

DORSET RECLAIM



INVOLVEMENT OF EX OFFENDERS POLICY

This policy sets out Dorset Reclaim's position in involving ex offenders in its work. As an organisation committed to equality and diversity, we recognise the contribution that all people can make as volunteers or paid employees. We undertake to treat all those that wish to work with us fairly and ensure that wherever possible, we will offer them the opportunity to contribute to our project in ways that will not put them or other people that we work with at risk.

Background

Ex-offenders represent a significant group in society, with almost a quarter of men and women having a criminal record, often for minor offences committed in their youth. Among this group are many people with the ability, experience and enthusiasm to be excellent volunteers or paid employees.

The safety of those that we work with is paramount, but the vast majority of potential volunteers who have a criminal record pose no risk to children, young people or vulnerable adults and have a positive contribution to make to our work. They wish to meet new people, learn new skills, and make a difference in the same way as everyone else who has ever thought of being a volunteer.

There is often a degree of embarrassment or shame in having to disclose their criminal record and overcoming the fear that simply because of that record they will be rejected.

Our principles

We will take a measured and commonsense approach in dealing with applications from ex offenders. The small number of people who might cause harm will be excluded from any opportunity to do so.

We do not wish to automatically exclude any category of offender from volunteering, although we must take into account that at any time, volunteers and others that we work with, including clients, may be vulnerable due to

- substance or alcohol misuse
- learning difficulties or mental health issues
- age or gender

We are proud of our approach to diversity and wish to be as inclusive as possible. We do recognise that on occasions however we will need to exclude certain offenders. This is not a decision that will be taken lightly, but may occur where:-

- a risk assessment has shown or implies a general risk to the public that is unacceptably high
- an offenders attitude to women, ethnic minority or people of a different sexual orientation, or other group is unacceptable
- an offender is restricted by licence conditions from any formal activities with any individual under 18 years of age.

Agency responsibilities

It is an expectation of any referring agency working with us that they will declare any known offending to the Project Manager to enable a thorough risk assessment to be undertaken and the most safe and suitable volunteer role to be found for each individual. Should we discover a situation where the referring agency has not disclosed in full an offending history, the placement may cease with immediate effect.

An individual's responsibilities

We expect any individual who wishes to volunteer with us to declare their full offending history. We will meet with each potential volunteer to discuss the role they are interested in and why, take up references as appropriate and give a two week trial period as with all our volunteers if they appear suitable. We also offer support and supervision as required or requested. Should we discover that an individual has not disclosed all their offending history, they may be asked to leave with immediate effect.

Whilst we will work fairly with ex offenders, any individual who commits an offence whilst on Dorset Reclaim property or while representing Dorset Reclaim in any aspect of their work, is likely to be automatically excluded from the project and the relevant agencies and authorities informed.

Our responsibilities

It may be necessary to exclude certain types of ex offender at certain times or days in the Dorset Reclaim calendar for set periods. This will be at the discretion of the Project Manager and in consultation with the relevant agencies and individuals to maintain a safe working and operating environment.

Dorset Reclaim must maintain its position of ensuring that the safety of all those who use the project is its paramount consideration when deciding who is suitable to be a volunteer. As a result of this we reserve the right to exclude any individual from acting as a volunteer if we believe it is the best interests of the project and those we work with.

Signed by the
Chairman

Date