

Code of Conduct

Community Guardian Scheme

Community Guardian Code of Conduct

We are delighted that you have agreed to become a Community Guardian! You'll be part of an active network of volunteers, who are committed to making valuable improvements to their local area.

To ensure the continuity of the scheme it's important that all Community Guardians follow four principles on how they behave and how they treat others. These basic principles are:

1. To be respectful of other people, and their views and opinions
2. To respect confidential information
3. To set a good example for others to follow
4. To be professional at all times

If at any time we feel that you are not adhering to these principles or we have complaints about how you have behaved then we will talk to you about what we've seen or heard. If we feel your behaviour is a serious problem or you cannot change your approach then you will have to leave the scheme. This may sound harsh but we have over 700 guardians who value the scheme as much as we do, we don't want to see the schemes reputation suffer. We cannot stress enough how people will look up to you in your community and how important is that you set a good example to others. We hope you will take pride in being a Guardian and understand that this code of conduct shows to everyone in Manchester that the Guardians and the Council take this role very seriously.

It is important that Community Guardians act in a way that demonstrates a positive attitude and promotes teamwork, ultimately acting as environmental ambassadors for Manchester. It is up to you how little or how much you want to do in this role. Some Guardians organise events, which are attended by several hundred people, other Guardians report things they see to Environment On Call. It does not matter what level of involvement you have. The scheme is completely flexible. There are no rules about what you have to do other than we ask that you follow this code. Our commitment as a Council is that we will aim to support you and help you in your role.

The following information explains the four principles in more detail.

1. Be Respectful of Others

We are all responsible for ensuring that we work together without harassment or discrimination, and where everyone is treated with respect, fairness and equality. If you believe a situation has arisen that does not follow the principles above, please contact the Community Guardian Team.

Harassment is defined as unwelcome and/or offensive behaviour imposed by one person on another. It can be written, verbal or physical, and it causes another person distress. Harassment is unacceptable in any part of the Community Guardian Scheme.

Direct discrimination

Direct Discrimination is defined as a person being treated less favourably than others would be treated in the same or similar circumstances, on grounds of age, colour, race, religion, nationality, ethnic or national origin, gender, sexual orientation or marital status.

Indirect discrimination

Indirect Discrimination is defined as a requirement or condition being applied equally to all volunteers, but with a disproportionately adverse effect on a group of people because of their sex, age, religion, race, sexual orientation or disability. The fact that a person may not have intended to discriminate against someone would not be a defence.

Both forms of discrimination are not acceptable, if you are at all worried that you may be indirectly discriminating then please ask us and we can help advise you.

2. Confidential Information/Privacy

As a volunteer you have a duty to protect confidential information about the scheme. You should not disclose the freephone telephone number or offer it to other people who are not part of the scheme. The freephone number is only for the use of Community Guardians.

Your details will be held by the Community Guardian Team, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, which means we will keep your details private. If you wish to, you may give your contact details to other Community Guardians, but you don't have to as part of the scheme. Similarly, you're not obliged to reveal your membership of the scheme to anyone.

3. To set a good example for others to follow

Criminal/Illegal Activity

Any volunteer found to be taking part in criminal and/or illegal activity will be removed from the scheme.

Drugs and Alcohol

Whilst in your role as a Community Guardian you may not use or be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs or any other substances that may affect your behaviour.

Property and Equipment

The Community Guardian Team may be able to lend you equipment and tools, as appropriate and available. Please be efficient and economical, take care of and protect any property loaned, and return all equipment as arranged.

Health and Safety

The Community Guardian Team is committed to helping you work safely in your role as a Community Guardian. You are required to take reasonable care in the course of your work in a manner that ensures the health and safety of you and others. Please be aware of, and follow, any safety information, instruction or training when carrying out work activities or tasks.

The following safety responsibilities apply to everyone:-

- Co-operate with event organisers and Community Guardian Team on health and safety matters
- Only use equipment, machinery or vehicles if you are authorised and trained to do so
- Heed any given emergency information or announcements.
- Take due care when lifting and carrying
- Wear protective clothing where required
- Report any potential hazards or safety failings to the organiser
- Remove yourself from and warn others of imminent danger
- Avoid hazardous situations
- Consider your own safety and that of others

4. To be Professional at all Times

When carrying out Community Guardian duties, you have a responsibility to behave professionally, set a good example, and work in partnership with Manchester City Council to promote local services. Any problems should be reported to Environment On Call or the relevant agency. Community Guardians must respect the beliefs and opinions of their neighbours, and act in an appropriate manner when carrying out Community Guardian duties.

We would also like you to think about the people that you invite to a community event. You will be held responsible if their behaviour does not reflect the Code of Conduct at the event, and you could have anticipated the possibility of such behaviour. If you have any difficulty with someone who you think is acting inappropriately at an event please let us know.

Identification and Clothing

You will have the option of having a Community Guardian fleece and t-shirt to wear if you would like to, although it is not compulsory.

When carrying out Community Guardian duties, you must carry your Community Guardian identity card at all times. This is to prove that you are a Community Guardian your identity can be checked if questioned by others. The card must be looked after and returned if you leave the scheme.

Community Guardians must not abuse their position whilst in any Community Guardian clothing or displaying their identity card, and may not use their Community Guardian membership to campaign on behalf of any other organisation, group, political party or scheme.

A Community Guardian should not behave in such a way as to bring the City Council into disrepute.

Contact with the Media

If you receive an enquiry from a journalist about the Community Guardians scheme, please refer them to the Community Guardian Team. All press enquiries must be dealt with by City Council's Press Office. If you want to get publicity about any aspect of your Community Guardian activities (eg: through a newspaper, journalist, leaflets or other promotional material) you will need clearance from the Community Guardian Team. This will ensure that things are done correctly, and that your activity gets maximum positive coverage.

Copies of letters to newspapers should be copied to the Community Guardian Team, in case of follow-up enquiries.

You must not sign letters to newspapers with your Community Guardian title or mention your status as a Community Guardian in your letters without prior agreement from the Community Guardian Team.

A couple of Useful Tips and Info to Make Life Easier

Your Personal Information

Please notify the Community Guardian Team of any changes to your personal details, such as address or telephone number. This will help us keep in-touch with you with newsletters and news about events and local forums.

Appeals Process

You have the right to appeal if your application is refused. Appeals should be made in writing and sent to the Community Guardian Coordinator.

If you are found to have breached the Community Guardian Code of Conduct and asked to leave the scheme, you will be given the right to appeal.

Leaving the Scheme

The agreement can be ended at any time by either party. As a Community Guardian, you can resign verbally or in writing. The Community Guardian Team will write to you if your services are no longer needed.

If the Code of Conduct may not address all the questions you have. If you are unsure whether a decision you are about to make will breach the Code of Conduct, please ask the Community Guardian Team before proceeding.

These guidelines have been put into place to ensure both your safety and that of the Community Guardian scheme. They are not designed to be restrictive in any way.

The free time that you give up to be a Community Guardian is very much appreciated, and we want you to enjoy being part of the scheme.

If you would like to discuss any part of this document, please contact the Community Guardian Team on **0800 083 7924** or email **communityguardians@manchester.gov.uk**

Criminal Records Bureau

The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) is an executive agency of the Home Office, and provides access to criminal record and other information to organisations in England and Wales through a service called Disclosure. Its specific purpose is to help organisations make more informed decisions when recruiting people into positions of trust.

The Disclosure service is also available to other professional, licensing and regulatory bodies whose volunteers, employees and/or licensees are not necessarily in direct contact with the vulnerable, but still need to uphold the highest standards of professional performance. Disclosure can help improve these recruitment decisions as well.

Data Protection Act 1998

The Data Protection Act 1998 applies to personal data held in an organised way, and in any medium (on paper, computer, microfiche, tape etc). To comply with the Act, any information collected must be used fairly, stored safely and not disclosed to anyone unlawfully. The Community Guardian scheme follows the eight Data Protection principles set out in the Act. In summary, these state that personal data shall be:-

- processed fairly and lawfully;
- obtained and processed for specified purposes;
- adequate, relevant and not excessive;
- accurate and up to date;
- held for no longer than necessary;
- processed in accordance with subject rights; kept secure;
- not transferred outside the European Economic Area - unless equivalent levels of protection for personal data exist.

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 concerns the employment of people with a criminal record. If a person has been convicted of an offence (provided they have not been re-convicted for a further offence during a specified period) his/her conviction becomes spent (that is, treated as though it had never existed) for the purpose of employment. A prison sentence of more than 30 months, however, can never become spent, so the person will always be required to disclose it, if asked by an employer.

There are a number of areas of employment to which the terms of the Act do not apply. This means that anyone with a criminal record must disclose the details of all their convictions including those that are 'spent'.

The employment, occupation and professions that are exempt fall into the following areas: -

- Work involving matters of national security e.g. some civil service posts
- Work that brings the person in contact with vulnerable groups e.g. the disabled, the elderly, mentally ill and young people under 18 years of age.

If you would like more information about the City Council's Recruitment/Equal Opportunity Policy, please contact the Community Guardian Team.