



Volunteer Policy

1. Introduction

It is the policy of the Kent Estuary Youth Project (KEY) to encourage volunteer adult workers and Young leaders (adult leaders 18+, Young leaders 14+). KEY acknowledges that volunteers can contribute in many ways and that their contribution should benefit young people using the provision, staff, local communities and the volunteers themselves.

KEY is therefore committed to working in ways that are encouraging, supportive, ensure fairness and consistency and legal compliance of volunteering.

2. Relevance and accessibility

This policy is of relevance to all current and potential volunteers, as well as those concerned with recruiting, supporting, developing and managing volunteers or promoting voluntary activity within KEY's activities.

The content of this policy will be made readily accessible to current and potential volunteers electronically through The 'KEY' website with printed copies available from the Trustees or Youth Work Staff on request.

All new 'KEY' Trustees and Staff will be informed about this policy as part of their induction process and made aware of the vital importance of volunteers to the achievement of the objectives of the organisation and the need to work closely and positively with volunteers, actively seeking and supporting their involvement in appropriate activities.

3. Defining Volunteering

The Compact Code of Good Practice on Volunteering (2005) states that volunteering is:

“... an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives.”

“You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.” *Kahlil Gibran*

“Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” *Margaret Mead*

4. Relationship between paid staff and volunteers

KEY seeks to maintain a balanced, effective and mutually beneficial relationship within the paid staff and volunteer partnership. Paid staff provide volunteers and youth group committees with support in the structure, organisation, direction and day-to-day management of activities, together with appropriate levels of accountability; while volunteers provide added value to the activities and relationships by performing a wide range of roles, contributing their time, flexibility, experience and specialist skills. Thus volunteering is a legitimate and crucial activity, integral to KEY and supported and encouraged by it, complementing that of paid staff.

In order to achieve this and to support good working relationships, tasks performed by staff and volunteers will be clearly defined and reciprocal expectations acknowledged, so that all concerned are sure of their respective roles and responsibilities.

KEY will seek to ensure views of volunteers are fairly represented and valued.

5. Equality and Diversity

KEY is committed to equality of opportunity for the whole community and believes that the diversity of the community is a major strength which contributes to the social, economic and spiritual capital of the area.

KEY commits to making sure that no one involved in its activities is treated inequitably or in an unlawful or unjustifiably discriminatory manner. For more information, please see the projects Equality & Diversity Policy.

6. Volunteer recruitment and selection

A new volunteer is expected to complete the volunteer pack relevant to them (including providing two referees to their character) and to participate in an informal interview with a designated person. This discussion should be very much a two-way process including what the volunteer wishes to offer KEY and to gain from volunteering. It should probe the candidates' attitudes and motives and their suitability to work with children and young people, in line with the advice about interviewing volunteers in the Good Practice Bank on the Volunteering England website:

www.volunteering.org.uk/resources/goodpracticebank/core+themes/recruitment/index.htm

All potential volunteers should be provided with a clear understanding of their potential role in the form of a concise and current role description.

DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) checks must be completed for all volunteers prior to the commencement of their role.

7. Disclosure and Barring Service Checks (DBS)

KEY is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and expects all trustees, staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Work within the project involves substantial access to young people and is therefore exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Therefore, all trustees, staff and volunteers are required to declare any pending prosecutions or convictions they may have, even if they would be otherwise regarded as 'spent' under this act, as well as any cautions or bind-over orders.

'KEY will carry out enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service Checks. The disclosure of a criminal record, or other information, will not necessarily stop anyone from gaining an appointment unless KEY considers that the conviction renders the person unsuitable. In making this decision, the project will consider the nature of the offence, how long ago and what age the person was when it was committed and any other factors that may be relevant. Failure to declare a conviction, caution or bind-over is likely to result in the withdrawal of any offer made.

8. Young People as volunteers

KEY recognises the value of encouraging young people to develop their skills, knowledge, confidence and self-esteem by taking responsibility and becoming actively involved in activities and projects. This may include their designation as a 'peer leader', 'senior member', 'junior volunteer' or Youth Committee member from the age of 14+. Such roles are distinct from that of volunteer under the terms of this policy.

At sixteen years old a young person can become a volunteer in line with this policy, completing the same paperwork as all other volunteers, including an application, references and a DBS check.

Young people (16-18) who become volunteers are still within the age range of KEY's provision and relevant consideration in regard to appropriate relationships & duty of care continue to apply.

9. Induction, supervision, training and development

New volunteers will be provided with an induction programme which will enable them to feel welcomed and to become effective members of the team as quickly as possible. Within this the volunteer will be made aware of information relevant to them, such as access to policies and material relevant to the specific location, role or group.

Volunteers will have a nominated person, who will support them through the induction programme and offer ongoing informal supervision chats and support.

All volunteers will be issued with a form of identification that must be worn at all times when the volunteer is on duty.

At the end of a mutually agreed initial settling-in period, an informal discussion should be held between the volunteer and a nominated person, to review positive experiences as well as discuss any areas of concern. Reviews should normally take place at 12 weeks and 24 weeks after the commencement of volunteering.

Volunteers will be expected to attend core training opportunities, to meet relevant basic training needs. KEY will seek to ensure that there is flexibility in training times and dates.

KEY is committed to the development of our volunteers and will endeavour to support them in developing their contribution.

10. Problem solving

KEY seeks to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently in line with the projects policies and procedures. Clear procedures are therefore in place to deal with complaints by or about volunteers, and these will be followed should a problem occur.

The nominated Youth Worker within the project, would initially be responsible for handling any problems regarding volunteer conduct or volunteer complaints (unless the complaint was against the worker). They would seek to ensure that the volunteer's views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly and in accordance with KEY's policies & procedures.

11. Insurance

KEY has Employers' and Public Liability Legal Insurance to protect it against third party claims that result from KEY activities. It covers damage or injury or death to persons, or accidental damage or loss to third party property when on KEY activities. KEY Youth Work Staff and Volunteers are included in this insurance.

Only youth work involving safe activities are covered by the insurance. All activities classed as dangerous sports and bonfire and firework parties etc. are not covered and volunteers (and staff) are banned from running such activities.

KEY insures all owned property and contents for which it is responsible. However, the cover does not extend to property belonging to volunteers. Therefore, all personal items should be kept safe or be locked away. Volunteers should also be aware that personal property of staff and young people is also not covered and exercise appropriate care.

12. Fitness, and Health and Safety

Volunteers must be able to meet the demands of their agreed role without risk to their physical health and wellbeing. There are a number of roles available for our volunteers to fit various abilities and where possible support will be given.

Risk assessments will be provided as appropriate that will relate to specific tasks or locations relevant to the volunteer's role, activity or location.

13. Expenses

Volunteers will be reimbursed for approved travel costs as agreed in advance with the Youth Worker or designated person. Volunteers are required to submit a KEY travel claim form on an agreed timescale. Claims that have been severely delayed before submission may not be paid. All receipts and tickets should be attached to the claim form; otherwise the claim will not be valid.

The rate of reimbursement will be as agreed by the KEY Trustees and is subject to periodic review.

Volunteers are expected to minimise travel costs where possible.

14. Volunteering while receiving benefits

Potential volunteers who are in receipt of benefits should establish if there is any impact on their benefits by reading the pamphlet 'Job Centre Plus: Volunteering while receiving benefits' or accessing the information online at:

http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/stellent/groups/jcp/documents/websitecontent/dev_015837.pdf

15. Record keeping

KEY will hold a record of names and addresses of all registered volunteers for the purposes of security and health and safety, together with a record of training undertaken, supervised sessions, etc. This information will be subject to the Data Protection Act and will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Information held will be kept for a minimum of six years after the volunteer leaves KEY for the purpose of providing references, safeguarding, etc.

KEY complies with the requirement of the Freedom of Information Act, further information is available on request.

16. Monitoring and evaluation

KEY will review the effectiveness of the volunteering within all its activities by monitoring the engagement, support and development of volunteers and their contribution to the objectives of the organisation.

17. When Volunteers leave

Exit interviews may be offered to volunteers who leave KEY in order to gain information and suggestions that may help us to improve our effectiveness.

All forms of identification, equipment and resources must be returned to the youth worker or designated person.

18. Summary of rights and responsibilities;

KEY recognises the right of volunteers:

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Document No. 12 Rev B

- To know what is expected of them
- To have clearly specified lines of support and supervision
- To be shown appreciation by KEY
- To have safe working conditions
- To be insured (except for their personal belongings)
- To know their rights and responsibilities and the lines of accountability if something goes wrong
- To be paid agreed expenses
- To work within their competences
- To be free from discrimination
- To have opportunities for personal development as appropriate
- To contribute positively to the volunteering opportunity
- To have the opportunity to make new friends
- To be given a job reference on request
- To be able to enjoy the experience

And in return expects that volunteers will:

- Be reliable
- Be honest
- Respect confidentiality
- Attend training, supervised sessions and team meetings where agreed
- Carry out tasks in a way which corresponds to the aims and values of KEY and be sympathetic to its ethos.
- Work within agreed guidelines, policies and procedures
- Notify sickness and absence to the appropriate person as soon as possible
- Where possible give reasonable notice before withdrawing from the volunteering commitment