**Rudheath & Witton Together**

**Volunteering Policy**

1. **Introduction**

Rudheath and Witton Together (RWT) recognises the significant and valuable role that volunteers and Partnership Members have in creating, implementing and enhancing our services and making the community a better place to live. We believe that being involved with RWT should be a worthwhile and rewarding experience for all volunteers/ Partnership.

We want to encourage, develop and support volunteer involvement in our partnership and our activities. For the purpose of this policy, a volunteer is a person who volunteers on our behalf, with volunteering defined as: “ *Any activity which involves spending time, unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives, or to benefit the environment”* (Helping Out Survey Volunteering England 2007).

Within RWT, volunteers serve on our partnership, identify gaps in provision in the local area and help with the delivery of our services. The Partnership take the lead on our priorities for the area. Volunteers undertake supplementary and supportive tasks, complementing and supporting the work of paid staff. RWT believes that our relationship with our volunteers is one of mutual responsibility and commitment within which RWT and our volunteers both have rights and responsibilities.

We hope that volunteers will enjoy their involvement and gain from it in terms of their own personal objectives. We expect all involved in RWT to work positively with our volunteers and, where appropriate, actively involve them in the project, complying with the procedures detailed below.

1. **Purpose and Advantages of adopting a Volunteer Policy**

This policy is RWT framework of best practice and procedures, which we will follow when recruiting, selecting, managing and supporting volunteers. The policy will:

* recognise the respective roles, rights and responsibilities of volunteers and RWT
* establish clear principles for the involvement of volunteers
* give a framework for recruiting and supporting volunteers including people from underrepresented groups
* commit RWT to identify and adequately meet the financial and personnel costs of the volunteer programme and to support volunteering through funding and other forms of help
* recognise the contribution all its volunteers make in a range of ways

1. **General**

In involving volunteers we will be guided by the following principles of good practice:

* Volunteers receive specific role descriptions and volunteer agreements, ensuring they have clear expectations of their role and responsibilities within RWT.
* Volunteers have a named person as their main point of contact and are provided with regular supervision to consider progress, and discuss any concerns.
* Training and support will be offered to all volunteers. We ensure that volunteers feel part of RWT by enabling them to contribute to our on-going development by attending relevant training, network meetings, development sessions and events. Partnership members may be offered further opportunities to help them complete their role in RWT.
* Information given to volunteers, and forms they are asked to complete, are clear and easy to understand and are kept safely and securely in line with data protection procedures.
* Volunteers are offered reimbursement for out of pocket expenses.
* Within resources currently available, RWT will try to meet additional equipment or support needs to enable disabled people to participate fully as a volunteer.
* We aim to identify and solve problems at the earliest possible stage; procedures are in place to deal with complaints either by or about volunteers.
* We do not regard volunteers as unpaid employees and do not expect volunteers to undertake inappropriate responsibilities or roles.
* All staff and volunteers are expected and required to follow our Equality and Diversity Policy and treat each other and all visitors with respect and fairness.
* Our Health and Safety Policy/ Risk Assessment and insurance covers volunteers, and we take care not to expose volunteers to risks to their health and safety, and that of others. Volunteers/Partnership may have occasions where they are required to undertake tasks alone, in these circumstances they must follow the RWT Lone Working Policy.
* There is no formal/legal agreement between RWT and its volunteers. When volunteers give their time for a given number of hours, this is entirely at their discretion.
* We will update our guidance in line with relevant changes in either law or in the scope of volunteer roles.

1. **Identifying Volunteering Opportunities**

* If a member of staff / partnership member/volunteer identifies a new voluntary opportunity/ gap in local provision, they should discuss the proposal and its implications, in terms of resources and support and the current RWT Plan, with the RWT Project Manager/ Events and Community Development Officer.
* A Volunteer Role Description/ activity will then be drawn up with support from the Volunteer co-ordinator.

Volunteer role descriptions ensure volunteers are clear as to what is required and expected of them and will minimally include:

* The volunteer’s role title
* A list of tasks and responsibilities
* Times/days and location of volunteering activity
* Skills/experience that are required/desired/essential
* Whether the role is anticipated to be short term or ongoing
* The person who will be their main contact for some roles it may be possible for the volunteer to “build on” certain tasks once their confidence and experience has grown.

1. **Recruitment**

RWT have a number of different roles available. We will use a variety of approaches to ensure we recruit volunteers that are representative of the community and the people who use our services. This will include social media, leaflets, local press and word of mouth.

1. **Selection**

The selection process for volunteers interested in volunteering for RWT will include:

* Completing a volunteer registration form with up to two referees if requested.
* An informal chat with the RWT volunteer co-ordinator to discuss the role and tasks involved.
* Attendance at an induction to RWT session where they will learn about RWT, their role and RWT policies/ procedures.

If references are requested they will be accepted from suitably qualified people, who do not need to have been former employers, but should not be close relatives. Two references are required where possible. Any prospective volunteer, for who may find it difficult to get reference/s, should speak to a member of the RWT team.

Where a volunteer role requires a volunteer to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, if the volunteer has completed one within the previous 3 calendar months, we will not ask them to complete a further check but will request to see the original notification.

We reserve the right to request a further DBS check based on the applicant’s criminal record or other relevant information may have changed since its issue. Having a criminal record will not necessarily be a bar to anyone who applies to be involved with our work and only relevant convictions will be taken into account when considering a prospective volunteer’s application. Please see Appendix 1 – Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy.

At any point in the selection process, if a potential volunteer is considered unsuitable for a role, RWT will explain their reasons to that volunteer.

1. **Induction**

All volunteers will receive an induction, which will be in keeping with the duration and nature of the volunteering activity.

At the induction all volunteers will have details of the volunteer co-ordinator who shall be responsible for:

* Providing the volunteer with a description of the volunteering role outlining specific and general tasks, responsibilities and who they will report to.
* Ensuring that volunteers are aware of their agreed responsibilities with regards to confidentiality/ appropriate behaviour and boundaries. Volunteers are bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as paid staff.
* Organising a planned induction to the organisation, which will vary dependant on the role of the volunteers. Also ensuring volunteers are aware of the Volunteers’ Information File which contains policies, procedures and forms
* Ensuring volunteers have adequate work space, equipment and services necessary to perform their tasks effectively and safely.
* Making up and maintaining a confidential file for the Volunteer. The file will be held in a secure manner in compliance with the Data Protection Act. The file should contain the application form, references, the volunteer agreement, induction record, record of the dates, times and activities undertaken, supervision record, training record and emergency contact details.
* Providing on-going support including one to one meetings , networks and training on a regular basis

1. **Trial Period**  
   All volunteers will have a 4 week trial period. In this time during volunteers will receive training, support and feedback, including the chance for them to feedback their views and concerns. At the end of the trial, if it is decided that the volunteer is not best suited to the needs of RWT an alternative voluntary role may be suggested and support will be given to find this. It is hoped that, if a volunteer considers a volunteer role does not fulfil their requirements, they feel able to withdraw their help without fear of embarrassment.
2. **Volunteer Agreement**

All volunteers will sign a Volunteer Agreement, which outlines the voluntary arrangement between the volunteer and RWT. It will also be signed by the RWT employee who will be the designated supervisor for the volunteer. It is binding in honour only and is not intended to be a legally binding contract of employment. This agreement is intended to be flexible enough to take account of changes in a Volunteer’s circumstances or in the requirements of RWT

1. **Volunteer Expenses**

RWT believes that no one should be at a financial disadvantage through volunteering their time on a freely chosen basis, and is committed to meet, within resources available, reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred by our volunteers should the volunteer wish to claim. These will include:

* Travel between home and place of volunteering activity. This includes public transport or a mileage allowance. If traveling by public transport, the ticket must be retained, by way of a receipt. If the volunteer is using his/her own transport, a record of all mileage must be kept.
* Travel to training courses/ sessions relating to RWT or Big Local. In some cases expenses can be claimed from Big Local and must be claimed on the Local Trust expenses forms.
* The mileage allowance paid will be concurrent with the HMRC rate. If a journey is in excess of 15 miles (round trip) volunteers are required to check the arrangements with the Volunteer Manager beforehand. Volunteers, claiming this allowance, must notify their motor insurance company and ensure their policy specifically includes “business use”. A copy of the certificate and MOT (if needed) will need to be seen by RWT before mileage can be claimed.
* Car parking charges. The car park ticket must be retained, by way of receipt.
* Other out of pocket expenses as agreed with RWT staff/ Chair.

Expenses must be claimed via the RWT Volunteer Expenses Form and should be claimed on a weekly or monthly basis. We reserve the right not to pay any claims after a period of 3 months. See the RWT Expenses Policy and Procedure for further information.

1. **Problem solving**

In any organisation, problems can sometimes occur and whilst it is hoped that this will not be the case, if there are any concerns volunteers should in the first instance speak to the Volunteer Co-ordinator who will try and resolve the matter informally.

If the matter remains unresolved, reference will be made to the RWT Problem Solving Procedure, a copy of which is in the Volunteer’s information File.

Volunteers will not be subject to disciplinary procedures nor have access to grievance procedures, both of which are for employees only.

If there are concerns about the conduct or performance of a volunteer, their supervisor should investigate to find out what is happening. This includes talking with the volunteer concerned.

If conduct or performance is unsatisfactory, the volunteer should be informed that s/he will be offered support and guidance for a period. The object of this support will be to encourage improvement. If a volunteer does not meet our standards of performance or the steps we have taken to encourage them to improve do not work, the volunteer will be supported to find more suitable voluntary activities.

If behaviour, which in RWT’s view, is equivalent to gross misconduct has occurred, then the volunteer activity will be terminated immediately

1. **Ending Involvement**

Although both RWT and a volunteer can end their volunteering arrangement at any time and without any notice, (if serious misconduct this will result in the agreement ending immediately). RWT will aim to give a volunteer at least 2 weeks-notice of the end of the role, hoping that they will offer the same to us.

The decision to ask a volunteer to leave will be a last resort. It might not be possible to keep a volunteer, for reasons nothing to do with the person’s performance, due to a project ending.

It may be necessary ask a volunteer to leave due to, for example, poor performance, misconduct, attendance irregularities, DBS issues or criminal convictions. Every effort will be made to ensure that the reasons for ending an involvement are clarified, recorded and shared with the volunteer.

Where a specific volunteer role within RWT has proved not to be suitable for a particular person, the Volunteer co-ordinator will assist them to explore other options. At the end of a volunteer’s time with RWT their views and experiences will be captured in an exit questionnaire. This will gather information on the following areas:

* Their “highs and lows” whilst volunteering with us
* Their views on the training and support they were offered or received during their time
* Feedback on how the volunteer performed

**12) References**

Once a volunteer has been with RWT for a period of 4 months or more we will be willing to provide a reference, based on a volunteer’s service with RWT, indicating the skills and knowledge acquired as well as personal qualities observed.

**13) Insurance**

RWT Volunteers are covered by the LTO’s Public liability insurance policies. LTO and RWT are responsible for the actions of its employees / volunteers in the course of their duties and will take all reasonable precautions to prevent or minimise accident, injury, loss or damage.

**14) Monitoring and Review**

It will be the responsibility of the Volunteer Co-ordinator to ensure that the Volunteer Information File is in accordance with current legislation, best practice in relation to managing and supporting volunteers.

**Appendix 1 – Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy**

# **Introduction**

Rudheath and Witton Together (RWT) is committed to offering fair recruitment and equal opportunities for all volunteers and partnership regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependants, age, physical/mental disability or offending background.

RWT actively promotes equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential and welcome volunteers from a wide range of candidates, including those with criminal records. Volunteers are selected based on their skills, qualifications and experience.

RWT understands that people are often ashamed and embarrassed about their cautions and convictions and/or fear they will not be treated fairly because of them. Please rest assured that if we do ask about criminal records we will handle the information you provide in confidence.

This policy will be made available to all DBS applicants at the start of the volunteering process to reassure that RWT does not discriminate unfairly against any subject of a criminal record check on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed.

As an organisation assessing applicants’ suitability for voluntary positions which are included in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order using criminal record checks processed through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), RWT will comply fully with the DBS [code of practice](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-code-of-practice) and undertakes to treat all applicants fairly.

A DBS check is only requested when it is both proportionate and relevant to the voluntary position concerned. For those positions where a DBS check is required, the recruitment information will contain a statement that a DBS check will be requested in the event of the individual being offered the position.

RWT can only ask an individual to provide details of convictions and cautions that RWT are legally entitled to know about and that are not protected

An application for a criminal record check is only submitted to DBS after a thorough risk assessment has indicated that one is both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned.

Procedure  
Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar you from volunteering with RWT. This will depend on the offence and the relevance of the offence in relation to the volunteering role you wish to apply for.   
  
The factors taken into account will include the responsibilities of the position, the vulnerability of the client group, the nature of the offence(s), the number and pattern of the offences (if there is more than one), how long ago the offence(s) occurred and the age of the offender when the offence(s) occurred.

There will be a risk assessment based on the above to decide if a volunteer is suitable for the position. The decision of the RWT partnership is final.

# **Rehabilitation Periods**

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| **Sentence/disposal** | **Rehabilitation period if aged 18 or over when convicted/disposal administered** | **Rehabilitation period if aged under 18 when convicted/disposal administered** |
| A custodial sentence of over 48 months | Never spent | Never spent |
| A custodial sentence of over 30 months but not exceeding 48 months | 7 years from the date on which the sentence (including any licence period) is completed | 42 months from the date on which the sentence (including any licence period) is completed |
| A custodial sentence of over 6 months but not exceeding 30 months | 48 months from the date on which the sentence (including any licence period) is completed | 24 months from the date on which the sentence (including any licence period) is completed |
| A custodial sentence of up to 6 months | 24 months from the date on which the sentence (including any licence period) is completed | 18 months from the date on which the sentence (including any licence period) is completed |
| Fine | 12 months from the date of the conviction in respect of which the fine was imposed | 6 months from the date of the conviction in respect of which the fine was imposed |
| Community order | 12 months from the last day on which the order has effect | 6 months from the last day on which the order has effect |
| Simple, caution, youth caution | Spent immediately | Spent immediately |
| Compensation order | On discharge of the order (i.e. when it is paid in full) | On discharge of the order (i.e. when it is paid in full) |

Follow this link for guidance and criteria which explains the [filtering of old and minor cautions and convictions](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dbs-filtering-guidance) which are now ‘protected’ so not subject to disclosure to employers