**Commitment to Volunteers**

Volunteers representing local communities are an important and valued part of the work of the Nottingham City Youth Justice Services (YJS). We hope you will feel part of our team and we will do the best we can to make your volunteer experience with us both enjoyable and rewarding.

The voluntary sector has emerged as a major social and welfare player. It prides itself on offering effective services which are flexible and sensitive to the needs of beneficiaries. We are continually reviewing all our systems to ensure good practice. Currently we operate to the following system:

* Potential volunteers will be contacted by telephone when training becomes available and invited for an interview.
* Volunteers will receive an induction pack including policies and procedures and additional information regarding the Youth Justice Services.
* Volunteers will receive relevant training for the role as a Panel Member and assessed proper to being appointed. This is usually over a 4 week training period.
* Volunteers will be treated equally and fairly.
* Volunteers act purely on a voluntary basis and incur no monetary reward. Travel expenses are reimbursed.

**Commitment from Volunteers**

* Volunteers will need to be aged 18 or over (however there is no formal maximum age limit)
* All applicants are subject to a Youth Justice Services funded Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and are asked to provide details of any criminal convictions, prior to being appointed. **N.B previous criminal convictions do not necessarily preclude applicants**.
* Volunteers are asked to commit to a minimum of 12 months volunteering after completion of their training.
* Volunteers to understand and operate within the Nottingham City Council’s policies and procedures, including confidentiality, equality and safeguarding.
* Volunteers to understand and maintain good Health and Safety practices.
* Volunteers to keep the YJS informed of any changes to contact details and availability.
* Volunteers to attend regular training, supervision and support opportunities as required.

**Youth Justice Services (YJS)**

Operational nationally since 1st April 2000, Youth Justice Services were set up by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) throughout England and Wales to provide a local level focus for tackling youth offending. The YJS is an inter-agency partnerships involving representatives from Social Care, Probation, Police, Health Authority, Education and Connexions. Together the vast skills and experience and wide resources of these agencies, work collectively to identify and respond to the problems of youth crime.

At the heart of the YJS philosophy is a community-based approach, engaging local members and reinforced by their vision of young people being part of the solution rather than the problem. Every YJS is unique, responding directly to local need. In unison they boast flexibility, adapting to challenge specific crime patterns identified within cities.

A key role of the YJS is co-ordinating and facilitating the completion of statutory orders issued by the court to young people. On a broader scale, the YJS focuses on some of the underlying causes of youth offending such as truancy, exclusions from school and lack of training and employment. Other risk factors addressed include poor parental supervision, domestic violence and abuse, peer group pressure, substance misuse and mental health problems.

One fundamental element of the work of the YJS is direct/indirect reparation. This enables young people to understand the impact of offending on victims and the community and take responsibility for their action by making amends, in a practical way, by giving up some of their spare time.

**What are Referral Orders?**

**Referral Orders** are court orders given to 10-17 year olds pleading guilty on a first time conviction, unless the charge is serious enough to warrant custody.

After appearing in a court, the young person is referred to a Youth Offending Panel who will consider the best course of action.

A **Youth Offender Panel** consists of two volunteers recruited directly from the local community, alongside one member of the Youth Justice Services (YJS), they talk to the young person, the parents and where possible the victim of the crime, to agree a tailor-made contract aimed at putting things right. This focuses on all the identified risks in relation to the young person’s life.

The contract might include a letter of apology to the victim, removing graffiti or cleaning up estates and communities. It will also include activities to prevent further offending, such as getting young people back into school and help with alcohol or drug misuse.

**In Detail**

The panel meets with the young person and their parents/guardians (when applicable) to discuss reasons for the offending behaviour and suggest ways forward.

With everyone in agreement, a contract is complied to include an element of reparation, either to the victim directly or the community at large. The contract also includes other elements to tackle the young person’s offending behaviour, for example, drugs counselling, anger management or dealing with truancy.

The contract is supervised by the YJS and reviewed every 3 months with the panel members. The conviction is “spent” when the order is successfully completed. If the young person fails to comply, the case is sent back to court and a different sentence may be given.

These panels give the community a say in creating effective packages that ensure young people who offend repair the harm done and are given positive help to prevent further offending.

**Are Youth Offender Panels just the soft option?**

The simple answer is no. These panels give the community a say in putting together a package that will ensure young offenders repair the harm done and are given positive help to prevent further offending. It is the responsibility of the panel to decide the right and most appropriate course of action, taking into account the young person’s offence and reasons for offending.

Youth Offender Panels give members of the community who want to make a difference the chance to do so and the chance to help tackle youth crime in their neighbourhood.

**Comments from young people who have attended Referral Order Panels:**

*“Having the victim at my meeting made me realise that small things you do for small reasons affect people for a long time”*

*“The driving course I was sent on by the Youth Offender Panel was really good; it made me realise the consequences of my offending”*

*“The anger management course helped me to keep out of trouble and just walk away from trouble when there is any”*

**Referral Order Panel Members**

* Must be able to commit to 12 months volunteering, after training and appointment, and a minimum of 1-2 panels a month.
* Be able to facilitate communication between the young person parent/carers, victims and other panel members.
* Be patient and non judgemental.
* Have personal integrity.
* Make an informal decision on what is the best way forward.
* Ability to work as a team.
* To plan and work with young people towards an agreed contract.
* Ability and strong commitment to work without prejudice.
* To have common sense and realistic expectations.

**“Young people need to be given time – I have that time to give”**

Exemptions: certain roles that would prevent people from volunteering in this capacity, due to potential conflict of interest, include:

1. You must not be a police officer or employed by the police authority
2. Not a Magistrate serving in Nottingham City Court, Youth Court or Adult Court.

If in doubt, please do not hesitate to contact the Nottingham City Youth Justice Services for an informal discussion.

**Panel Member Comments:**

*“Youth Offender Panels give youngsters the ability to verbally own up to what they have done and to apologise. It’s very therapeutic, watching that young person slowly understand that everything you do in life has an impact on other people. I find it really heartening to think panels really have the ability to prevent further offending and even improve relationships between children and parents. It is such a positive feeling knowing you have been part of that process. Youth Offender Panels are about community justice; it’s about ordinary people interested in fair play, who want to turn these young people around and give the victim a say”*

*“Panel meetings give young people a big wake-up call. They are made more accountable when they have to turn up and explain what they’ve done and why they’ve done it. Most of the time they are scared about the whole process, some might have made a stupid mistake and have to face up to their parents and even the victim and it makes them think ‘I don’t want to do that again’. I know all too well from my current profession how a criminal record can affect your chances of getting a job. I want to help steer these young people away from crime and give them a chance in life”*

*“We take a lot out of the community we live in and being on a Youth Offender Panel gave me a chance to put something back. As a panel member, you can use your life experiences to put things right for the victims and families. The result is a better young person with greater understanding of how offending behaviour affects a whole group of people and not just them. I have seen emerge a friendlier young person, with better self esteem, increased confidence and a more positive outlook on life.*

*“I was worried that I would sense the ‘lock ‘em up and throw away the key’ mentality when I did my training to become a panel member, but it wasn’t like that at all. My first panel meeting was an amazing feeling. I thought there would be a lot of tension in the room, but we all had the same agenda – to help that young person change their behaviour. The most amazing thing was that the victim did not harbour any animosity or anger. I found that they (the victim) were quite compassionate. To know you might make someone’s life much better is a feeling you just can’t buy”*

**Insurance Information**

**Volunteers Acting on Behalf of Nottingham City Council**

It is important that individuals volunteering to work with Nottingham City Council understand the degree to which they are protected by City Council’s insurance arrangements. This guidance note summarises the main insurance issues that affect volunteers, further information can be obtained by contacting the Insurance and Risk Management Officer, on 0115 915 4015.

**Liability Insurances**

Public Liability

Covers any damages and legal costs that the City Council is legally liable to pay to a third party arising from the authorised activities of a City Council volunteer, i.e. where the volunteer has been negligent, resulting in accidents involving injury or damage to a third party’s property.

Employers Liability

Covers any damages and legal costs that the City Council is legally liable to pay in respect of bodily injures sustained by a volunteer in the course of their authorised activities for Nottingham City Council.

**Personal Accident Insurance**

Provides cover whilst the volunteer is in pursuit of their authorised duties on behalf of the City Council.

**Motor Insurance**

If a volunteer is using their own vehicle to carry out activities on behalf of the City Council they need to check with their own insurers that their policy extends to cover their voluntary work. The City Council’s policy does not cover volunteers using their own vehicle. Volunteer co-ordinators should check insurance policies and driving licences to ensure that they are valid.

Normally volunteers would not be expected to drive a vehicle belonging to or on hire to the City Council. If for some reason a volunteer does have to drive a Council vehicle then guidance should be sought from the Insurance & Risk Management Officer and the Fleet Manager.

### Damage to Personal Property

Unless there is an act of negligence on the part of Nottingham City Council, there is no cover for damage or loss of personal property belonging to volunteers.