



The Association of Panel Members

Communities for Youth Justice

Charity No 1137430 Company No 60006552

www.aopm.co.uk

Email admin@aopm.co.uk

Fact sheet: Volunteering as a Panel Member in the Youth Justice system

Community Panel Members are two or three members of the community who sit on a Youth Offending Team (YOT) panel meeting, which follows agreed formats and ground rules to discuss with a young person and their parent/carer the impact of their offence on the victim, their parent(s) and the community. We negotiate a contract with the young person and monitor it for the duration of the order, deal with breaches and prepare reports for the court as required.

Why?

Panel Members are volunteers commissioned by the Crime & Disorder Act 1999 to administer orders issued by the court to young people, who pleaded guilty at their first appearance in court. The contract provides a restorative justice solution for a young person to make reparations to the victim or carry out unpaid work in the wider community, alternatively to attend mediation sessions with the victim or pay compensation. They will also participate in training programmes to address issues affecting their behaviour where appropriate eg substance misuse.

We are keen to maintain this system for rehabilitation, because restorative justice can be highly effective for young offenders who have not previously thought about the impact of their offending behaviour on others.

What we do.....

- We are appointed by YOTs to administer restorative justice on behalf of the community, as the best means of tackling young people who plead guilty to an offence
- We undertake 7 full days training, split into two sections and a formal interview process
- We have restricted access to data about young people and victims
- We operate independently of YOTs and the Youth Justice Board
- We listen to offenders' and victims' accounts privately, in confidence and in neutral settings
- We adopt a problem-solving approach to young people in the criminal justice system
- We aim to secure positive, long-term outcomes from the earliest encounters with the criminal justice system
- We monitor the effectiveness of programmes implemented by YOTs through reviews and final panels
- We become rusty and forget our purpose and function, if we undertake very few panels.

We don't

- Make the rules governing community justice panels, but we see that these are properly applied
- Oversee the order, supervise the YOT's intervention or reparation work, or meet with the young person over the course of the order - except to review progress.



The Association of Panel Members

Communities for Youth Justice

Charity No 1137430 Company No 60006552

www.aopm.co.uk

Email admin@aopm.co.uk

- Consider completion of the contract to be a "success", but how it has affected the likelihood of re-offending.
- Believe it is possible to turn these young people's lives around overnight - it can take ages because of learned behaviour and individual circumstances.

We don't consider Breach of an order as an act of failure, but recognition that not all solutions will succeed using the same formula.

We can apply for an Extension if the young person repeats offending during the order, because we have to start somewhere, and in the belief that we are on the right road with them.

Volunteering as an employee

Panel Members are the backbone of the community in the youth justice system and deal with one third of all cases in England and Wales, including crime against businesses. Many Panel Members are full-time employees and make their contribution as committed volunteers.

For employees who volunteer, duty rotas are finalised well in advance, so that absences from work can be planned for. Employers are not legally required to allow Panel Members time off to complete their duties, however employers may choose to do so in recognition of their important contribution to the community and in development of skills that directly benefit the employer.

Panel Members receive highly valuable training in:

- decision-making
- teamwork
- communication skills
- time management
- acceptance of responsibility
- presentation skills
- leadership and mentoring
- legal issues and regulations

All volunteers can get more involved through joining the national Association (www.aopm.co.uk). Members have a voice in organisation-wide developments and a vote in electing other volunteers to a national committee.

Contact your local Youth Offending Team if you are interested in becoming a Community Panel Member

<http://www.yjb.gov.uk/engb/yjs/YouthOffendingTeams/ContactDetails.htm>