

## **PERSON SPECIFICATION: Community Panel Member**

### **Person Specification:**

Community Panel Members come from all sections of the local community and no specific educational qualifications are required. Community Panel Members must be aged 18 or over and live within the City of Sunderland.

### **It is essential that Community Panel Members:**

- 1.** Have the time and commitment to attend training and to fulfil their role as an active Community Panel Member for a minimum period of one year.
- 2.** Have an interest in working with the victims of crime and young offenders, to assist them in recognising the consequences of crime and to prevent further offending.
- 3.** Have an understanding of the effects of crime on the local community.
- 4.** Have a non-judgemental approach and a respect for different ethnic, cultural and social backgrounds.
- 5.** Have the ability to communicate and engage with all sections of the local community, including the victims of crime and young offenders.
- 6.** Have the ability to relate to, and work with, others.
- 7.** Have the ability to identify relevant information and assist in the negotiation of plans with young offenders, their families/carers and victims of crime.
- 8.** Are able to provide two satisfactory references and comply with police check requirements.

# **ROLE DESCRIPTION: Community Panel Member**

## **Purpose**

To serve as a member of a Community Panel, working with young offenders subject to Referral Orders, their families/carers and victims of crime.

## **Opportunities:**

To be a part of community panels, playing an active role in creating intervention programmes, which ensure the young person make a real difference to their community, whilst addressing personal problems, which may have led to the offending.

This process also gives victims the chance to have a say in what happens to the young person who offended against them.

Being a Community Panel Member will allow you to develop many skills, whilst increasing your understanding of the Youth Justice System.

## **Community Panel Member's Responsibilities**

- 1** To attend Community Panel Meetings on a regular basis.
- 2** To attend introductory training before commencing work as a Community Panel Member, and additional training days as an when required.
- 3** To attend and participate fully in supervision sessions on a group and individual basis.
- 4** To identify and communicate your support needs and make effective use of the support mechanisms provided.
- 5** To follow relevant Policies and Procedures as laid down by the Youth Offending Service in the delivery of your role.

## **Responsible to:**

Referral Order Team Manager

## **What are Referral Orders and Community Panels?**

Referral Orders were introduced in April 2002 and are an entirely new way of dealing with young people who offend aged between 10 and 17.

Referral Orders are used with most young people appearing in Court for the first time and who are pleading guilty to the offence. The Court will decide the length of the Referral Order and refer the young person to a Community Panel.

## **What will Community Panels do?**

Community Panels will be made up of 2-3 trained members of the local community and a member of the Youth Offending Service staff. Community Panel meetings will take place at various locations throughout the City of Sunderland.

The Community Panel will meet with the young offender, their family/carers and, where appropriate, the victim of the crime will be actively encouraged to take part. The aim of the meeting will be to:

- Consider how and why the offence occurred, and what can be done to prevent further offending by the young person.
- Ensure that the young person takes responsibility for their behaviour.
- Increase the young person's understanding of the harm done to the victim, the consequences of their offence and how they can make amends to the local community.

Working in partnership with the young person, their family/carers and the victim, the Community Panel will draw up a contract for that young person. Contracts will be designed to meet the specific needs of each young person. The contract will include an element of restorative justice, this could mean:

- Letter of apology
- Direct/Indirect reparation (carrying out some practical work for the victim/community)

Combined with a programme of support which will address risk factors or problems which led to the young person committing the offence. For example drug and alcohol work or education support.

Young people will be asked to sign the contract and will be expected to complete the agreed activities during the period of their Order.

The Community Panel will meet with the young person every three months until the Order is completed to review their progress and discuss any difficulties or problems, which may have arisen.

In the final month of the Order the Community Panel will meet the young person to ensure full compliance with the identified contract, and confirm the order will end.

However, if they fail to comply with the terms of the Order, or re-offend during the period of the Order, they will be returned to Court for sentencing.

Young people will only have one opportunity of a Referral Order (there are certain circumstances where an extension is available as long as the order doesn't exceed 12 months)

## **Who can become Community Panel Members?**

- It is important that Community Panels reflect all sections of the local community.
- Community Panel Members require no special skills or formal qualifications, but commitment and enthusiasm are essential.
- Have an awareness of the impact of crime on the local community and an awareness of the issues facing young people.
- Have the ability to communicate with a range of people, including young people, including young people, their families/carers, victims of crime and Youth Offending Service staff.
- Be aged 18 or over and live within the City of Sunderland.

If you have any questions about your eligibility, please do not hesitate to contact us.

## **How much time will Community Panel Members have to commit?**

- Community Panel Members will be expected to commit to Panels for a minimum of 12 months at a negotiated level. Community Panel Meetings will take place at different times during the day and evening. Panel Members will be asked to identify their availability. Each Community Panel meeting will last approximately 2 hours.
- Community Panel Members will also be **expected** to attend regular supervision and training sessions with the Referral Order Team.

## **Will Community Panel Members receive training?**

Training is an important way of looking at a volunteer's existing skills and abilities and developing their confidence and knowledge as a Community Panel Member. All Community Panel Members will be expected to attend an introductory 48 hour training course before commencing work, which will cover:

- Youth offending
- Work with victims of crime
- Effective communication skills
- Working as a Community Panel Member

100% attendance will be required, and we would ask that only those who are able to commit to the whole training course complete the application form.

Community Panel Members will also be **expected** to attend additional training throughout the year, on a 3 monthly basis.

### **Will Community Panel Members receive support and advice?**

Ongoing support is an important part of developing a Community Panel Member's skills and abilities, enabling them to become more effective in their role.

Community Panel Members will be expected to review/evaluate their own/others practice at Panel Meetings, following each meeting they attend. This will allow Panel Meetings to identify their own training/development needs.

Group supervision/support evenings will be held every 3 months, which will provide Panel Members with the opportunity to meet and support their co panel members and receive information in relation to practice/service developments as needed.

One-to-one supervision with Referral Order Manager will be available at request.

### **How long do Community Panel Members have to serve?**

All Community Panel Members will be expected to commit to serving for a minimum of one year. However continued service will be reviewed at the 2-year stage.

### **Will Community Panel Members be paid?**

The purpose of the Community Panel is to recruit members of the local community to work on a voluntary basis. Therefore, Community Panel Members will not be paid. However expenses incurred whilst acting as a Community Panel Member, such as travel costs/child care will be reimbursed.

### **Do I have to service as a Panel Member in my local community?**

Community Panel Members will be given the option of servicing on panels in their local community or elsewhere in the City of Sunderland. Some Panel Members may feel uncomfortable about serving on panels where they may come into contact with people they may meet on a day-to-day basis. Community Panel Members will be asked to specify their preferences at the end of the introductory training course.

### **What would happen if a Panel Member knows a victim or a young person?**

It would not be appropriate for someone to serve on a Community Panel if they knew the victim of the crime, the young person who had committed the offence or their family/carers. In these instances, the Community Panel Member would need to notify the Referral Order Team Manager so alternative arrangements can be made.

### **Will community Panel Members undergo police Clearance?**

Any person with access to children and young people, whether as an employee or volunteer, must undergo police clearance. Protecting vulnerable children and young people is a priority.

As part of the application form, prospective Community Panel Members are required to disclose any previous convictions, including any that are regarded as 'spent'. Previous convictions will not automatically disqualify an applicant from becoming a Community Panel Member, but a failure to disclose a conviction will be viewed seriously. Applicants disclosing previous convictions will be required to discuss these at the interview stage.

All information received will be treated as strictly confidential and destroyed after six months.

## **How do people apply to become Community Panel Members?**

Enclosed with this information leaflet are a number of forms, which must be completed:

- ❖ The Application Form, which provides information about a volunteer and their reasons for wanting to become a Community Panel Member.
- ❖ A Declaration of Previous Convictions Form. All applicants must complete and return this form, even if you have no previous convictions.
- ❖ An Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form. Sunderland Youth Offending Service is committed to Equal Opportunities, and no application will be discriminated against in terms of race, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, ability or age. This list is specific, but not exclusive. In line with this commitment we need to monitor all applications and would request that this form is completed. Any information given will be treated as strictly confidential and this form will not be used in the selection process.

## **Your views can make a difference**