

Witness Service Student Volunteer Guidance

Statement of Intent

Student volunteers are actively encouraged to apply to our volunteer roles within the Witness Service. We recognise that students can make an appropriate and significant contribution to our service. We believe that by providing opportunities for student volunteers, they can gain a range of skills and experiences that could support them in their future careers. They can also develop confidence and motivation that will in turn benefit the communities they serve.

We expect that all volunteers will:

- Respect other volunteers, colleagues and court staff in line with our Volunteer Dignity at Work policy
- Always maintain the confidentiality of witness information
- Be sensitive towards others
- Be approachable and pleasant
- Dress in accordance with our specified dress code
- Complete mandatory training as requested

The Witness Service can:

- Provide a copy of the role profile and public liability insurance
- Provide support and supervision from a dedicated Team Leader
- Provide a standard reference of time served volunteering
- Permit volunteers to complete personal reflective statements that must not include any personal information relating to Witness Service clients, cases, colleagues or other Criminal Justice professionals in or out of court.

The Witness Service cannot:

- Facilitate formal student placements
- Support any use of witness data, data from court or support professionals or data relating to hearings by student volunteers to further their educational studies/degree/course
- Sign off on student volunteer time sheets or guarantee any volunteer a certain number of hours/days due to the unpredictability of the role
- Participate in appraisals or feedback on performance other than normal support/supervision of your role as a volunteer
- Support any research that requires conducting interviews or surveys, observation or gathering of quantitative data from clients and / or professionals in the criminal justice system including witness service staff.

Aims

The aim is to ensure a consistent approach in the recruitment, management and supervision of student volunteers. All student volunteers must be familiar with this guidance prior to starting their role with the Witness Service. Whilst we endeavour to meet the needs of all our volunteers - our witnesses, their dignity and wellbeing, will always be paramount. If a student's volunteering has the potential to or breaches the

confidentiality of a witness or affects their dignity or wellbeing, the volunteering role will be ended with immediate effect.

Guidelines Recruitment of volunteers

As with all volunteer roles, student volunteers are required to complete our online application form. Applications are encouraged from anyone aged 18 and over.

After an application has been submitted the applicant will be contacted by a member of our volunteering team who will discuss the needs of the role further and provide a copy of these guidelines.

If both the volunteer and volunteering team agree the role is suitable, the student volunteer will be invited to attend an interview with a team leader. A 'student volunteer' tag will be added to their record on our database and a note that they have received a copy of this guidance. All other aspects of the recruitment process remain the same. We expect student volunteers to attend court one full day per week (8.45am to 5pm) or half-day sessions with the advance agreement of their Team Leader (8.45am -1.00pm or 1.00pm - 5pm).

Student volunteers should keep their Team Leader informed of their availability and where possible 4 weeks' notice should be given. Particularly when an extended break is needed due to exams or outside of term time.

In the event of unplanned absence student volunteers should contact their Team Leader directly via phone or e-mail or leave a message with the court staff.

Induction and training

Before volunteers can work with witnesses they will have a generic online induction session with the volunteering team. This will be followed by a period of online and in court training including the shadowing of experienced volunteers. Each volunteer's progress through the training will be monitored through regular check-ins with their Team Leader and once completed, volunteers will complete an accreditation consisting of a guided discussion and an observation of practice.

All volunteers must sign a confidentiality agreement stating they understand their role with regards to maintaining the confidentiality of sensitive information.

Expenses

Out of pocket expenses will be reimbursed in line with the Volunteer Expenses policy.

Supervision and support

Throughout their volunteering role, student volunteers are expected to report directly to their Team Leader / Deputy Team Leader. The Team Leader will explain daily expectations of the role. The Team Leader will pass on essential information about witnesses. We reserve the right to end a volunteer role if we feel a student volunteer is unable to meet the needs of our witnesses or the criteria for accreditation.

Safeguarding

All student volunteers will complete a safeguarding e-learning module as part of their initial induction. This will include the Witness Services procedures for reporting safeguarding concerns, what constitutes a safeguarding concern and who to pass this information to. All volunteers have a duty to pass on any safeguarding concerns regarding

colleagues or witnesses. Safer working practice will also be shared, including lone working procedures.

No volunteers will be left unattended with witnesses during shadowing. If this occurs it must be reported to a Team Leader who will investigate why the situation occurred and take appropriate action to ensure it does not happen again. The use of mobile phones is not permitted whilst supporting a witness. The use of Witness Service equipment for personal use is prohibited.

We understand that student volunteers may volunteer to support their studies, but they are prohibited from taking photos of witnesses or interviewing them for use in coursework. If students are completing "personal reflection" statements on their experience of the criminal justice system, this should not mention Witness Service clients, cases, colleagues, other Criminal Justice professionals or any other identifiable information.

Volunteers must not name witnesses or discuss cases on social media or have contact with witnesses via social media. If a witness or any other person involved in a case (including supporters) is known to a volunteer prior to a case starting this must be disclosed to their Team Leader.

Health and safety

All volunteers are inducted into health and safety procedures at the Witness Service as part of their initial training. This will include slip and trip hazards, keeping the environment safe and fire drill procedures.

Courts are non-smoking buildings.

We request all volunteers provide an emergency contact number during onboarding which is stored on their record.

Equal Opportunities

We recognise that the activity of volunteering can provide an individual with experience and opportunities for self and career development. In accordance with our EDI Policy, our volunteer roles are open to everyone irrespective of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age or marital status. Where a prospective volunteer demonstrates hostility to, or a clear lack of support for equal opportunities, she/he will be deemed automatically unsuitable for a volunteer role with the Witness Service. All volunteers are required to make a commitment to this policy. A copy can be given on request.

Confidentiality and data protection

All volunteers will come into contact with sensitive information regarding cases and witnesses. All information volunteers are exposed to must be treated with the highest level of confidence. Information must not be discussed beyond court. Witnesses, volunteer colleagues and staff should not be named, and information must not be shared outside of the Witness Service. Further information can be found in the Witness Service Volunteer Confidentiality statement and Data Protection statement.

Problem solving and complaint procedure for volunteers.

Volunteers are encouraged to discuss any issues or concerns with their Team Leader in the first instance. If this is not possible or appropriate they can talk to an Area Manager or the Volunteering Team.

If issues continue to be unresolved informally a volunteer can make a formal complaint using the volunteer complaints policy.
Whistleblowing will be covered during the induction session.

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