

# WARWICK VOLUNTEERS

## SCREENING POLICY

Warwick Volunteers has a duty of care to protect its volunteers and the members of the community it works with. All projects within Warwick Volunteers contain elements of risk for volunteers and service users alike. Both groups are vulnerable and protection needs to be in place in order to minimise risk and liability. Screening volunteers through criminal records checks is one of the initial ways in which Warwick Volunteers can begin to address issues regarding duty of care and provide a more successful and effective service to the local community. All volunteers will receive appropriate guidance and training on working with their client group, so that they can protect themselves from potential risk/allegations.

### *Section 1: Seeking Disclosures*

- 1.1 Warwick Volunteers requires all volunteers whose volunteering is defined as Regulated Activity to obtain an Enhanced Disclosure with Children's Barred List from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). DBS checks which have not been processed by the University of Warwick are not accepted.
- 1.2 Disclosures are free for volunteers. The University of Warwick uses the services of GBG to process applications. GBG charge an administration fee for each Disclosure, which is paid for by Warwick Volunteers.
- 1.3 Volunteers will not be allowed to begin volunteering on projects with children or vulnerable adults until Warwick Volunteers have received their Disclosure.
- 1.4 In accordance with University of Warwick safeguarding policy, volunteers will be DBS checked every 2 years as a minimum standard. This means that, if a student volunteered in the previous academic year, they would not be DBS checked again at the start of the current academic year, providing there has been no break in their registered student status with the University during that time.
- 1.5 All volunteers applying for a new Disclosure will be asked to sign up for the DBS Update Service.
- 1.6 If volunteers register for the DBS Update Service, Warwick Volunteers will check volunteers against the Update Service every 2 years as a minimum standard.
- 1.7 Some projects may require further screening and selection processes to help ensure that volunteers are given suitable placements. These might include a DBS check every year, application forms, short interviews, seeking further references or consulting with a safeguarding professional on the suitability of a volunteer to undertake the placement.
- 1.8 The GBG database will show when a volunteer's check is complete. If the database shows that there is content on the volunteer's certificate, the Warwick Volunteers Manager will contact the student, and follow the steps laid out in Section 3.

### *Section 2: Storage of Information:*

- 2.1 Paper copies of Disclosures, containing all details of a volunteer's record, are sent only to the volunteer.
- 2.2 Photocopies of documents provided as identification for a DBS check are stored securely until information about the Disclosure is received from GBG. Documents will then be confidentially destroyed.

- 2.3 If the Disclosure shows a previous conviction, documents considered by the Disclosure Panel and the determination made by Designated Person for Child Safeguarding for the University will be retained on a file with restricted access. (see Section 3.1)
- 2.4 The Certificate of Good Conduct is checked and a record is made on the database, a copy is not retained.
- 2.5 Every volunteer has the right to see the information stored about them.

#### *Section 3: Making Decisions Regarding Sensitive Information:*

- 3.1 Should a volunteer's Disclosure reveal a previous conviction, warning or other information, the volunteer will be interviewed by the Warwick Volunteers Manager and a member of the Warwick Volunteers Steering Committee. The volunteer will be asked for comments about the information on the Disclosure and informed about how the decision will be made regarding whether they will be allowed to volunteer with children or vulnerable adults. A record of this interview will be made and referred for a decision to the Designated Person for Safeguarding at the University of Warwick.
- 3.2 The decision will take into account the nature of the Disclosure and the sensitivity of the project (e.g. whether it involves unsupervised contact with children). A confidential written record of the decision will be made and a record of the information provided by the volunteer and the decision kept in a secure place. Sensitive documents should be retained no longer than necessary, generally this would be up to 6 months but might be far longer dependent on setting. See **Appendix 1** for notes on how this decision should be made.
- 3.3 Should the Designated Person for Child Safeguarding for the University determine that the student is suitable to undertake the type of volunteering activity cited, the volunteer will be advised in writing and a copy will be retained on the records.
- 3.4 If a decision is made that a volunteer cannot participate in a particular project, Warwick Volunteers will endeavour to find another appropriate project for the volunteer.
- 3.5 A note of the decision will be made on the student's record on the Warwick Volunteers database.

#### *Section 4: Certificates of Good Conduct (Overseas criminal records check):*

- 4.1 Warwick Volunteers recognises the limitations of seeking Disclosures for volunteers who have not been resident in the UK during the previous five years. In line with best practice guidance, the University of Warwick requires all volunteers who apply for a Disclosure and have been resident in a country outside the UK for a continuous period of 6 months or more in the previous 5 years, to obtain a Certificate of Good Conduct from the country(ies) in which they have lived.
- 4.2 Warwick Volunteers recognises that it is not possible to obtain a Certificate of Good Conduct from all countries, and that significant costs can be involved where they are available. In order to minimise barriers to volunteering, Warwick Volunteers will inform potential volunteers as early as possible of this requirement and where possible in pre-arrival information issued by the University. Warwick Volunteers will reimburse reasonable expenses incurred by volunteers when obtaining a Certificate of Good Conduct.

#### *Section 5: Sharing information*

- 5.1 When the selection and screening process has been completed, Warwick Volunteers will contact the community partner/school by email to confirm the name(s) and student ID number(s) of the volunteer(s) and the name of the project on which they will be volunteering. The email will be sent from [volunteers@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:volunteers@warwick.ac.uk) prior to the placement commencing and will confirm that Safeguarding checks and appropriate training have been completed.
- 5.2 The volunteer will be emailed with a document confirming completion of their Suitability Check to volunteer with children or vulnerable adults in Regulated Activity. The email will be sent from [volunteers@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:volunteers@warwick.ac.uk) and should be shown to the community partner/school on arrival. The student

will also provide ID by showing their University of Warwick student card which contains their photograph and student's ID number which can be matched to the ID number on the email sent by Warwick Volunteers.

- 5.3 The procedures outlined in 5.1 and 5.2 provide written confirmation from the University of Warwick that Safeguarding checks have been carried out. The student ID card provides evidence that the person presenting themselves to volunteer is the same person on whom the checks have been made. This is in line with guidance contained in Keeping Children Safe in Education, DfE, September 2016 (Part 3, para 116) and complies with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (2014). This replaces the previous procedure where students were required to show their DBS Certificate on arrival at their volunteering placement.

When making a decision regarding a volunteer's participation in a project if their Disclosure reveals a previous conviction, warning or other information, a risk assessment will be undertaken to determine the likelihood of the volunteer presenting a risk to children or vulnerable adults. The factors that will be considered in making this judgement will be:

1. **The nature of the project**, in particular the opportunity for un-supervised access to children or vulnerable adults as part of the project activities. Group-based projects will in general be regarded as lower risk.
2. **The seriousness of the offence** committed as determined by the standard UK sentence tariff for the offence.
3. **The context of the offence**, and the likelihood of this context being relevant to the volunteering activity.
4. **The relevance of the offence to the volunteering activity**, and the likelihood of a similar offence being committed in the volunteering context.
5. **The likelihood of re-offending** assessed by the general character of the individual, their attitude towards their conviction, time which has elapsed since the offense was committed, whether there is a history of offending or the offense was an isolated incidence. For example, an individual with an isolated offence for which remorse is expressed and evidenced by subsequent actions may be considered to present less risk than an individual with multiple offences over a sustained period of time.

At all times, the decision on whether or not a volunteer may participate in a specific project will be based solely on an assessment of the risk that the volunteer's involvement will pose to the safety or well-being of children or vulnerable people.

If a decision is made that a volunteer cannot participate in a particular project, Warwick Volunteers will endeavour to find another appropriate project for the volunteer.

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