations to perform better by screening out candidates who may be unsuitable for certain kinds of work. In doing this it particularly helps to provide protection for children and other vulnerable members of society.

In terms of its own performance the DBS operates as an executive agency of the Home Office.

**Acting on the results of DBS checks**

The fact that someone has committed an offence in the past does not automatically make him or her unsuitable for voluntary work, even with vulnerable clients. Volunteers who have spent previous convictions, and have stopped offending, can prove to be positive role models for young offenders.

In deciding whether a prospective volunteer’s criminal record is relevant for a placement the Youth Justice Team will consider:

* the nature of the offence
* the nature of the voluntary work
* how long ago the offence was committed
* the frequency of offending and whether there is a pattern of related or similar offences.

These decisions are at the discretion of the YJT Head of Service and, if necessary, legal advice may be sought.

**Problem Solving**

The YJT aims to identify and solve any problems at the earliest possible stage, and ideally informally when possible.

If a volunteer has a problem - including issues related to staff or another volunteer - they should first discuss the matter with the YJT Restorative Justice Co-ordinator who will endeavor to resolve the matter as soon as possible.

Should this not resolve matters, a formal complaint could then be made in writing to the YJT Operational Manager, who should respond within 10 working days.

**Expenses**

Reasonable expenses will be reimbursed according to the nature of the volunteering task. This will compensate the volunteer for any out of pocket expenses and will include cost of travel, parking, copying, postage etc.

Volunteers should always check with the YJT what expenses are reimbursable before committing themselves financially. Expense forms should be submitted along with any relevant receipts / proof of purchase.