

Braintree Youth Project Charity

Staff/Volunteer Managing Challenging Behaviour Policy

Introduction

Staff and volunteers of Braintree Youth Project Charity (BYPC) who are involved with youth centre activities may on occasions be required to deal with challenging or difficult behaviour.

This policy aims to promote the right practice, whilst encouraging a proactive way of supporting young people to address and be able to manage their own behaviour. Obviously, every episode of such behaviour will be unique and this policy will not cover all of them, but should give you an appropriate method to follow.

All BYPC participants are under a duty to report any instances of the behaviour that is detailed below to the Youth worker or Centre Manager as soon as possible.

Conduct

All BYPC staff, volunteers and participants are expected at all times to act in a reasonable and appropriate manner. BYPC is committed to creating a safe, positive working environment for all concerned and episodes of unacceptable behaviour in any way will not be tolerated.

The key question to ask in every situation is: Is the individual experiencing discomfort, distress, or unhappiness as a result of the actions of another person?

Any person who is found to be in violation of any of the above and of any other incident of behaviour which a BYPC staff member, volunteer or other young person deems to be unacceptable, will be dealt with in the appropriate manner.

The appropriate method is firstly to give the person a light verbal warning about their behaviour, giving them the opportunity to apologise and recognise that what they have done is wrong. Something along the lines of 'We do not tolerate that behaviour here, could you stop that please?'. If the Youth worker or Centre Manager is present they should be informed of the warning.

If a verbal warning is not successful, ask to take the person to one side and have a quiet word with them about the issue. Ensure that you always have another BYPC member with you at this time. If the Youth worker or Centre Manager are present at the time, they should be a party to the conversation. Explain the rules to the young person and that everybody must respect the property and those in it. This should be done without making a big fuss or attracting a big crowd.

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If the challenging behaviour continues, then explain the problem and the consequences unless he/she changes their behaviour. Use as few words as possible so as not to confuse the issue. Be very clear about what the unwanted behaviour is, what you want the young person to do and what the consequences will be if he/she does not stop. Reinforce that we want him/her as part of BYPC but we do not want or tolerate that behaviour.

If this is still not successful and in particular if you feel they are of risk to themselves or anybody else and are refusing to leave the premises, then BYPC has the right to exclude them for up to three sessions.

Unacceptable Behaviour

Types of behaviour which would be deemed unacceptable by BYPC including the following:

- Threatening, shouting, displaying aggressive mannerisms or using aggressive language towards another person;
- Any act of violence;
- Any property abuse (including theft or borrowing not approved by the owner);
- Deliberately singling out and targeting an individual, or a group of people and intentionally displaying acts of unkindness;
- Focusing purely on a person's weaknesses;
- Criticising people or gossiping about them in their absence;
- Comments or remarks about individuals based on their age, gender, religion, appearance, sexual orientation, race/culture or disability;
- Coercing or encouraging another individual to join the harassment/bullying of another person;
- Refusing to engage with individuals because they are 'different' from you;
- Swearing, whether generally or at an individual.

This is not an exhaustive list and is merely a guide which is to be followed by all BYPC members. It enables individuals to be aware of their own behaviours and the behaviours of those around them and whether they are acting in an acceptable manner.

High Risk Behaviour

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Any BYPC staff member, volunteer or young person displaying any of the following examples of behaviour should automatically be suspended from BYPC premises for up to three sessions (not counting the session at which the young person was suspended):

- Fighting or acts of violence either alone or with others against one or more people
- Serious damage to property
- Dealing drugs;
- Carrying or threatening to use a weapon.

The behaviours intended to be caught under this category are ones which in Society at large would be worthy of investigation by the Police as potential criminal offences.

At least one of the Youth worker, Centre Manager, the Chair or the Deputy Chair of the Charity should be immediately alerted in any such event. In consultation with the above, a decision would be made as to whether to call the Police.

If there are reasons to believe that there is a material risk of danger to any BYPC staff member, volunteer or young person, then the Police should be called. The safety of those in our care is the paramount consideration.

The decision to exclude

Such a decision must be one which is approached in a consistent manner and followed through accordingly. Favouritism should not be shown to any individual and in no circumstances should a young person be deliberately undermined by an adult member of BYPC. At the same time, young people need to know that unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated and by adopting a strict but well-rounded approach, BYPC will not be hindering, but helping them in the long term.

If BYPC take the decision to exclude a young person, then we will ensure, as far as it is possible to do so:

- An incident report form is filled out on the same day as the incident occurs;
- The decision is fully and clearly explained to the young person(s) that are being excluded (or as well as the circumstances will allow);
- If for more than one session, contact the young person's parent or guardian and arrange a follow up meeting with them;
- If the behaviour is of a more serious nature and warrants police involvement, then BYPC will inform them as soon as possible;

- Plan how to address the issues and how to work with the individual(s) to ensure that the problems are tackled effectively;
- That we work with any other outside agencies that we feel need to be contacted, e.g. Social Services, Counselling services, drugs and alcohol support.

The decision to contact PCSOs/Police

BYPC strives to achieve a good working relationship with all members of the community. The following are instances where BYPC would expect to contact local PCSOs (in a non-emergency). In a more serious situation where a serious crime has been committed or somebody's life is deemed to be at risk, 999 should always be called.

If there are reasons to believe that there is a material risk of danger to any BYPC staff member, volunteer or young person, then the Police should be called. The safety of those in our care is the paramount consideration at all times.

Instances where the PCSOs number or 101 (non-emergencies) should be called:

- An incident involving young people known to BYPC which happens on or near to BYPC premises;
- General nuisance or threatening behaviour;
- Problems in moving the young people away from BYPC premises;
- Reporting a general crime in the area;
- Reporting a minor traffic incident;
- Damage to property.

Instances where 999 should be dialled:

- Reports of a weapon or where a weapon is seen to be used or use is being threatened;
- Severe physical injury to a young person, staff member, volunteer or member of BYPC has taken place (an ambulance should also be called!);
- Seriously threatening behaviour in which individuals feel completely uneasy and fear for their life (e.g. attempting to kick the door in);
- Reports of serious crime, including rape, abuse, assault, actual bodily harm or grievous bodily harm;
- Where sufficient quantities of drugs are found on a person to give rise to a suspicion that a young person is involved in more than just general recreational use (dealing drugs for a profit);
- If a crime is actually taking place in front of you (in progress);
- Where violence is being used.

This is not an exhaustive list and is merely a guide to be followed. If you dial 101 and they consider that it is an actual emergency, then they will refer you to 999 straight away.

Special educational needs and disabilities

BYPC will ensure that it takes account of any special educational needs or disabilities of an individual that are known to us when deciding whether to exclude an individual or not.

We have a legal duty under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 not to discriminate against disabled people by excluding them for behaviour related to their disability. BYPC will ensure that reasonable steps have been taken to respond to an individual's disability, so as to ensure that the individual is not treated less favourably for reasons related to the disability.

Safeguarding

An immediate exclusion will not take place if there is known to be a risk to the individual concerned that would result from the exclusion. For example, if the young person is unable to walk home on their own, or cannot be collected at that point, then other arrangements will be made. If the case is a more severe one, then BYPC is entitled to contact Police and/or Social Services, in order that the individual can be safely and effectively escorted off BYPC premises.

Restraining

No BYPC staff member, volunteer or young person should attempt to do anything which risks their own safety, or the safety of others.

If somebody believes that an individual needs to be restrained, then this should be done with the minimal amount of contact possible and only by two staff or volunteers working together. Instances where this may be necessary include where two individuals are fighting each other, or attempting to fight; if somebody is attempting to hit you or approaching somebody else in a threatening way.

Restraint should be the last resort and a verbal warning or command or other way or defusing the situation should always be tried first.

Support

All BYPC staff members and volunteers will receive training in 'Managing challenging/difficult behaviour'. If a volunteer is concerned with any aspects of how a situation has or has not been dealt with, then they should speak to the Youth Centre Manager in the first instance.

If the concerns relate to the Youth worker or Centre Manager and how a particular instance was handled, then they should seek advice from the BYPC Chairman. The BYPC Complaints Policy should be followed in such circumstances.

If there is a challenging individual known to BYPC, then the Youth worker or Centre Manager has a duty to report this to volunteers and members, in order to know how to deal with them. If the Youth worker and Centre Manager are unaware of a particular individual but another BYPC member is, then the information should be relayed to the Youth worker and Centre Manager as soon as possible.

Monitoring

In the same way that staff/volunteers may need support, the young people who present challenging behaviour will often need help themselves. It is therefore important to ensure that those specific individuals who are known to BYPC are monitored.

Challenging behaviour almost always surfaces as a result of difficulties in a person's life. BYPC has a duty to ensure that the physical and emotional wellbeing of all the young users of its premises is promoted.

If a BYPC member believes that there is particular cause for concern, then this should be relayed to the Youth worker or Centre Manager and should be recorded for the purposes of future reference. A log book will be maintained setting out all instances of disciplinary problems with young people.

Follow-up

As well as being a problem, the suspension of a young person from the sessions is also an opportunity. Such an event highlights actual or potential problems in the young person's life or personality. As such, we should take full advantage of the problem to seek to improve the life chances of the person concerned.

Whenever a young person is suspended, they should be told (as far as the circumstances of their suspension allows) that a meeting will be arranged between two members of the Charity, the suspended young person and a supporter nominated by him/her (usually a parent or guardian).

This meeting must take place before the young person is readmitted to BYPC premises and, for the avoidance of doubt, the young person should not be readmitted until the meeting has taken place.

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the event that triggered the suspension, what triggered it (both the proximate cause and any background issues) and what is unacceptable about the behaviour and why it is. During the meeting, BYPC representatives will seek to understand the underlying behavioural issues, if any, and will see if any assistance can be provided. The young person will be required to apologise for any wrongdoing that they have done, to commit to apologise to any other parties involved in the event and to commit not to repeat the behaviour.

It is of course possible that a completely innocent party will be suspended as a result of either a complete misunderstanding or his/her being the victim of someone else's behaviour. The above meeting objectives will therefore have to be interpreted flexibly according to the circumstances.

For the avoidance of doubt, the behavioural event is an opportunity to deal with problem issues. No-one suspended will be readmitted to BYPC premises until the circumstances of their suspension have been fully discussed with them and any necessary action followed-up (including apology and atonement). If we "let off" young people in these circumstances, we are harming them and not helping them.

Approved ~~13/10/2020~~08/11/2022