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Revolution Youth Staff and Volunteer Handbook

UPDATED 18.06.2023

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VALUES

Revolution Youth launched in 2021 to work with young people in Wythenshawe. We operate with a Christian ethos and are welcoming to all young people between the ages of 11-18, and we have three core values; **respect**, **value** and **love**.

RESPECT

All young people are worthy of respect in every given situation. Although the world may teach that respect is earned, not given, at Revolution Youth respect is freely given, even where it is not returned. Even where a young person has been hurtful, has shown poor behaviour, or has been disrespectful to others, it is vital that they are respected regardless. This does not mean that poor behaviour is not managed, but that it is done in a respectful way. In general, this means young people are much more likely to show respect in return.

VALUE

The life of every young person is precious, and has an inherent value. We can help young people to recognise this value in themselves by supporting them in their aspirations, or helping them to find aspirations where they have none. We can help them strive for better for themselves, and come to the realisation for themselves that their lives have meaning and purpose.

LOVE

Love underpins everything that Revolution Youth stands for. Every young person should be able to come to a session and feel loved by the team, regardless of their background, the day they've had, or whether they experience love in their home life. Love is unconditional on behaviour, and can be demonstrated in many ways, big and small - from giving up hours of our time to mentor, to taking the time to learn names, there are many ways we can show love to our young people.

SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding is a key consideration of the leadership of Revolution Youth, and all information in this handbook is designed to be in line with the Kings Church Manchester safeguarding policy. If there is any doubt over a particular section, please refer to this policy for matters of child safety.

DBS CHECKING

All staff and regular volunteers must undergo a DBS check at the commencement of their time on the team. A potential volunteer may visit as a one-off, either for a particular event (e.g. stewarding for a large event) or to assess whether they would like to join the team, but as soon as it becomes regular, a DBS application must be made. Until a DBS check has been successfully completed, no volunteer should be left alone with a group of young people, and must be supervised accordingly.

Revolution Youth will meet the cost for this check, but volunteers are asked to be mindful that there is a cost to it, so should only request one when there is a genuine desire to join the team.

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

We are covered under the Kings Church Manchester safeguarding policy, which should be referred to for details regarding any safeguarding topics. All team should have access to this policy and be familiar with it.

RAISING CONCERNS

Any team member should be able to raise a concern at any point. Typically, this should be done firstly with the Session Leader. If for any reason the team member feels unable to do this, or if the concern involves the Session Leader, they can speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (named in the Safeguarding Policy). If the team member feels unable to speak to either of these, they can take their concern to the LADO at Manchester City Council, or in case of an emergency, where there is immediate risk to a young person, or a crime has occurred, can ring 999.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS

Revolution Youth has certain expectations of staff and volunteers both in sessions and outside of them.

CHRISTIAN ETHOS

As a team, our faith in Jesus is what inspires our work with young people, and as such, we ought to reflect genuine Christian principles in our work with young people, and also in our private lives too.

In sessions with young people

The team should always be mindful that although we operate with a Christian ethos, there is no expectation that the young people at our sessions will do likewise. Therefore it is important to ensure that no volunteer or staff member attempts to enforce their faith on a young person, either by being overtly proselytizing where it is clearly unwelcome by the young people involved, or by holding young people to standards expected within the

Christian faith. Regardless of one's personal views on a range of topics (but with particular consideration to sexuality, gender, or other typically contentious topics), it is important that every young person feels welcomed and accepted by every member of staff and volunteer.

Outside of sessions

Team are expected to conduct themselves in a manner in line with Biblical teaching, although with regard for the fact that we are made up of a number of different Christian denominations, with differing teachings on certain subjects. Team should be mindful of what is shared on social media, as well as private conduct - integrity is an important characteristic for any team member.

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Our behaviour management should always reflect our three core values of **respect, value** and **love**. In particular, managing behaviour respectfully can be a challenge, but can pay off enormously in the long-term.

TRAFFIC LIGHT SYSTEM

Many of the things we say to young people can be broken down into three categories - Green, Amber or Red.

Green

A green comment is something encouraging which will build a young person up. Examples might be "It's great to see you again tonight", "You made a really good point in the discussion just then", or "I really like the fun energy you bring into the session". These types of comment should, in general, not be about physical characteristics, in case they are misconstrued, and should be encouraging to the young person and help them feel accepted.

Amber

An amber comment is something which is might be necessary to say to a young person, but often is not typically "positive", and more like a correction - such as "You're being disrespectful at the moment when you're talking over me", "I need you to clear up the mess you've just made", or "If you keep being disrespectful, I'm going to need to ask you to leave". These comments should always be made respectfully.

Red

A red comment is something which should never be said to a young person, which is purely destructive. Examples would be "You're really stupid", or "That attempt was

pathetic”. Even as a joke, these comments should not be made to young people in any circumstances. Shouting at a young person would almost always be considered a red comment, as it can be perceived as threatening or belittling.

Red comments should never be made, and as a general rule, for every Amber comment, five Green comments should already have been made by the team member to whoever they are speaking to. Amber comments are often necessary, which demonstrates how frequently team members should look for opportunities to use Green comments. This is because if a young person already feels respected, built up, and encouraged by a team member, they will respond much more positively to a correction than they otherwise would. Investing in Green comments will not only help a young person’s self-esteem, but it will support your behaviour management in the long run too. Try looking for ways to deliver Amber comments in Green ways - for instance, rather than “You’re being too noisy right now”, telling a young person “You’re a really natural leader, and people often follow you in how you act. I’d really like it if you can help set a great example, because I think if you do, others will do the same, but I know that when you’re chatting, it means other people start to do it too.” Look for the positives in a young person, and consider how they can turn them for good.

DISCIPLINE

All team members should feel empowered and able to respond to poor behaviour, and deal with it appropriately. This is not solely the role of the Session Leader, but rather, the Session Leader will support team members in their discipline.

Discipline should not feel like school discipline - it is a different environment when a young person chooses to engage, rather than has to, and our approach to discipline should reflect that. Whereas some organisations or schools will have a clearly outlined consequence system, such as a “three strikes” system, Revolution Youth operates differently, based on a policy of respect. This means that although we will always deal with young people respectfully, we do not need to allow ourselves to be disrespected, and there will be several ways a youth leader may choose to deal with a situation. Team members have discretion to deal with an issue in whichever way they choose, and this will be supported by the Session Leader.

Reminding a young person to be respectful

Often, for mild poor behaviour, a simple reminder can be enough - things like using bad language, being on phones during sessions or talks, talking over people, or similar. Often things like use of phones or poor language are habitual, and a simple reminder is enough.

Asking a young person to fix a problem they have caused

This may be clearing up a mess they have made, intentionally or otherwise, or fixing damage they have caused. If they have been offensive or disrespectful to someone, asking for a sincere apology or even to pay a compliment to that person can be effective.

Asking a young person to take a short break from the session

Sometimes, if a young person is exhibiting bad behaviour, often all they need is some time outside by themselves to calm down. They should be supervised, and it's often helpful for them not to feel like they are in trouble - a simple suggestion of "I feel like if you keep talking right now you're going to get yourself into trouble, let's take two minutes outside the room" is enough.

Asking a young person to leave a session

Sometimes if a young person is being blatantly disrespectful and has either done something which they clearly know is wrong, or they aren't willing to make up for a problem they have caused, they may need to be asked to leave the session. This shouldn't usually be a first response to poor behaviour, but if it has been serious or continued, then should be considered. Often it is better to send one young person home from a session so that others can see what isn't acceptable than it is to allow them to stay, which can undermine the authority of a team member if they have been blatantly disrespected. Afterwards, team members can speak to the Session Leader about whether or not it is appropriate for the young person to come back the following week, or if a longer time away from sessions may be appropriate. Permanent bans will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, usually where young people or team have been endangered or harmed.

Most sessions do involve a compulsory element, e.g. a talk or discussion group. If a young person won't engage in this part of the session (particularly after a warning), then they may be asked to leave, and take the next week off too - this should be expressed not as a punishment, but in the sense that these sessions have parts which aren't optional, and by coming, they're agreeing to engage with those parts - and if they aren't, then they shouldn't really be coming to the session at all. They will be welcome back the week after, but not before. This is particularly the case when they are not only refusing to engage with a session, but also disrupting it for others too.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Revolution Youth operates a completely drug and alcohol-free policy, and if any young person brings drugs or alcohol to a session they will be asked to leave immediately, and may face further consequences. If a young person ever gives drugs or alcohol to another young person, it will result in a permanent ban. If a young person arrives at a session and youth leaders suspect they have been taking drugs or drinking, they will not be permitted into the session, and if this is a reoccurring problem, they may be asked not to return to sessions.

VAPING AND SMOKING

Although young people are not legally allowed to purchase vapes, we are aware that many young people do vape, and are addicted. To enforce a no-vaping policy would mean that young people who are addicted may be unable to attend our sessions, and in reality would lead to

issues with young people hiding vapes and doing it anyway, so instead, we enforce the following rules. Youth found breaking these rules will be given a choice; either hand the vape over for the rest of the session, or go home.

- Vaping is only permitted outdoors, and when accompanied by youth leaders. This can be a good opportunity for conversation with young people - potentially about vaping itself.
- Smoking cigarettes is not permitted, due to the increased fire hazard.
- There is strictly no swapping or sharing of vapes. This is because although a young person may struggle with addiction themselves, it is unacceptable for them to encourage other young people to join the same habit. Breaking this rule will result in being sent home immediately, and not being allowed to return for a week.

SWEARING

For many young people, bad language is simply a part of how they have grown up, and part of their vocabulary. Though we should never encourage this, part of accepting a young person as they are means accepting how they speak, and not penalising them for something which may be extremely difficult for them to change overnight. If a young person uses bad language conversationally, then this can be addressed (“Hey, watch your language, please”) but should be done so politely and without demeaning. However, there is a difference between conversational bad language and intentional rudeness or disrespect, which may include bad language or otherwise. Using bad language in passing may be acceptable, but directing it at somebody is not, in the same way that any other insult would be unacceptable.

There are times which can be particularly helpful to encourage young people not to use bad language, including when there are other youth around, especially younger ones, or if they are leading something - it’s fair to assert that young person can only be leading something if they can control how they speak to a reasonable degree.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

P.A.C.E

A helpful tool for building relationships is the P.A.C.E principle, which encourages youth leaders to think about **Playfulness**, **Acceptance**, **Curiosity**, and **Empowerment**.

Playfulness

Playfulness with young people is an excellent way to build relationships, and can take a wide range of forms. Leaders should always join in with games where possible, unless they have another assigned role which stops this, or they have a health condition which doesn’t allow for that game. However, playfulness extends beyond organised games - having fun with young people, joking with them, eating with them - team should be considerate of where elements of play can be introduced. When young people see that

leaders are playful with them, they develop an increased level of respect and relatability, meaning that behaviour management becomes easier, and young people are more likely to share from their own lives. However, team should be aware of appropriate boundaries, and not allow play to become overly physical or inappropriate.

Acceptance

Revolution Youth welcomes a wide range of young people from a broad spectrum of gender identities, sexualities, faith backgrounds, ethnicities, economic backgrounds, and more. Regardless of the personal beliefs of a leader, it is never our role to try to enforce change on a young person, even for poor personal decisions that a young person may make. As a team, we need to accept that a young person may be with us for many years and never change or develop at all - and that is their decision. Our role is to create an environment which enables and empowers them to make positive decisions for themselves, but not to enforce that change. We should at all times be accepting of who that young person is, and only where appropriate, through positive relationships, can we gradually introduce ideas that change is possible for those who want it. Positive change is fantastic, but is not a precondition to being a part of Revolution Youth.

Curiosity

Children and young people are naturally curious, and our relationships deepen with them where we become the same. Finding out more about the lives of young people is important, and even where there are hobbies and interests that do not naturally interest leaders, being curious about those interests demonstrates to a young person that they are worth our time. Practice asking questions that are not simple “yes” or “no” answers, but can be expanded on - e.g, asking “Did you have a good day” is a very simple question with a simple answer, but asking “Tell me about your day” is much broader and allows the young person to speak more. The more curious we are (and can demonstrate we are) about young people, the more they will open up about themselves, and allow the basis for positive change.

Empathy

Different from sympathy, empathy means standing with young people in solidarity through difficult situations - whether a short-term problem or something much larger. Though it can be tempting to try to “fix” an issue or provide solutions, often that is not what is required by young people at that moment. Simply being there to listen well can be enough, and often a response of “I’m really sorry you’re going through that, it sounds really hard” can be more useful than “What you should do is this...”. The fundamental difference between empathy and sympathy is feeling what the young person is feeling, and so although we may never be able to truly understand, allowing ourselves to feel the pain that a young person feels is a powerful thing. Where appropriate, it can also be useful to offer prayer to young people - not as a “fix”, but to show that we care, and we believe in a God who cares too.

EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE

Empowering young people to make their own decisions and giving them responsibility can be one of the most powerful ways to build positive relationships and see real, self-led change within them. Revolution Youth runs a Young Leadership programme for some of our young people, but young people don't need to be on this in order to be empowered. For instance, asking a young person "What game would you like to play next week" gives them a measure of empowerment, but an even greater step would be "Would you like to come up with a game for next week, and lead it?". This demonstrates trust in young people, and not only is this important for their growth, but as a team we genuinely find that young people can be far more capable than we might initially expect. It is important to ensure that we also support young people through their empowerment (in the example above, offering to co-host a game, or being ready to help them out if they begin to struggle, would be useful).

CONSULTING AND CO-LEADING

As well as the Young Leadership programme, consulting young people on decisions can be important - both for the young people, who will feel heard and listened to, but also for us, because very often young people can have better ideas about youth sessions than youth leaders! This doesn't mean that we are bound to do whatever a young person wants, but it is important to listen to them, and where their suggestions or ideas are impractical, helping them to see this for themselves, rather than simply telling them. Ideas should be welcomed on almost any topic - at the moment the food we serve, the games we play, the way we run discussions, and more, have been suggested by young people.

Particularly when a young person is upset about something, asking them with sincerity "How would you like this to be dealt with?", or "What do you think I should do?" can be very useful. Often, they will have a reasonable response, or sometimes even realise and empathise with youth leaders that some situations are more complicated than they may have initially perceived. Questions like this shouldn't bind us to their answers, but it can be helpful to both young people and team to involve them in discussions like this.

BRIEFINGS, DEBRIEFS AND TRAINING

BRIEFINGS

Sessions will generally begin with a briefing 30 minutes before young people arrive. Briefings are an important part of the sessions and it is a general expectation that youth leaders will be present for them, unless pre-arranged with the Session Leader. They are a time to discuss the plan for the session, safeguarding concerns and issues, and wider vision, as well as more practical elements like setting up. They should be seen as no less important than the main session, particularly given that they can affect safety, including assigning roles for the session and important risk factors for some activities. The team will usually pray together before the session, too.

DEBRIEFS

Usually sessions will end with a debrief, which is a chance to reflect on the session, give feedback, pray for the young people, and cover any concerns (though concerns relating to safeguarding should be directed to the Session Leader away from other team members, and concerns about other team members should never be shared in a group setting but instead reported directly to the Session Leader or safeguarding lead). Team members are encouraged to be a part of these debriefs as much as possible.

TRAINING

Training and teambuilding will generally be run at least once per term, and youth leaders are asked to prioritise this, as not only does it affect the practical outworking of what we can deliver, but also team dynamic.

There may be additional training that team members wish to undertake, outside of Revolution Youth, to further develop their abilities on the team, such as safeguarding training, first aid, or youth work courses. Speak to your Session Leader about these if you would like support from Revolution Youth to attend these. We will also offer relevant external training as and when it becomes available.

ROTAS

Rotas will generally be planned in 12 week blocks, usually at least two weeks before they begin. Revolution Youth leadership will aim to accommodate all rota requests, however, once the rota is planned it is very important that as far as possible, team honour their commitments on the rota, and if there are issues which arise meaning that a session needs to be missed, as much notice as possible should be given.

Some team members will work irregular shift patterns and be unaware of their shifts beyond a certain point. Revolution Youth leadership will always accommodate this, but please do keep session leaders updated as early as possible to assist in planning.

EXPENSES

Most team members won't need to submit expenses, but for those who do, the expense should be arranged with the Session Leader for whichever session they are relevant to. The Session Leader will go over the process with you, but you will always need a clear photograph of your full receipt (please ensure all 4 edges are visible). They may submit it for you, or if you are regularly claiming expenses, you will be given an account to submit your own. If in doubt, email your

receipt to john@revolutionyouth.co.uk, but you must ensure that no purchases are made without prior approval from the Session Leader.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND CONTACT OUT OF SESSIONS

SOCIAL MEDIA

As a representative of Revolution Youth, you must ensure responsible social media usage, even in your personal time. Any posts made or shared by you must not bring Revolution Youth into disrepute, or be judged as discriminatory. Always be mindful that your social media presence is not private, even if your settings are - people can take screenshots and widely share your posts. If your settings are not private, you can be found online by young people, so all content must be appropriate for young people or their families to see.

CONTACT OUT OF SESSIONS

Occasionally young people may be contacted outside normal sessions, but there are some important rules to follow regarding this.

Online or phone contact

Young people should never be contacted in a 1-to-1 environment, nor have access to any team member's personal phone numbers. Mentors will be able to contact young people directly, though there are rules relating to this - if you are a mentor, speak to the Mentoring and Development Lead if you are unsure what these are.

In public

Often young people may run into youth leaders outside of normal sessions. Team members are free to engage with young people in these instances, but should remember that they still represent Revolution Youth, and be mindful of all existing safeguarding policies which will still be relevant.

Church or other organised events

Young people may attend events outside of regular Revolution Youth activities hosted by the churches of youth leaders, or other organisations. In these instances the young person will be covered by the safeguarding policies of those events, although Revolution Youth team should still be mindful that they should demonstrate the ethos and values of Revolution Youth to young people at all times, not solely in our sessions.

Meeting outside of sessions

In general, youth team should never arrange to meet young people outside of regular sessions (other than an invitation to a public event, as detailed above). An exception to this is the mentoring programme, though there are important policies which need to be

followed by mentors. Speak to the Mentoring and Development Lead if you are a mentor and need further clarification.

LIFTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

At times it may be appropriate to give a young person a lift to or from a session. The general rule is that this should only be done when there is no other way for a young person to make the journey, or if there is more risk for them not to have a lift than to have one. There is never an expectation that a team member will give a lift to a young person; it is at a team member's discretion. However, if they decide to offer a lift to a young person, there is a procedure which must be followed.

- The Session Leader must be aware that a lift is happening, either to or from a session.
- Employed staff should have business insurance on their car (though volunteers are able to give lifts with personal insurance).
- Where possible, two youth leaders should be present in a vehicle with a young person.
- Where this is not possible, lifts should be done as groups, i.e. more than one young person, to avoid a 1-to-1 scenario where possible.
- There may be occasions where no other youth leader or young people are available. In this case, it is still possible to arrange a lift, but the team member should be aware of the increased risk of an allegation, and the increased perception of risk by a young person. In those instances (including where a young person may need to leave a residential early), there are additional rules which must be followed:
 - The parent or guardian of the young person should be made aware and give permission for the lift to occur, and be aware of approximately how long the journey will take.
 - The young person should sit in the back seat.
 - The journey should only be directly to the destination, not take detours, and the young person should not stay in the car any longer than is necessary, e.g. to chat to the youth leader.

MENTORING

Revolution Youth runs a mentoring programme for young people who wish to engage with it. Mentoring can be an invaluable next step, allowing input into the lives of young people we're not able to provide at regular weekly sessions. We seek to provide support for young people not engaged in education (either voluntarily or not), as well as mentoring for other young people who may appreciate input into their lives, and Christian discipleship for young people who would like it. Most of the mentoring is geared towards supporting young people achieve goals that they set themselves, and is not specifically Christian (though, like our sessions, is run with a Christian

ethos), except the Christian discipleship, which is available for young people who are Christians themselves. Speak to the Mentoring and Development Lead if you would like to mentor a young person and support them in their life.