

**Guidance**



# **Volunteering in the youth justice system**

**Guidance for youth offending teams and secure establishments**



Youth Justice Board  
Bwrdd Cyfiawnder Ieuencid

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**VOLUNTEERING IN THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM**

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# Introduction

Volunteers can significantly increase the size and available skills of both youth offending teams (YOTs) and secure establishments for children and young people. There are approximately 10,000 volunteers already working within the youth justice system; and the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) recognises and wants to expand the important contribution made by these volunteers, and by the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS).<sup>1</sup>

The increased contribution of volunteers and the VCS to public services is also a Government and Welsh Assembly Government priority, as demonstrated by:

- the Compact (the agreement between the Government and the VCS to improve their relationship) in England<sup>2</sup>
- the Voluntary Sector Scheme in Wales.<sup>3</sup>

Volunteers and the VCS also have a vital role to play in delivering the Green Paper, *Every Child Matters*, and the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy, *Extending Entitlement and Making Connections*.<sup>4</sup>

## Aim of the guidance

Research commissioned by the YJB<sup>5</sup> found that 33% of respondents were interested in undertaking voluntary work with young people who have offended, with 59% prepared to offer up to four hours a week.

This guidance outlines how YOTs and the secure estate for children and young people can recruit and manage these potential volunteers. It describes:

- the benefits that volunteers bring
- the kinds of role they can fill
- how to plan and manage a volunteer programme.

Templates and contacts, and case studies providing examples of volunteering from YOTs and secure establishments around the country, are available in the 'Get Involved' section of the YJB website ([www.yjb.gov.uk](http://www.yjb.gov.uk)).

<sup>1</sup> Also known as the Third Sector.

<sup>2</sup> See [www.thecompact.org.uk](http://www.thecompact.org.uk) for more information.

<sup>3</sup> See [www.new.wales.gov.uk](http://www.new.wales.gov.uk) for more information.

<sup>4</sup> See [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk) for more information.

<sup>5</sup> *Volunteering in Youth Justice* (2005). London: YJB.

# What do volunteers bring to the youth justice system?

Using volunteers in the youth justice system has advantages for:

- young people who have offended (or who are at risk of doing so) and their families
- the community
- victims of youth crime
- the youth justice system as a whole.

## Young people and their families

For young people involved with the youth justice system, the volunteer represents an interested and committed adult who is choosing to be with them, rather than being paid to do so. This can increase the young person's receptiveness and provide him or her with a positive adult role model. Because they are local, volunteers can also help the young person to feel less alienated from their community, and to understand the consequences of their actions on others in their area.

Volunteers can also play an important part in the work youth justice practitioners undertake with the family.

## The community

Youth justice services depend on the involvement of the local community. Volunteers take back into the community what they learn about issues relating to youth crime and young people. This can influence and inform others and lead to greater public confidence in the youth justice system.

## Victims

Volunteers (especially youth offender panel members – see page 7) can help victims of youth crime to move on and rebuild their lives.

## Youth justice system

As well as bringing skills and freeing up time for practitioners, having a volunteer programme can help to diversify and increase formal recruitment to the workforce, by introducing the system and the opportunities it offers to individuals who might be less likely to be engaged by the traditional recruitment routes.

# Who can volunteer in the youth justice system?

## Older and young people

There is no lower or upper legal age restriction on volunteering.

## Disabled people

Volunteers are found across the spectrum of disabilities, for example mental health, learning disability, and visually impaired.

## People on benefits

People on benefits can volunteer at the same time as 'actively seeking work'. Those on Incapacity Benefit can volunteer as much as they want and volunteering will not affect their Disability Living Allowance. It is up to the individual whether they inform Jobcentres and the Benefits Agency about their volunteering activities. Volunteering Wales advises that people seek confirmation from the Benefits Agency before starting to volunteer, and cautions them against volunteering for work similar to what they did before their incapacity.<sup>6</sup>

## People with criminal convictions

People with criminal convictions can volunteer but may have restricted opportunities. The Protection of Children Act 1999 and Court Services Act 2000 make it an offence to knowingly employ anyone with a conviction for offences against children to work with people under 18. Beyond this, the Criminal Records Bureau<sup>7</sup> has issued a list of 'considerations' in relation to the relevance, seriousness, date and circumstances of the conviction, pattern of offending and current circumstances. More information is given in the 'Screening' section (pages 17–18).

<sup>6</sup> See [www.volunteering-wales.net](http://www.volunteering-wales.net) for more information.

<sup>7</sup> See [www.crb.gov.uk](http://www.crb.gov.uk) for more information.

### Refugee and asylum seekers

Refugee and asylum seekers, those appealing against a decision and those registered for return to their home country, are entitled to volunteer for not-for-profit organisations, and to receive out-of-pocket expenses like other volunteers. Home Office guidance states that care should be taken to ensure that the activity is not job substitution.

### Employer supported volunteering (ESV)

This is when employers either allow their employees to do volunteering during work time, or have formal, supported volunteering programmes within the workplace.

# What can volunteers do in the youth justice system?

Some of the most common roles volunteers fill in the youth justice system are outlined here. More details can be found in the 'Get Involved' section of the YJB website ([www.yjb.gov.uk](http://www.yjb.gov.uk)).

## Appropriate adult

Appropriate adults<sup>8</sup> attend the police station when the police wish to interview a young person but his or her parents/carers either will not or cannot attend. The appropriate adult is there to ensure that the young person's interests are represented and that his or her rights are protected.

## Youth offender panel member

Youth offender panel members are involved in agreeing the programme of activities for a young person who has received a Referral Order.

## Mentor

A mentor provides the young person with a positive role model. They can form part of the range of youth justice activities, including:

- youth inclusion programmes (YIPs)
- youth inclusion and support panels (YISPs)
- specific mentoring projects (for example, literacy and numeracy mentoring projects).

## Prevention worker

Volunteers work with young people across the range of diversionary and preventive activities, and help them to achieve the aims of their individual support plans through low-level direct support.

<sup>8</sup> See the website for the National Association of Appropriate Adults Network for more information ([www.appropriateadult.org.uk](http://www.appropriateadult.org.uk)).

### **Reparation supervisor**

These volunteers oversee young people on a one-to-one and group basis as they carry out reparative activities such as painting and gardening.

### **Independent monitoring board volunteer**

Volunteers on independent monitoring boards visit secure establishments and meet with the young people to help monitor different aspects of their life in custody, such as living conditions and staff activity. They identify concerns and issues, discuss these at board meetings and recommend changes.

### **Resettlement and Aftercare Provision volunteer**

Volunteers may visit or write to young people in custody, before making contact again on their release. This contributes to the resettlement and aftercare needs of young people leaving custody.

# Running a volunteer programme: the planning stage

Before starting to operate a volunteer programme, it is important to:

- identify resource implications
- decide how the programme will be managed
- consult with other members of the YOT or secure establishment
- create volunteer task descriptions.

## Identify resource implications

Each YOT or secure establishment needs to work out the costs associated with running its volunteer programme, in order to create a budget and identify funding.

Running a volunteer programme requires the commitment of:

- staff and management time
- money for materials (for marketing and the equipment to carry out the role)
- money for CRB checks
- time and activities to make the volunteer feel valued
- money to cover out-of-pocket expenses.

This is a worthwhile investment: research has found that for every £1 an organisation spends they receive a 'notional payback' of up to 14 times that amount.<sup>9</sup>

## Allocate responsibility for volunteer work

It is essential that staff time is dedicated to managing a volunteer programme. Depending on the size of the YOT and secure establishment, this would usually involve:

- a member of the senior management team; who provides a strategic overview
- a practitioner, who acts as coordinator for the programme.

<sup>9</sup> Key Volunteering Facts and Figures ([www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)).

### Senior management team member

This person is responsible for:

- implementing the volunteer policy
- agreeing resources
- developing a clear understanding of roles and expectations
- dealing with problems of access and communication
- maintaining the organisation's commitment to volunteering.

### Volunteer programme coordinator

This practitioner has responsibility for:

- coordinating all aspects of the programme (whether undertaken by individual volunteers or by VCS organisations)
- overseeing volunteer recruitment, induction, support, supervision, deployment, and training (within the guidelines of the volunteer policy: see page 12).

The coordinator's own training and development should also be considered. National Occupational Standards exist for managers of volunteer programmes, and a National Training Strategy has been introduced.<sup>10</sup>

## Consultation

It is important in the planning stage to consult as widely as possible with people from all levels of the YOT or secure establishment. Not everyone will know about volunteers and the contribution they can make: an effective consultation can help to ensure that people feel included, have more understanding of volunteers, are more willing to work with them, have more ownership of the policy, and want to make volunteer involvement a success.

A consultation can be undertaken in many different ways, such as through a questionnaire, participatory workshops, or by establishing an advisory group. It should ask people to think about:

- the strengths and weaknesses of any current volunteer work (if applicable)
- what practical tasks volunteers might do to support practitioners
- whether these tasks substitute or complement the work of practitioners
- what volunteers want and expect from their placement
- practitioner concerns about the programme
- what resources are available to make the programme a success.

<sup>10</sup> See [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk) for more information

## Create volunteer task descriptions

A detailed and concise task description should be created for each role. Task descriptions are similar to job descriptions but use different terminology to avoid appearing like a contract of employment.<sup>11</sup> It is an important tool, as it:

- makes clear to the volunteer what they are contributing to, the part they play and the boundaries of their activity
- gives the volunteer coordinator a clear framework for recruiting relevant volunteers.

When recruiting volunteers through a third party (such as the VCS), the task description also provides a clear insight into what is required of them.

The consultation results should form the basis of the task descriptions, and be used to create a range of relevant and structured volunteer roles, which can be advertised. At the same time, any current volunteer work can be assessed against these descriptions, to ensure it is still fit for purpose.

Each task description should contain the following information:

- description of the project the volunteer will be working on
- title of the role
- purpose of the role
- contribution of time required, and how often
- location of the role
- tasks the volunteer will be required to carry out
- skills, experience, knowledge and attributes needed
- training provided
- point of contact/support (see page 24).

A note should also be made (for internal use only) of the practical considerations the role holds for the YOT or secure establishment, such as:

- is equipment needed?
- when will it be available?
- when will the project be ready for the volunteer?
- is the induction programme ready?
- when will supervision be available?

A task description template is available in the 'Get Involved' section of the the YJB website ([www.yjb.gov.uk](http://www.yjb.gov.uk)).

<sup>11</sup> It is important to avoid creating formal contracts that give volunteers employment status, and so entitlement to employment rights, such as a claim against unfair dismissal, since this can cause legal complications. However, it is beneficial to both sides to have detailed task descriptions in place.

# Volunteer policy

## What is a volunteer policy?

A volunteer policy is a written statement expressing the YOT's or secure establishment's commitment to their volunteer programme and volunteers. It:

- provides a framework for planning, procedures and practices
- demonstrates that care and thought has gone into involving volunteers
- states commitment towards effective practice
- provides consistency and fairness
- helps volunteers, staff, managers and members of management boards to understand why volunteers are involved and the roles they will fill.

## Creating and circulating the volunteer policy

The volunteer policy needs to be developed at a senior level after the planning and consultation stages (see pages 9–11). It should be short, accessible and written in clear language, outlining the main commitments and referring to other relevant policies (such as the YOT's or secure establishment's health and safety policy).

Once the volunteer policy has been created it should be circulated (for example, through a meeting, posters, or relevant newsletters), to make sure that as many people as possible are aware of it and understand how it will be implemented. Young people, their families and others who come into contact with the YOT or secure establishment should be informed about it, so they understand the role volunteers play in service delivery. All staff and any existing volunteers should receive copies and it should be included in all induction packs.

## What should the volunteer policy contain?

While each policy reflects the needs of the individual YOT or secure establishment, each one should start with a 'statement of intent', setting out:

- why the YOT or secure establishment wishes to involve volunteers
- how they will contribute to the organisation
- how they will be valued.

This should be followed by an 'aims and principles' section, setting out the commitment the organisation will make to volunteers, and outlining how paid staff will relate to volunteers.

The volunteer policy should go on to cover the following areas:

- recruitment, selection and screening (pages 14–19)
- induction and training (pages 20–2)
- support and supervision (pages 23–4)
- expenses (page 25)
- health and safety and insurance (pages 26–27)
- confidentiality and data protection (page 28)
- resolving problems (pages 29–30).

A volunteer policy template is available in the 'Get Involved' section of the YJB website ([www.yjb.gov.uk](http://www.yjb.gov.uk)).

# Recruitment, selection and screening<sup>12</sup>

***The volunteer policy should contain a statement outlining the selection process, when it will be formal and when informal, whether posts will be advertised, if an application form will be used, whether interviews will be undertaken, when references should be sought, and the role of the equal opportunities and diversity policy.***

Recruitment should only begin after the planning and consultation stages have been completed, and the task descriptions finalised. While many volunteers are recruited through an informal process that involves the friends or relatives of existing staff or volunteers, a more formal process of recruitment has many advantages, such as:

- offering consistency
- improving the image of volunteering
- helping to match skills to roles
- providing structure and promoting effective practice
- fulfilling equal opportunity and diversity guidelines.

The recruitment and selection process should reflect the size of the organisation and the opportunities available, and address:

- how volunteering opportunities will be promoted
- how public enquiries about volunteering will be dealt with
- application forms
- interviews
- references
- screening
- how to accept and reject applicants.

More information on each of these areas is given below.

<sup>12</sup> There is specific statutory guidance for the recruitment and deployment of panel volunteers and Referral Orders. See [www.yjb.gov.uk](http://www.yjb.gov.uk) for more information.

## Promoting volunteering opportunities

The aim should be to involve volunteers who reflect the diversity of the local community. Ways of promoting the volunteer programme include:

- working with the local VCS
- collaborating with the local volunteer centre (volunteer bureau),<sup>13</sup> which may also place the information on the national 'do-it' website
- advertising in the local press and radio
- contacting local employers who operate an ESV scheme (see page 6)
- putting posters and leaflets in community centres, supermarkets, local shops, libraries, cafes, clubs, schools, colleges, gyms, and dentists' and doctors' surgeries
- using local authority websites and newsletters
- giving talks and presentations
- ensuring that information is accessible to minority groups and disabled people.

## Dealing with enquiries

Enquiries about the possibility of volunteering need to be dealt with efficiently, so that potential volunteers have clear information about the type of work available, and about the process for application and selection. The volunteer coordinator should:

- ensure that all staff are familiar with the volunteering opportunities available
- have systems in place to deal with enquiries out of office hours
- prepare a short form to fill in about each enquiry, in order to record people's skills and experience
- have a concise information pack that can be sent out, which includes details about the organisation, the task description, what volunteers can expect from the organisation, and an application form (see below).

## Application forms

Application forms should be short, available in a range of formats, and include reassurance that the information given will be treated in confidence (see page 28), and offer the opportunity to complete the application verbally instead of in writing. It should ask for:

- name, address and telephone number(s)
- what volunteer role is being applied for

<sup>13</sup> For information on volunteer development agencies, see [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk) and [www.wcva.org.uk](http://www.wcva.org.uk).

- how much time the candidate can commit
- his or her skills, experience and knowledge
- contact details for two references (with an explanation of who may be suitable; it is important to remember that candidates may not have been in recent paid employment: in this case a referee who has known the candidate for at least two years could be selected such as a tutor, club or society leader, religious representative, probation officer, or long-term friend).

The form can also include an equal opportunities monitoring section, as an optional extra. An application form template is available in the 'Get Involved' section of the the YJB website ([www.yjb.gov.uk](http://www.yjb.gov.uk)).

## Interviews

The interview should be more informal than a job interview, and reflect the volunteering role being applied for. Time should be set aside for the process and notes of factual information should be retained (with the candidates given reassurance that the interview itself and the notes taken are confidential).

The interview should:

- be an informal, two-way process that enables both sides to get to know each other
- give an overview of the YOT or secure establishment and its role within the youth justice system, and outline how and why it involves volunteers
- describe the context in which the volunteer would be working, and the pros and cons of volunteering for the youth justice system
- clarify the role and time commitment, and identify the skills, knowledge and experience needed
- identify the support, recognition, and expenses available
- explore the candidate's motivation for volunteering, and what they can bring to the role
- find out what the interviewee knows already about young people who offend, or are at risk of offending
- allow the candidate to ask about any support needs
- outline any further selection activities and screening processes, and describe the induction, probation period, and training requirements.

If it is clear the candidate is suitable at the end of the interview, ask if he or she also wants to proceed, and outline the next steps. Alternatively, if more time is needed for reflection, give a deadline for the decision.

If the person is unsuitable, inform them, giving the reasons. Their desire to volunteer may be of benefit to another organisation, and they should be directed to their local volunteer bureau or centre.<sup>14</sup>

## References

References offer the YOT or secure establishment more insight into the potential volunteer. A reference confirms who they are, and identifies their strengths and weaknesses, skills, and possible risk factors.

The procedures in place for dealing with employee references should be followed. Only essential information should be sought, and a useful way is to send the referee a form outlining the job description and asking for comments on the person's character and skills to fulfil the role.

Sometimes it may not be possible to acquire references, for example in the case of a recently arrived asylum seeker. In this instance they may be accepted as a volunteer but asked to perform the role within a risk assessment framework until they are better known, for instance, working in group activities only.

## Security and screening

***The volunteer policy should outline how the YOT or secure establishment will reduce the risk of involving volunteers who are unsuitable to work with vulnerable young people. It should state the circumstances in which volunteers should be screened,<sup>15</sup> how the applicant will be informed of the need for a disclosure, and how the information disclosed will be interpreted. It should also identify situations in which individuals with section 4 offences against children would be excluded from volunteering; and include how volunteers from overseas, including refugees and asylum seekers, should be checked.***

Potential volunteers should be informed early on in the process when an enhanced or standard disclosure is needed (see opposite). The individual has to apply for this check, with the YOT or secure establishment as the counter-signatory.

<sup>14</sup> For information on volunteer development agencies, see [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk) and [www.wcva.org.uk](http://www.wcva.org.uk).

<sup>15</sup> See [www.crb.gov.uk](http://www.crb.gov.uk) for information.

### Enhanced disclosures

Enhanced disclosures are needed for 'posts involving substantial contact with children or vulnerable adults regularly training, supervising or being in sole charge of individuals or groups'.<sup>16</sup>

Disclosures include:

- details of all current and spent convictions, cautions, reprimands, warnings, and other 'relevant' non-conviction information held by the local police
- any inclusion on the Protection of Children Act and Protection of Vulnerable Adult lists
- information held by the DfES, under section 142 of the Education Act 2002, of those considered unsuitable or banned from working with children.

Occasionally the chief police officer may release 'additional' information to the counter-signatory only. It is a criminal offence to reveal this information to the applicant, or another person not involved with the recruitment decision, without written permission of the Chief Police Officer.<sup>17</sup>

### Standard disclosures

Standard disclosures should be sought when the role involves 'working with children or regular contact with vulnerable adults'.<sup>18</sup> The only difference to the enhanced disclosure is that it does not contain the non-conviction information held by the police.

### How to apply for a disclosure

The candidate completes and signs an application form, which the YOT or secure establishment countersigns. The form, with proofs of identity, is then processed by a 'registered body': the YOT or secure establishment may apply to be this, or use an 'umbrella body' (such as the local authority: a database of relevant organisations is available from [www.crb.gov.uk](http://www.crb.gov.uk)). The disclosure is posted to both the organisation and the volunteer. On receipt of the disclosure, a decision should be made as to the suitability of the volunteer, using the volunteer policy as guidance.

In accordance with the volunteer policy the information disclosed should be stored, shared and destroyed in a way that complies with the Human Rights Act and the Data Protection Act. There is no specific length of time for which a disclosure is valid. The CRB suggest between three and five years, but it is at the discretion of each organisation.

While both disclosures are free for volunteers there are costs to the organisation; either the £300 registration fee to become a registered body, or an administrative fee paid to an 'umbrella body' for each disclosure.

<sup>16</sup> Taken from 'Screening and police checking information sheet' ([www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)).

<sup>17</sup> DIP 006 – Local Police Force Information ([www.crb.gov.uk](http://www.crb.gov.uk)).

<sup>18</sup> Information sheet CO8 ([www.wcva.org.uk](http://www.wcva.org.uk)).

## Accepting or rejecting applicants

While some candidates are rejected at the interview stage others, for legitimate reasons, may be found unsuitable after references and/or screening, and will not be invited onto the induction programme. They may not have the right skills and attributes for the task, which may create problems in the future for both themselves and the YOT or secure establishment; they may also present the organisation with a risk in relation to its duty of care to others.

A letter should be sent informing them that the role would not be the most suitable for them. They too should be provided with the local volunteer centre contact, as their desire to volunteer may be beneficial to others. It is important to offer them an opportunity to receive feedback on the decision if they request it.

## Equal opportunities and diversity

***The volunteering policy should outline how the YOT's or secure establishment's equal opportunity and diversity policy applies to the recruitment and management of volunteers, and the policies and practices required of any VCS organisation providing volunteers.***

Care should be taken that equality of opportunity is considered when designing and delivering recruitment, deployment, training and management of volunteers; and diversity expands the principles of equal opportunities to consider how to recruit and retain volunteers from diverse backgrounds, and how to engage on an equal basis with them. The recruitment programme should be designed in such a way as to recruit a diversity of individuals, who are representative of the local community.

# Induction and training

*The volunteer policy should set out the YOT's or secure establishment's commitment to induction and training and how these will be welcoming, comprehensive, clarify working practices and routines, and ensure volunteers are able to work safely and effectively.*

## Induction

An induction programme is essential for all volunteers, whatever their experience of the youth justice system and the volunteering role. It also acts as the final stage in the selection process. The induction programme should:

- be welcoming and comprehensive
- clarify working practices and routines
- ensure volunteers are able to work safely and effectively
- convey a realistic picture of volunteering in the youth justice system, to enable volunteers to make an informed decision about whether they still wish to volunteer.

The programme should be well-paced, but not overwhelming, and take place over a number of days or weeks. It may include current volunteers and members of staff. The programme should draw on the contents of the volunteer policy, and build on any information provided in the information pack (see page 15) and interview (see page 16). The following topics should be covered.

### Organisational information

- Details about the YOT or secure establishment, its role in the youth justice system and its relationship with other agencies.
- Information on working in the youth justice system, including security issues and the principles to be adhered to.

### Information about young people and risk of offending

- An overview of young people's risks and needs, why they commit crime and the risk factors that may influence them.

### Volunteering within the YOT or secure establishment

- Details of the contribution volunteers currently make to the youth justice system.
- The organisation's volunteer policy and its commitment to, and recognition of, volunteers.

- The procedures for support and supervision.
- How the specific project contributes to the aims of the YOT or secure establishment.

### **Volunteering in practice**

- The task description and its practical application.
- Training requirements and opportunities, including the Foundation Programme (see page 22).
- Health and safety and risk management policies and procedures.
- Effective practice guidelines when working with young people.
- Insurance details (see page 27).
- Confidentiality policy (see page 28).
- How expenses can be claimed (see page 25).
- How problems and complaints are resolved (see pages 29–30).
- Reference to other relevant policies.

Volunteers should be given a copy of the volunteer handbook, and a volunteer agreement to sign at the end of the induction period.

### **Volunteer handbook**

YOTs and secure establishments are encouraged to put together a tailored volunteer handbook, containing everything the volunteer needs to know (all of which should have been covered, or referred to, during the process of recruitment and induction). It should include copies of any written policies, particularly the volunteer policy, health and safety policy, problem-solving and complaints procedure, and information about expenses.

A volunteer handbook template is available in the 'Get involved' section of the YJB website ([www.yjb.gov.uk](http://www.yjb.gov.uk)).

### **Volunteer agreement**

If at the end of the induction period both the YOT or secure establishment and the volunteer decide they want to continue, both sides should sign a volunteer agreement. This document is a brief and clear description of the arrangement between the organisation and the volunteer, and what they can expect of each other. It is not a contract, and so should not be worded like a contract of employment; it is an expression of hopes and intentions, rather than rights and obligations.

The agreement should reflect the contents of the volunteer policy, and include a copy of the relevant task description. A volunteer agreement template can be found in the 'Get Involved' section of the YJB website ([www.yjb.gov.uk](http://www.yjb.gov.uk)).

Signed volunteer agreements and service level agreements with VCS organisations (where applicable) should be in place before the volunteer carries out any activities.

## Training

### The Foundation Programme and Panel Matters Programme

The YJB has created the Foundation Programme, which provides core learning for all volunteers, covering the issues and topics that are central to understanding and working with young people who have offended (or who are at risk of doing so).

The Foundation Programme comprises:

- three group training days (focusing on young people and crime; communicating effectively; and intervening effectively)
- background reading and self-directed exercises for participants
- information about additional workshops and training opportunities.

Additional training may be necessary beyond the Foundation Programme, to equip individuals with the skills necessary for specific roles. This already exists for Appropriate Adults and Reading Matters, and the YJB has produced revised training for panel members; for other roles, it is essential that local training is provided.

### Training workshops and sharing practice

Workshops to supplement the Foundation Programme are recommended, particularly in relation to safeguarding and child protection. Others should cover issues (such as parenting or dealing with substance misuse) that are relevant to understanding young people who are at risk of, or are involved in, offending behaviour. The YJB recommends that these workshops are provided every two months, as part of a continuous, rolling training programme, and that they are open to practitioners as well as volunteers. They should be run by a relevant specialist youth justice practitioner.

Individual learning through professional development, support and supervision, as well as sharing practice with peers is also encouraged.

### Professional development

Some volunteers may wish to develop careers within the youth justice system. If this is suitable, they should be encouraged to complete the Introduction to Youth Justice course, which forms part of the National Qualifications Framework. From here, it is possible to progress to the Professional Certificate in Effective Practice (PCEP), and ultimately a foundation degree in youth justice.

For more details, see the 'Get Involved' section of the YJB website ([www.yjb.gov.uk](http://www.yjb.gov.uk)).

## Support and supervision

*The volunteer policy should give information on the main point of contact for volunteers in the YOT or secure establishment, the process of support and supervision, how often such sessions should occur, and the policies and practices required of any VCS organisations providing volunteers.*

Volunteers are not tied to the YOT or secure establishment in the same way as staff, and it is important to recognise that there will always be some turnover. High turnover, however, is time-consuming in terms of recruitment and training; and so the YOT or secure establishment needs to ensure their approach and practice is as appealing to volunteers as possible. Volunteers give freely of their time to perform essential tasks for the benefit of organisations, their staff and service users. For this to be a reciprocal arrangement volunteers need to be valued and recognised, getting something back for their commitment.

For the volunteer programme to be a positive experience for both sides, there needs to be:

- commitment to the programme from all levels of the YOT or secure establishment
- a positive work environment.
- practitioner recognition of the skills and knowledge volunteers contribute (see below)
- clear processes and procedures for the volunteer's role, including appropriate training
- practitioner commitment to working with volunteers as colleagues, rather than tolerating them and seeing them as not 'real' workers.

### Recognising the contribution of volunteers

It is important to plan how volunteers will be valued. Just as their motivations for volunteering will be different, so a variety of ways to recognise their involvement should be available. These could include:

- a simple 'thank you'
- providing access to training, which may lead to a qualification and personal development
- mention in reports and publications
- inclusion in meetings and functions
- specific celebratory events.

Establishing a practice of formally and informally recognising the valuable contribution they make to the organisation will contribute to successful retention of volunteers.

## Support

Good support and supervision procedures regulate volunteer activity and help to avoid risk in response to the organisation's overall duty of care. A named individual should be responsible for support and supervision, which should be appropriate to the role, the needs of the volunteer, and whether they have been recruited directly or through a VCS organisation. Peer support, possibly through a buddy system or volunteer meetings, offers additional encouragement and a chance to share experiences (see page 30).

## Supervision

Formal supervision meetings are an opportunity for a private conversation with each volunteer to discuss what is going well, what isn't, whether there are enough appropriate tasks, whether support is adequate, and the development of training. Volunteers should be encouraged to voice concerns early, so they can be dealt with effectively. Clear feedback should be given on both good and bad areas.

Some volunteering roles will not require such formal meetings, and other methods of giving and receiving feedback should be established, such as informal chats during an activity or regular phone calls.

A record of every volunteer's progress should be kept, as this may be needed later when providing references, dealing with problems, or asking a volunteer to leave the programme.

# Expenses

***The volunteer policy should state the YOT's or secure establishment's commitment to reimbursing volunteer expenses, together with a list of items that can be claimed.***

While the reimbursement of reasonable and specified out-of-pocket expenses against receipts is good practice, the payment of benefits in cash or kind should not be made, as this may constitute a contractual agreement. It is also not always easy to distinguish between what qualifies as an expense, and what is a payment of benefit. For example, the reimbursement of childcare costs is an acceptable expense, but the provision of non role-related training may be seen as a benefit.

Volunteers should be made aware of:

- what they can claim for
- how and when the claim should be made
- when the claim can be made
- what evidence they need to provide.

## What can volunteers claim for?

Repayment against receipts of the following types of expenses is acceptable:<sup>19</sup>

- travel to and from the site where an activity is undertaken
- travel and meals (up to £5) during the course of volunteering
- care of dependants during the period of voluntary work
- cost of protective or specialist clothing.

## How and when should the claim be made?

Repayments should be made regularly using a claim form, and the transaction should be recorded following the organisation's usual systems. Repayment of actual expenses should not affect benefits.

Only incurred expenses can be paid (i.e. payments cannot be made in advance). It is important not to pay for other items, or a flat rate for an activity that will result in the volunteer 'making a profit'. For example, if travel costs were £2, but a flat rate of £3 was paid, the extra £1 could suggest a contractual arrangement exists; it may be seen as income for income tax purposes; and it may also affect the volunteer's benefits.

<sup>19</sup> These are legitimate expenses recognised by the Inland Revenue and DSS. Up-to-date information, including the maximum level of motor mileage allowance allowable, should be checked regularly on [www.wcva.org.uk](http://www.wcva.org.uk).

# Health and safety and insurance

*The volunteer policy should state how the YOT or secure establishment will undertake their duty of care to volunteers, with reference to the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Clear links should be made to the YOT's or secure establishment's overall health and safety policy.*

## Duty of care

While the legal obligations are not as clear as they are for employees, the YOT or secure establishment does have a 'duty of care' toward volunteers. This means that if a volunteer sustains an injury while undertaking an activity, the YOT or secure establishment may be liable. The YOT or secure establishment should therefore ensure that volunteers:

- are never knowingly placed in a position of risk
- have 'due regard and concern' so as not to act in a way that will endanger the health and safety of themselves or others.

## Health and safety procedures

It is recommended that the same health and safety procedures are adopted for volunteers as for paid employees.

Volunteers should be informed at induction:

- which member of staff has responsibility for health and safety advice
- health and safety rules, including emergency procedures
- the guidelines to follow if they find themselves at risk
- how to report accidents and dangerous incidents
- where fire alarms, extinguishers, fire exits and first-aiders can be found.

## Risk assessments

Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 states that organisations have a statutory responsibility not to harm or damage the health of individuals through their involvement in activities. Depending on the activities the volunteer is involved in, the YOT or secure establishment may be obliged to carry out a written risk assessment to comply with this.

Risk assessments identify any hazard within a YOT's or secure establishment's activities, and assess the risk of harm that it might pose. Measures should then be put in place to control the risk. Risk assessments should always be carried out by those with knowledge of the organisation's activities and working practices: this includes volunteers as well as employees.

### Protocols for home visits

If volunteers are required to undertake home visits, a separate risk assessment should be undertaken to identify any concerns about potential risk and the appropriate measures to be taken. The supervisor should ensure that before a visit the volunteer:

- has already had contact with the individual/family
- checks records to see what is known about the home situation, and talks to staff and volunteers who have been to the home
- knows the YOT's or secure establishment's procedure for dealing with potential difficulty
- is provided with a mobile phone
- arranges to visit with a practitioner
- informs practitioners of the name, address and time of the visit, mobile contact number and expected time of return, and lets them know when the visit is finished
- knows only to enter the house if a member of the family or colleague is nearby, and keeps a door open if a young person has to be interviewed alone in a room
- is prepared to record all details of the visit
- is ready to finish the visit if a situation feels threatening.

### Insurance

***The volunteer policy should outline when and how volunteers are covered by insurance; in what instances volunteers are responsible for their own insurance; and what is required of external agencies deploying volunteers.***

The YOT or secure establishment should ensure that there is the best possible insurance cover for volunteers.<sup>20</sup> In certain circumstances, volunteers may have special insurance needs (for instance, if they are required to drive their own vehicles; this can affect their car insurance): again, Volunteering England provides information.

<sup>20</sup> See [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk) for information.

# Confidentiality and data protection

***The volunteer policy should state the rules on confidentiality and procedures to be followed by volunteers; outline how to work with volunteers from VCS organisations where these rules may be different; and describe how to deal with volunteers' right of access to their personal records.***

To comply with the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Data Protection Act 1998, YOTs and secure establishments need to have clear confidentiality policies in place. These should be shared with volunteers as part of the induction process; and volunteers should agree to adhere to them as part of the volunteering agreement.

It is important that volunteers are very clear about how to identify circumstances that may constitute an activity that could compromise security, and/or have implications for child protection, victim protection or self-harm. It is equally important that volunteers know the procedures to apply in those circumstances, and in particular when and to whom they should report this information.

## Volunteers from VCS organisations

Guidelines should be developed for when deploying volunteers from a VSC organisation which has confidentiality procedures that are not fully compatible with that of the YOT or secure establishment.

# Resolving problems

*The volunteer policy should include a statement outlining the process for dealing with problems and complaints raised by or about volunteers. It should outline with who, and in what circumstances, the concern should first be raised; the process for reaching agreement; and what to do if the issue is unresolved.*

A formal problem-solving and complaints procedure should be developed for volunteers, which is similar to, but separate from, that used for practitioners (so there is no risk of the arrangements with the volunteer being seen as contractual). This should outline procedures for:

- raising concerns
- dealing with complaints (both by and about the volunteer)
- resolving disputes
- referring the issue on if it cannot be resolved locally.

## Dealing with complaints

If the volunteer makes a complaint against another volunteer, practitioner or the YOT or secure establishment, this should be discussed with them. If this does not resolve the problem the volunteer should make a formal written complaint to a named senior member of staff, within a stated time period. The YOT or secure establishment should respond within an agreed time. The volunteer should have a right to appeal against the decision; but the resulting decision is final – volunteers have no legal rights to pursue their case.

If the complaint is against the volunteer, he or she should be made aware that there is a problem, and agree a way forward with his or her supervisor. It may be necessary to consider:

- retraining in particular areas
- improved or increased supervision and support
- reconsidering whether the volunteer is in the right role (another may be more suitable to his or her skills and abilities)
- whether external factors are influencing the situation.

If the problem is not resolved a more formal meeting is necessary to discuss the problem. The volunteer should have an opportunity to put their case and a time period set in which to achieve an improvement. If no improvement is achieved the volunteer can be asked to leave.

### What if a volunteer has to be asked to leave?

In the event of a volunteer being asked to leave, the situation needs to be approached sensitively; and the volunteer may become emotional. The following actions should be considered:

- informing the volunteer about the local volunteer centre, where they may find other volunteering opportunities
- following the meeting with a letter restating the decision and the reasons why it was reached
- informing staff, other volunteers, and service users that the volunteer has left (but not giving the reason for this).

# Monitoring and evaluating the volunteer programme

Monitoring and evaluating the volunteer programme will help the YOT or secure establishment to:

- measure the quality of the volunteers' experience
- identify their social and economic impact
- analyse the strengths and weaknesses.

Practitioners responsible for volunteers should decide which information is to be collected, with what frequency, and for what analysis and reporting purposes, and establish the systems needed to implement this.

## Identifying outputs and outcomes

The programme itself should have identified outputs and outcomes. For example:

### Outputs

- how diverse the volunteers are
- the number of volunteers retained

### Outcomes

- how happy the volunteers are (this may be reflected by turnover)
- whether volunteers are gaining employment or training in a related field

When volunteers are providing services that contribute to the outputs and outcomes of, for example, a preventive programme or a mentoring project, some measures may be set to monitor their activity. This may include the following.

### Outputs

- the number of young people the volunteers have supported
- the number of sessions the volunteer have undertaken

### Outcomes

- the benefit of their involvement to the young people
- change in the young person's behaviour as a result of their activity

It is important that volunteers and staff are aware of any monitoring and evaluation, what it will achieve, and how they contribute to the process.

### Monitoring volunteer satisfaction

Once volunteers have started their activities, their progress should be reviewed regularly to check whether:

- their experience of volunteering is positive
- they are still motivated
- they want to learn new skills
- they feel involved
- they feel they are contributing to the YOT or secure establishment.

Finally, an exit interview with volunteers when they leave can provide the organisation with valuable monitoring information. This can be used to inform the volunteer programme and help to retain volunteers in the future.

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