



# 'How we work'

## Information for co-op members and volunteers

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These phones are not always on, as we work part-time.

Please ensure you have your colleagues' numbers.

#### Please note:

**Other organisations are welcome to borrow or adapt from this document.**

**Please credit Voice of Youth, Hackney. Thanks!**

[www.voice-of-youth.org](http://www.voice-of-youth.org)

## **Our principles**

Voice of Youth was set up on certain principles which we should work towards as an organisation and as individuals. It's good to talk about what they mean; we will do this through informal discussions, at meetings and through training. These principles are available on our website and repeated here:

1. Young people choose whether and how to become involved with our groups and work.
2. Our work starts from the needs and wishes of young people in Hackney and all funding bids will reflect this.
3. We involve young people in taking action to improve their own lives and the lives of their communities;
4. We promote equality and challenge oppressive structures in society, institutions, groups and individuals, including in our own organisation.
5. We promote co-operative decision making in our own work, in our youth groups and in the communities where we work.

## What makes a good youth worker?

Being a good youth worker is something we are all learning every day; we can always get better. People become good youth workers through practice, reflection, discussion, training and education. There are courses in youth work from level 1 up to degrees and masters. We also learn with and from young people and our colleagues.

Here are the top guidelines we expect VOY youth workers (including placement students and volunteers) to follow:

1. Look for the best in every person; find your own connections.
2. Stay professional: think about when to be serious and when to be joke – think about how, when and with who.
3. Be a good listener.
4. Work with your colleagues, be co-operative.
5. Think about the safety of those around you, as well as your own.
6. Take part in session debriefs, supervisions, VOY meetings, and training.
7. Aim to be approachable, thoughtful and fair.
8. Never share your personal contact details, and do not socialise with young people outside of work sessions (including on social media). If this is an issue because you live in the local area or have family / friends who are involved, discuss this with your supervisor / colleagues.
9. If you are unsure or worried about anything, talk to any of your fellow volunteers and co-op members in a debrief or by phone / email / text / whatsapp, or bring it up in supervision, and/or at a co-op meeting.

# Keeping young people safe from abuse (safeguarding policy)

Date of last revision: February 2014

Everybody who works with children / young people has a legal and moral obligation to keep them safe from abuse. Abuse can be physical, emotional or sexual. At Voice of Youth we believe in keeping our policies short so every worker including volunteers can be very familiar with them. However, safeguarding is a complicated issue so workers including volunteers must ensure they discuss concerns with colleagues and attend regular training on safeguarding issues. In addition, co-op members meet regularly to look at safeguarding issues in VOY.

## Do's and don'ts

We use a 'traffic light system' to show how co-op members and volunteers can safeguard children:

### **RED: STOP. These things should never be done.**

- Don't run a session on your own with a group of children/young people unless agreed by the co-op.
- Don't meet up with a child / young person outside work time (unless they are part of your existing family / social life: discuss any questions with colleagues).
- Never promise a child/young person you will keep a secret and never ask a child/young person to keep a secret.
- Don't give or buy a child/young person cigarettes, a light, alcohol or drugs.
- Don't share your personal contact or social media details with children/young people.
- Never lend / give money outside of an emergency situation.
- Never harm a child/young person physically and avoid play fighting.
- Never make sexual comments, nor physical contact that could be perceived as sexual e.g. kissing.

### **AMBER: THINK. Do not do these things without a good reason. Discuss these with a colleague, preferably someone with more experience than you, and bring up at the next VOY co-op meeting.**

- We do not have a 'no touch' policy at VOY. However, be aware of young people's personal boundaries and how your actions may come across.
- We do not usually talk to parents/carers about something their child told us, or inform them about how they behaved. There may be exceptions, so discuss this with colleagues.
- Where possible we avoid shouting at children/young people.
- We would not usually bring a friend / relative to work outside of public events, or invite adult members of the public in to sessions.
- Usually we would not give a child / young person a lift in a worker's car.

### **GREEN: GO. Things we can do.**

- Listen to a child / young person who is trying to tell you something.
- You can speak with a child/young person one-to-one, but ensure you are in public view and inform colleagues.
- Always take action if you are worried about the well-being of a child/young person.

- Always take action on any complaint or allegation about another staff member.
- Always debrief after every session and let your colleagues know if you are worried about a child's safety or wellbeing.

### **If you are worried that a child / young person is being abused**

If a child says that he or she is being abused or provides information that suggests that they are being abused, the person receiving that information should:

- Be calm and reassure the child / young person
- Discuss with the child / young person who needs to be told about the situation – say that you will probably need to discuss it with one of your colleagues, and that if we are really worried we might need to tell someone else for more advice
- Take what the child / young person says seriously
- Use open questions rather than putting words in their mouth, and don't put pressure on them or ask too many questions
- Let the child / young person know you understand what they have said and you will act upon it
- Get in touch with the safeguarding contacts (below) as soon as possible

If the child / young person does not say anything but you are concerned for other reasons (e.g. persistent unexplained injuries, information from other people) get in touch with the safeguarding contacts (below) for support or advice.

### **Safeguarding contacts**

Please ensure you know who the VOY safeguarding coordinators are, and put their phone numbers in your phone – if you're not sure, ask any colleague. If you cannot contact a safeguarding coordinator and you think the issue might be urgent, contact the local social services team immediately for further advice (Hackney Social Services out of hours support: 020 8356 2710 or 020 8356 4865). Alternatively, contact the NSPCC 24-hour helpline that provides counselling, information and advice to anyone concerned about a child / young person at risk: 080 8800 500.

### **Complaints and concerns:**

If a child, parent / carer, colleague or member of the public complains that a worker is behaving inappropriately with children / young people, or if anybody raises any concerns about Voice of Youth or any of its workers or volunteers, ensure this complaint / concern is taken seriously. Use the contacts below to discuss the issues and gain further support. The matter must be raised at the earliest possible VOY co-op meeting. If necessary, a special meeting may need to be called and / or social services contacted.

### **Staff recruitment**

**All** staff including volunteers **must** apply for an Enhanced DBS through Voice of Youth **before** starting any work with children / young people. All staff including volunteers must share any criminal record (including spent convictions) with a safeguarding coordinator. Staff will not be unfairly prejudiced if they have a criminal record that does not affect their ability to work with children / young people. Staff including volunteers who are waiting for their DBS to be returned may start work but must be supervised **at all times** by a worker with DBS clearance. DBS checks must be renewed every three years.

**Working with young colleagues**

Some of our volunteers and co-op members are also young people (aged 16-17). Some are 'young people' (participants) on one of our programmes while volunteering on another, whereas others are purely volunteers or co-op members. In either case, they must be treated as young people in relation to this policy. They also need to be treated as colleagues when we are working alongside them, and they must do their best to understand and follow this policy in relation to the children / young people they work with.

## Co-op member or volunteer?

Co-op member	Volunteer
Legally and morally responsible with others to run Voice of Youth safely, and to a good standard.	Help out with Voice of Youth without having to take so much responsibility.
Being very committed – attend all (or at least 90%) of your youth work sessions and meetings unless for unavoidable reasons, let colleagues know and find cover where necessary.	Attend everything you have committed to, and please let us know if you can't, but don't worry if you can't make it every time.
Commit to at least 6 months-1 year, and please give at least 2 months' notice before leaving / taking a long break	Commit to at least 6 months, and please give at least 1 month's notice before leaving / taking a long break
At present co-op members mostly do voluntary work. Paid 3 hours per month for meetings. Potentially paid for some sessional work. Some co-op members choose to be unpaid.	Unpaid. May receive thank-you's such as vouchers for special projects, etc.
Some experience of youth work needed	No experience of youth work needed
As a co-op member you cannot usually be a 'young person' in any VOY group	If you are a young volunteer, you can attend one VOY group while volunteering at another
<p>Will receive travel expenses for unpaid work.            Free refreshments provided at meetings.            VOY will organise free training, socials, etc.            You will have a supervisor but no manager!            You have an equal right to have your say at meetings!</p>	

## Volunteers' agreement

Between Voice of Youth and [enter name of volunteer]: .....

### Agreement by volunteer:

#### I agree that I will:

- Aim to attend 50% or more of the monthly co-operative meetings and let people know when I can't come
- Be clear about what groups I am committed to working on regularly
- Give my colleagues as much notice as possible if I cannot attend a session with young people
- Work towards learning about and upholding VOY's principles
- Work towards VOY's policies, especially around working safely and supportively with young people
- Bring it up at a supervision if I would like to have more / less / different responsibilities
- Intend to commit to VOY for at least 6 months if possible and aim to give 1 month's notice if I need to leave or take a lengthy break

**I intend to** contribute around ..... hours per week / fortnight, and discuss any changes at a co-op meeting.

My responsibilities will include (tick / cross out):

- Youth worker at ..... group every week / every fortnight
- Youth worker on other projects e.g. school holidays
- Providing cover for absent volunteers if available
- Other .....

I understand that if I do not keep to this agreement it will be discussed at a co-op meeting and/or supervision. I will have the chance to give my perspective at a co-op meeting. If necessary I can be asked to leave but this will be avoided if possible.

**Signed by volunteer:** .....

**Print name:** .....

### Agreement by Voice of Youth towards volunteers:

#### VOY will:

- Ensure everyone has the right and the space to contribute views and ideas, including if they are different from others' opinions
- Value my contribution as a volunteer without further expectations
- Provide a supervisor who will meet with each volunteer for at least one hour every three months
- Pay reasonable travel expenses for any voluntary work undertaken, and provide refreshments at co-op meetings, planning sessions, supervisions, etc
- Make decisions fairly at co-operative meetings, taking everybody's view into account
- Be open to challenge, including on issues of equality and anti-oppressive practice

- Provide occasional training, development opportunities and socials
- Write a reference for job or study applications
- Write a placement report and provide additional placement-related supervision, if agreed

**Signed by (as many members as possible, on behalf of the co-op):**

**\* Any changes should be discussed at a co-op meeting \***

# Co-op members' agreement

Between Voice of Youth and [enter name of co-op member]: .....

## Agreement by co-operative member:

### I agree that I will:

- Take responsibility for my communication with the group
- Commit to attending monthly co-operative meetings, aiming for 90% attendance (not including illness or other important reasons – but I will let everyone know and if it's ongoing I will discuss it with everyone)
- Be clear about what groups I am committed to working on regularly
- Give colleagues a minimum of two weeks' notice of planned absences at my regular sessions with young people, and take responsibility for finding suitable cover if necessary
- Commit to upholding and promoting VOY's principles
- Take joint responsibility for the legality, safety and sound finances of VOY
- Register as self-employed and declare my income (if I want to be paid for any VOY work)
- Follow VOY's policies, especially around working safely and supportively with young people
- Bring it up at a supervision if I would like to have more / less / different responsibilities
- Intend to commit to VOY for at least six months to one year, and give 1-2 month's notice if I need to leave or take a long break

**I intend to** contribute around ..... hours per week / fortnight. My responsibilities will include [tick / cross out below]:

- Youth worker at Lea View every week / every fortnight
- Youth worker on other projects e.g. school holidays
- Other youth work
- Providing cover for absent volunteers / co-op members if available
- Being supervisor for co-op members / volunteers
- Other .....

I understand that if I do not keep to this agreement it will be discussed at a co-op meeting and/or supervision. I will have the chance to give my perspective at a co-op meeting. If necessary I can be asked to leave but this will be avoided if at all possible.

**Signed by co-op member:** ..... **Print name:** .....

## Agreement by Voice of Youth towards co-op members:

### VOY will:

- Provide a supervisor who will meet with each co-op member for at least one hour every three months (more often for those with weekly contact with young people)
- Ensure everyone has the right and the space to contribute views and ideas, including if they are different from others' opinions
- Pay reasonable travel expenses for any voluntary work undertaken, and provide

- refreshments for co-op meetings, planning sessions, supervisions, etc
- Make decisions fairly at co-operative meetings, taking everybody's view into account
  - Be open to challenge, including on issues of equality and anti-oppressive practice
  - Provide occasional training, development opportunities and socials
  - Ensure that it is clear whether paid work is available and how decisions on paid work are made – see 'paid work for cooperative members', below
  - Write a reference for job or study applications

**Signed by as many members as possible, on behalf of the co-op:**

**\* Any changes to this agreement should be discussed at a co-op meeting \***

## Paid work for co-operative members

VOY is a **workers co-operative** so all VOY co-operative members are seen as workers, whether they are paid or not. Being a co-op member entitles you to be considered for paid work. At present, because VOY is a very small organisation getting off the ground, being a co-operative member usually involves voluntary as well as paid work from its members. We are working towards this being a choice, but we are not there yet.

### To be a paid VOY worker:

You need to register as self-employed and give the co-op your self-employment reference number.

### How much do I get paid?

At present, all VOY co-op members are paid £13.50 per hour on a self-employed basis for any paid work. This is a sessional rate and you are responsible for your own tax, NI, etc. All paid work must be agreed in advance by the co-operative.

### What will I be paid for?

- Paid co-op members can claim 3 hours for each monthly co-op meeting they attend
- Sessions with young people, planning work, additional meetings, etc may be paid or unpaid, depending on decisions made at co-op meetings
- Decisions on paid work are made at co-op meetings. Decisions should be made fairly, and every co-operative member and volunteer can ask if they are unsure about how decisions have been made.

The following will be taken into account when deciding what work should be paid:

- What funding do we have? E.g. sometimes we have funding to pay workers for a summer project or a weekly group. Then we can guarantee paid part-time work for a set number of hours over a specific time period. This should be made clear at a meeting.
- Do we have money in our unrestricted funds? Sometimes we can pay workers from our unrestricted funds, if we ensure we leave enough in unrestricted funds for other essential expenses and contingencies.

Who should be paid if there is not enough money to pay everyone who needs / wants to be paid?

- This should be decided at co-op meetings, taking into account factors such as who needs the work, who has been working regularly on this particular project / task, who has been putting work in to the co-op, who will be able to be reliable over a long term and for every session, having a mixture of experience on the team (e.g. it might be good for a more experienced and less experienced youth worker to run a project together), having a diverse team (e.g. a mixture of younger and older workers, as well as thinking about diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, etc.)

### How will I be paid?

You need to submit an invoice at the end of each month, and you will be paid by bank transfer. You cannot submit your invoice early or late unless this is agreed. There is a template available for invoices.

### What if I am being paid for an upcoming session but I can't make it?

Inform your colleagues at the session, especially your fellow co-op members and whoever coordinates the project. If you are not ill, please find another co-op member to cover your work. They can claim payment for the session if it is a paid session. If you are ill, the co-op *may* be able to pay you as well – discuss this with your supervisor or at a co-op meeting – and one of your fellow co-op members will try to find cover for you. Once cover is arranged, please do not change the arrangements, as your colleague might be relying on the money.

### **Unpaid co-op members**

Some co-operative members may be *unpaid*, which means they currently waive any payment (for example, maybe they do not want to register as self-employed, or maybe they already have enough paid work). Members who have waived payment in the past can change their mind and request at a co-op meeting to be considered for payment again, as long as they are registered self-employed.

# Joining VOY

## **If someone wants to join as a co-op member or volunteer:**

- What would they like to do for VOY?
- How long can they commit for? (Min 6 months if possible)
- Are they willing to work according to VOY's principles?
- Do they have any experience of youth work or similar? (Preferred but not essential)

## **Checklist for taking on prospective volunteers / co-op members:**

- Have most or all co-operative members and volunteers agreed (at a meeting or by email) that we should take on this person?
- Has a co-operative member had an informal meeting or chat with them?
- Check the availability of the prospective volunteer / co-op member, and if there are any factors relating to which group they might work with.
- Check that the prospective volunteer / co-op member is aged 16+ and ask them about any criminal record. If a criminal record might be considered a danger to children or young people or to VOY, discuss with other co-operative members before going further.
- Prospective volunteer / co-op member should then be invited to an induction meeting and asked to bring a CRB/DBS certificate (if they have one) and their ID.

## **Induction**

An induction session introduces you to VOY's work before you start. It is usually about 2 hours long and is likely to include:

- Meeting other VOY workers / volunteers
- Discussing your hopes and fears for your work at VOY
- Going through this pack as discussion, including our principles and the safeguarding policy
- Completing and signing your volunteers/ co-op members' agreement
- Completing and / or showing your DBS, ID, references, etc.
- Any questions?

## **Before starting, a new volunteer / co-op member must:**

- Complete an induction
- Show us a DBS/CRB certificate that is less than 3 years old. (Co-op members: write down the date and reference number and send to Tania) OR apply for a DBS certificate (VOY will arrange and pay for this).
- Show us ID – if you have a DBS/CRB certificate, show us a reliable form of photographic ID that proves you are the person named on the certificate. If you do not have a DBS/CRB certificate, you need to show at least 3 forms of ID, which are legally defined – we will send you the latest list. (Co-op members: write down which ID documents you have seen, and check the names match).
- Reference: Unless we know you well, we will need to see at least one reference from someone who can comment on your suitability to work with children and young people.
- Complete and sign the volunteer / co-op member agreement

## **After this checklist is complete**

- Hurray, you can start! Check you know your work dates and times and get the

contact numbers of other team members on that session, so you can inform them if you are unwell or cannot make a session.

- You should be assigned a supervisor who you can meet with regularly to share any concerns and reflect on your work. This may not happen immediately but it should be put in place soon.
- Once you receive your DBS certificate, you need to bring it to show to a co-operative member, who will write down the reference number and date, and will check any convictions are the same as what you told us.

## Questions

### **I need a letter / signature / reference from my manager / from someone at VOY**

You can ask your supervisor if they will do the paperwork or give you a reference, or you can ask any co-op member.

### **What's supervision? What's a supervisor?**

A supervision is a chance to talk and learn by spending time with an experienced youth worker. It is your time to talk about how your work is going, what is going well, how you are getting on with young people and colleagues, what you could do better, any support or training you need, any ideas you have had, and any concerns you have, and anything else! If you are on placement you can also talk about your course learning experiences and requirements. You can set your own agenda, or your supervisor can suggest things to talk about.

### **Why doesn't VOY have managers?**

We want to work cooperatively, and as much as possible value each other equally and have an equal say in decisions. We don't think we need people telling us what to do: we can make more fair and better decisions if we do it together. Each youth group or task has one or two or more people who are responsible for it, and responsibilities can always be shared or changed so we are all learning new things. Major decisions (such as who has what responsibilities, and things that affect all of us) are made at cooperative meetings where everyone gets a say.

### **Why do all cooperative members get paid the same hourly rate?**

In the capitalist world, things that make money are valued more highly than things that don't make money, and people are given status and paid accordingly. In the youth work world, this often means that people in the office get paid more than people doing the actual youth work – we don't agree with this. Why should someone who is good at filling in forms get paid more than someone who is good at getting young people to try something new? Why should someone who goes to lots of meetings get paid more than someone who is good at talking on young people's level? We want to learn from each other so all of us can get better at all of these skills, and more. Everyone who is ready to take the responsibility to be a youth worker / cooperative member becomes an equal member and gets equal hourly pay to everyone else. This challenges all of us to think beyond normal hierarchies.

# Equality and Diversity Policy

Voice of Youth

Last update: March 2013

Equality and diversity are at the heart of all of Voice of Youth's core principles:

- 1. Young people choose whether and how to become involved with our groups and work.*
- 2. Our work starts from the needs and wishes of young people in Hackney and all funding bids will reflect this.*
- 3. We involve young people in taking action to improve their own lives and the lives of their communities;*
- 4. We promote equality and challenge oppressive structures in society, institutions, groups and individuals, including in our own organisation.*
- 5. We promote co-operative decision making in our own work, in our youth groups and in the communities where we work.*

At Voice of Youth we believe in keeping our policies short so every worker including volunteers can be very familiar with them. We are committed to promoting equality and diversity in our work with young people, with each other, and in the wider world. This is a practical policy arising from conversations between youth workers and young people, and will continue to be developed.

Youth workers will:

- Challenge young people to think about language and attitudes which discriminate against others.
- Learn about equality and diversity through training and education, and through individual and group reflection and evaluation.
- Run sessions with young people on equality and diversity issues.
- Think about equality and diversity in terms of who uses our services, who works for us, and how we represent people on our website and publicity materials.
- Do all we can to include all young people (e.g. avoid bans or exclusions where possible, even if behaviour is challenging).
- Listen to quiet people as well as confident people.
- Challenge bullying.
- Create working agreements with groups of young people.
- Make links between groups of young people from different areas or different backgrounds or experiences.
- Work with young people to challenge inequality in society.
- Provide snacks and food appropriate for the people in the group, e.g. Muslims, vegetarians.
- Give choices of activities where possible so different young people can feel included.
- Think about fairness and making it clear how decisions are made, e.g. who comes on trips.
- Think before organising competitions – how to make sure those who lose don't feel bad.

VOY as an organisation will:

- Pay all youth workers the same hourly rate.
- Encourage young people to gain experience and become youth workers

themselves.

- Involve all workers and volunteers in decisions about running VOY.
- Think about equality when making decisions.
- Try to ensure a diverse group of workers.
- Avoid hierarchical structures.

# Health and safety policy

Voice of Youth

Last update: March 2013

At Voice of Youth we believe in keeping our policies short so every worker including volunteers can be very familiar with them. We are committed to making sure young people and youth workers are kept safe while engaged with VOY. This does not necessarily mean removing every element of risk, as risk is an essential element of learning and living. This is a practical policy arising from conversations between youth workers and young people, and will continue to be developed.

All youth workers including volunteers should:

- Check the environment is safe before every session / activity.
- Make the immediate environment safer where possible, e.g. remove things that could trip people up, ensure fire escapes are available.
- Talk with young people about safety before and during activities.
- Encourage young people to think about and discuss risk and safety where appropriate, e.g. ask them to help with safety briefings, making play spaces safe, looking after each other, telling us when they see something dangerous, etc.
- Encourage young people to help us to solve safety issues such as conflicts where this is appropriate, but give them active support and do not leave them alone or isolated to sort things out.
- Encourage young people / colleagues to wear seatbelts where these are available.
- Avoid working alone with young people, and never do this without informing a colleague.
- Include safety in discussions when developing working agreements / group agreements.
- Have informal and organised discussions and activities around health issues.
- Tell the organising worker or any other VOY co-op member about any safety concerns, and bring any safety concerns to a co-op meeting.

The organising youth worker(s) for each group / activity should:

- Ensure there is a safety briefing for young people before trips, outings and risky activities.
- Make written risk assessments before all residential and risky activities, and discuss these with all colleagues taking part.
- Ensure we have a signed consent form for all trips and risky activities including parents / carers' contact numbers, medical information and allergies.
- Ensure adequate staff numbers for each activity, cancelling activities if necessary.
- Ensure there is time before and after each session for workers to plan, evaluate, reflect on and discuss any concerns.
- Provide healthy snacks / food where possible.
- Ensure qualified / experienced instructors are there to oversee hazardous activities (e.g. canoeing).
- Notify parents/carers when we are late back from trips.
- Notify parents/carers about any accident or illness their child experiences when they are with us. If it is potentially serious, notify parents/carers immediately.

Young people should:

- Tell a youth worker if they see something dangerous.
- Wash hands carefully before cooking and eating.
- When playing outside, stop playing when cars come.
- Listen carefully to safety briefings.
- Behave calmly in public spaces.

VOY as an organisation should:

- Discuss all accidents and near misses at co-operative meetings and keep records.
- Discuss any safety concerns at co-operative meetings.
- Have first aid kits available at every venue, and keep an accident book.
- Encourage workers to attend safety, first aid and safeguarding training.
- Ensure the safeguarding procedure is followed and all workers / volunteers are aware of it.