



Volunteer Handbook

for the Pilot Project 2026

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Part I – Welcome to Triumph Together

Welcome to being part of Triumph Together

Thank you for showing an interest in supporting young people to thrive, to overcome the barriers they face and to triumph in their goals and wellbeing.

Through Triumph Together, you'll make a real difference in the lives of young people helping them build confidence, grow their skills, connect with their communities, and explore work and life opportunities, discovering and developing their own goals along the way.

Our Mission

We believe every young person has the potential to find their own interests and ways to contribute to society, with fulfillment and a sense of personal reward.

Like all of us, young people need others around them to help them be their best selves and to support them as they explore who they are and what fulfillment might look like for them. Some young people who have been in the care of the Local Authority have limited connections and or have lost a lot of confidence and self-belief.

We want to help each young person triumph over obstacles and challenges that entering adulthood presents in today's world, doing so with support and a sense of belonging and connection with others in the community.

Therefore, we are building a community including:

- (i) volunteer mentors, matched 1-1 to support a young person as a mentee
- (ii) volunteer trainers, offering skills-based workshops with young people

As a volunteer mentor, you'll:

- Build **positive, trusting relationships** with young people
- Offer **encouragement and support** with personal goals
- Help them connect to **opportunities**, including work experience and skills training
- Be a **bridge to the community**, showing them what's possible

As a volunteer trainer, you'll

- Provide **supportive, non-judgemental inspiration** for young people.
- **Engage and encourage** young people to believe in themselves and have a go.
- You'll have patience; **building on strengths and helping overcome barriers**.

Triumph Together's Values

Triumph Together has a number of key values at its heart. This Handbook will, we trust, help you understand these values and the principles of how Triumph Together works as well as answering questions you may have about practicalities.

MEDALS ☺

- 1) **Mutuality:** Triumph Together believes in and supports mutual learning and reward; as a volunteer you will receive as well as give.
- 2) **Empowerment:** We believe that how we help helps as much as the helping itself! Triumph Together empowers young people not only to receive but also to give; young people give insight to volunteers and businesses, and can also contribute to how the project works and develops, and can be involved in leading the project, and in training volunteers.
- 3) **Diversity:** We are interested in a diverse cohort of volunteers, just as each young person who will be supported is unique with their own interests and experiences. Don't think you have nothing to offer just because you don't fit your expectations of a mentor or trainer, or because you feel you haven't 'achieved' something noticed in society.
- 4) **Ambition:** We are ambitious for each young person, believing they can thrive.
- 5) **Local:** We believe the solution for supporting young people to build their confidence and self-esteem lies within local communities and connection.
- 6) **Safety:** Safeguarding the wellbeing of young people is central.

The Impact You'll Make

You may not always see the impact right away — but trust us, it's there.

A kind word. A little encouragement. An open ear.
These seemingly small things **can change a life**.

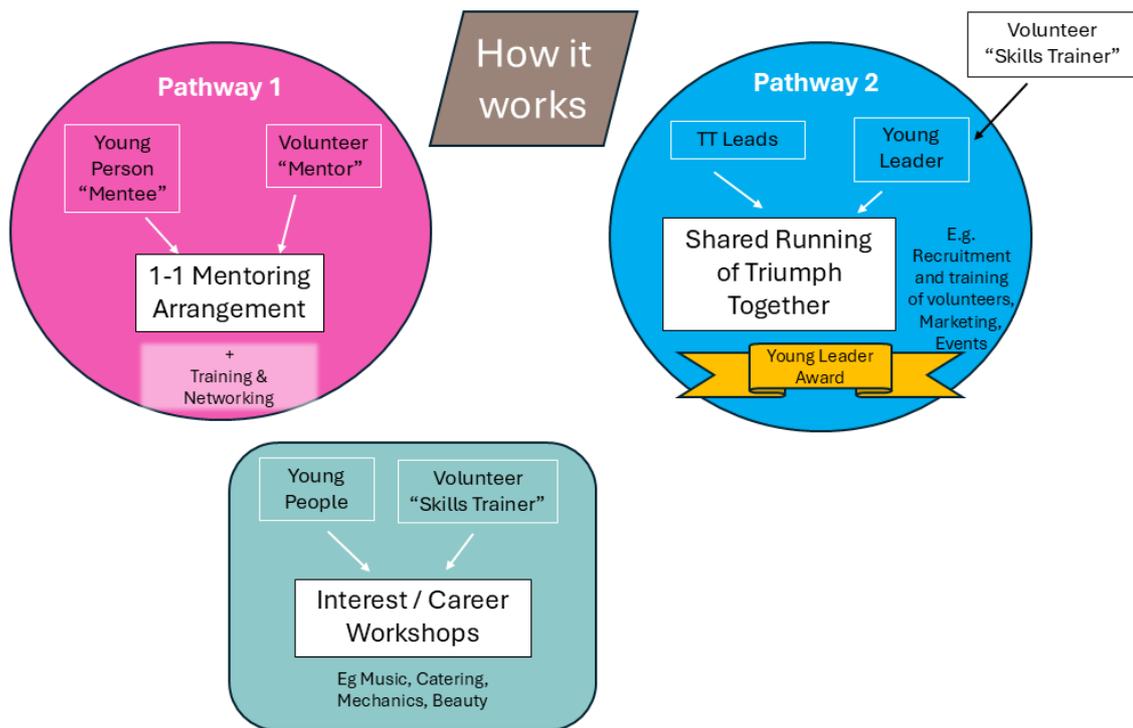
By showing up, you're helping young people believe in themselves, take healthy risks, and find their place in the world. That's powerful

Part 2 – Triumph Together Processes

The Model of Triumph Together

Triumph is a mutually beneficial, co-produced model of mentoring and coaching within the community for children in care and care leavers.

See the model diagram below:



Triumph Together is managed within Cheshire West and Chester Council’s Children’s Services. The project is led by the Team Manager of the Supporting Independence Team.

As you can see in the model above, there are different ways for people to be involved. Young people can be mentees or young leaders. And we also have young people as co-producers on the Steering Group.

Volunteers can be mentors, being matched 1-1 with a young person, or can offer skills training which might be to our young leaders or to a wider group of young people including mentees. Or you can do both.

Your Role as a Mentor

What You'll Do:

- Meet regularly with your mentee (in person or online)
- Be a great listener and positive role model
- Share life and work experience where appropriate
- Encourage their interests, strengths, and goals
- Help them navigate choices, challenges, and opportunities

Note: it is likely that what you do with the mentee will be low cost, community-based activities: going for a walk, meeting for a coffee in a café, going with them to explore places of shared interest as hobbies or career.

What You Won't Do:

- Solve every problem (you're not expected to!)
- Offer professional advice (e.g. legal, medical, financial)
- Be on your own in supporting; you have connection within Triumph Together to a network of other volunteers and there is a wide range of further support in different areas of expertise for our young people.

How we match your offer

To help the mentoring relationship work, the following process will support a good match of mentor and mentee:

- All potential volunteers and all young people to be mentees complete a profile giving key interests, likes, bug-bears and goals.
- Mentors and Mentees are met individually by the Triumph Together Project Manager to give further knowledge for matching.
- The Triumph Together Project Manager recommends a match and you and the young person are introduced.
- With the assistance of the Project Manager and a template (called Our Mentoring Agreement), you and the young person, map out and agree the features such as frequency and focus for your mentoring relationship. You also decide how and when to review this.

The Essentials before you start

Before you begin mentoring, there are a few things we'll need from you to help ensure a safe, high-quality experience for everyone involved:

1. Mentor Application: Your expression of interest, which includes a simple profile.
2. Meeting with the Project Manager and ideally one of our Care Leaver Leaders.
3. Reference Checks
4. Enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service), no cost to you.

5. Mentor Training: There are some short essential e-learning/reading modules (Safeguarding, Data Protection, Diversity and Inclusion), and two group sessions introducing mentoring and trauma-informed support
6. Signed Volunteer Agreement (see Appendix of this Handbook)

Your Role as a Trainer

What You'll Do:

- Provide skills coaching in a small group
- Be a great encourager and positive role model
- Share life and work experience where appropriate
- Encourage interests, strengths, and goals
- Help identify opportunities for continuing skill development in your area of expertise.

What You Won't Do:

- Be on your own in supporting; you have connection within Triumph Together to a network of other volunteers and there is a wide range of further support in different areas of expertise for our young people.

How we match your offer

To help the training/coaching arrangements to work, the following process will support a good match of skills and interests:

- Potential trainers complete a profile giving key interests and areas of skill expertise.
- Volunteers meet with the Project Manager to give further knowledge for understanding the skills training offer.
- The Project Manager coordinates interests amongst young people to match these with offers.
- The Young Leaders Award offers recognised achievements for care leavers wishing to develop in their leadership. Training offers supporting our young leaders contribute to this pathway for our young people.

The Essentials before you start

Before you begin as a trainer, there are a few things we'll need from you:

1. A Trainer Offer form
2. Meet with the Project Manager and possibly one Care Leaver Leader
3. Triumph Together Trainer Training: some short essential online/reading modules in Safeguarding, Data Protection, Equality Diversity and Inclusion, and Triumph Together
4. Signed Volunteer Agreement

5. Note: to offer 1-1 training, or for regular or unaccompanied involvement, you would also need a Standard DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service), references and to have completed the full initial Triumph Together training.

These help ensure a safe, high-quality experience for everyone involved.

Commitment

We ask Mentors to commit to:

- A minimum of 6 months
- A regularity of meeting. As a guide this could be around 1–2 hours per fortnight. You can set out your availability on your interest form.
- Attending Hub gatherings that may include training, networking and/or checking-in; expectation about 3 times a year.
- Meet with the Triumph Together Project Manager to reflect on the role and the project in its pilot phase; expectation about every two months.
- Complete the recording of involvement as a mentor, at least monthly.

Why? Because consistency builds trust — and trust builds confidence.

We ask Trainers to commit to:

- Availability over the coming 12 months to offer one or more workshops.
- If possible, to attend Hub gatherings that may include training, networking and/or checking-in; 3-4 times a year.
- Complete a recording form for any workshops / sessions provided.
- If possible, to help skill development over a few sessions working towards a goal for the group.

Tips for Great Mentoring

Here are a few things our mentors say help the most:

- **Be yourself** – You don't need to have all the answers.
- **Listen more than you speak** – It builds trust.
- **Celebrate small wins** – Confidence grows from progress.
- **Be patient** – Some mentees take time to open up.
- **Respect their journey** – Your job is to walk beside them, not lead the way.

If you would like to look into some of the research into mentoring and befriending, you can find a Practice Guide produced in 2025 following research. This highlights positive principles such as autonomy for the young person, choice, and matching well to their interests.

[Mentoring and Befriending Practice Guide - Foundations](#)

Safeguarding & Safety

Safety is everyone's responsibility. We're working with young people — some of whom may be vulnerable — and your role includes helping to create a safe, respectful, and supportive space.

Please make sure to read and understand our:

- **Safeguarding Children Policy**
- **Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy**
- **Privacy Notice giving details about data protection**
- **UK Data Protection for Volunteers information and Fraud Awareness Information.**

These documents are available in your volunteer welcome pack and online in the mentor portal. If you do have any questions, please make sure you ask.

If something doesn't feel right, do ask. There are several avenues of support for you if you have a query about safeguarding.

You can contact the following people to discuss safeguarding concerns:

- a) For independent advice, including when you want to ask general or anonymous questions: our Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) representative for Triumph Together, Ruth Tate 0151 337 4618 Triumphsafeguarding@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
- b) The Project Manager on 0151 337 4662 (duty Business Support), 07979708524 (Lindsay Tanner's work mobile) or TriumphTogether@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
- c) The young person's Social Worker or Personal Adviser, if it is important that the information is passed to them and/or with the young person's permission to do so.
- d) For social care advice out of hours, you can contact the Emergency Duty Team within Cheshire West and Chester Council on 01244 977277 and EDT2@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Boundaries Matter

Setting healthy boundaries helps keep relationships respectful and effective. Some examples of good boundaries:

- Meet in agreed public or online settings
- Avoid giving money or gifts
- Don't share personal problems with your mentee

Clear boundaries protect **both you and your mentee** — and allow trust to grow

within a safe framework.

We do discuss this topic in the initial volunteer training when we consider different scenarios, challenges and any worries that you have.

If you have concerns at the beginning, it will work well to talk about them early, for example when working out the mentoring agreement with a mentee.

If you are unsure about anything ask the Project Manager.

Regarding car travel and giving lifts: It is our policy that initially in any mentor-mentee relationship, volunteers are not giving young people a lift in their car, just 1-1. This would not be meeting in a public setting and also does not adhere to the principles of travelling in a way that a young person can also do independently, as helps with their wider confidence.

Reporting & Record Keeping

For safeguarding and support purposes, we ask mentors to:

- Keep brief records of sessions and communication with the young person via the mentor portal.
- Not to keep any paper records or notes including personal data yourself, or outside of the designated portal.
- Report any concerns as soon as possible, and within 24 hours, to the Safeguarding Lead: Triumphsafeguarding@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk or for urgent awareness or response to EDT on EDT2@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk or 01244 977277 (if it is out of normal office hours).

This helps us track progress and ensure the safety and wellbeing of everyone involved.

Support & Supervision

You're never on your own in this work.

We offer:

- Regular **check-ins with the Project Manager**
- Peer **volunteer hub meet-ups** (optional, but fun!)
- Ongoing **training workshops and optional training modules**
- **Support and advice from an Independent Reviewing Officer**

You can always reach out if you're unsure, need advice, or just want to talk

something through. We're here for you.

Expenses

It is expected that the financial cost to a volunteer is small, limited perhaps to some refreshments and some travel to a meeting place or public transport with a young person. We do not expect the mentor-mentee relationship to include expensive trips or activities, so please do ask if you plan to do something with costs beyond light refreshments.

If you are able to consider these expenses as part of your contribution to the support of the young people, that is appreciated and recognised.

** However, it is very important to the success of the project for our young people that no one feels that they cannot volunteer because of any financial costs it may occur. We need a wide breadth of context and experiences in our volunteers.

Please see the **Volunteer Expenses Process** for more information. Also, please speak to the Project Manager about your position with regard to expenses, and please do not let financial concerns about involvement stop you volunteering. As you begin a mentoring relationship, please confirm with the Project Manager any projected expenses that you expect to claim and then as applicable please keep receipts.

Training

As mentioned above, there is an agreed programme of essential initial training prior to any volunteer starting as a Mentor. These include:

- (i) Welcome and Introduction to the role (Face to face). Including input from experienced mentors and from care leavers, and also covering self-care.
- (ii) Further exploration of the role, practicalities and understanding the impact of trauma and key elements of a healthy mentoring relationship.
- (iii) Online/Reading Mandatory Training Modules (3): Safeguarding covering children and vulnerable adults; UK Data Protection, storage and information sharing; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Further training modules will be available to volunteers such as neurodiversity, and more on mental health, and volunteers will be expected to cover these during their first year of involvement.

Over the course of the pilot we will work together to develop further training according to need. Moreover, shared volunteer network gatherings can be used for training and development in the role as is deemed beneficial

Staying Connected

Questions, ideas, concerns, or just want to chat?

Contact our Project Manager at:

TriumphTogether@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

 07979708524

Final Word

Thank you for choosing to be part of this journey.

Your time, kindness, interest, stories and support are changing lives.

We trust this experience will be as meaningful for you as it will be for our young people.

Appendix I: Why local community mentoring?

Children in Care and Care Leavers vary greatly in their experiences, needs and interests. They cannot be treated as a homogenous group although of course there are statutory duties that are to be applied appropriately to all.

We want to build a local community network that offers flexible support and encouragement according to need.

We all benefit from connection: from relationships, belonging and mutually supportive relationships; from parental figures and from non-parental adults slightly ahead of us on our journey. Perhaps in different measures, but we all need encouragement and challenge, motivation and nurture, purpose and reward.

We want to build a local community network as naturally as possible, that produces more connections organically, in its own ways.

For too many of our care leavers, supportive relationships are limited or not there at all. For a significant number, the support of children's social care has not been entirely positive, possibly highly damaging, and difficult to comprehend. The ability for some young people to trust professionals has been compromised and may take time to build back into a helpful perspective.

We want to build a local community network, linked to and supported by the local council, whilst operating in a way distinct from statutory services.

"The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members." – attributed to Mahatma Ghandi (several internet sites). Care Leavers are one of the most vulnerable groups; they have faced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and navigate the impact of trauma. For many this has led to disruption in education and connection with wider family. For some it is coupled with learning needs, physical disabilities or challenges for their mental health. The wellbeing of our community is impacted as well as demonstrated by how well we all work together to support our care leavers.

We want to build a local community network ambitious for all young people to thrive.

Appendix 2 – Some Context of Children’s Social Care

Children’s Social Care Teams

Within Children’s Social Care there are lots of different teams. There is currently some change taking place and therefore details of some may change, though not those of most relevance for Triumph Together’s young people, so this is a very simple outline.

- a) There is a ‘front door’ team who considers any new referrals and concerns. It is known as i-ART
- b) There are Early Help teams who work alongside children and families to offer support
- c) There are Child Protection professionals/teams who work with children and families to address significant safeguarding concerns to protect children, and ideally to support them to stay safely cared for by their family.
- d) There is a team to support children and families when one child in the family has a disability and there is a focus on the support that they need. There are further specialist teams for young people with additional needs aged 16-17 and aged 18-25.
- e) There are teams that support children who have become Looked After by the Local Authority. This can include continuing support of birth families, support of foster carers and liaison with residential care providers. It includes work to support the health and wellbeing of each individual child.
- f) There is a team supporting children in care and care leavers as they come towards the transition to adulthood. This is the team in which Triumph Together is overseen. This team is called the Supporting Independence Team, which is the name chosen for it by young people in our Children in Care Council.

Who is in the Supporting Independence Team?

The manager of the Supporting Independence Team is Lindsay Tanner. She manages a team of workers called Personal Advisers. This is a term used in legislation for workers allocated to work with every care leaver at least until they are 21, and available to work with them until they are aged 25.

Each Personal Adviser works with a number of young people. By mid 2026, this should be a maximum of 25 young people. The role of the Personal Adviser is to provide advice, guidance and practical support in areas related to moving into and managing their own tenancy, next steps in study or career, family and social relationships, health etc. often signposting them to specialist support.

A Personal Adviser is often known as a PA, so not to be confused with a Personal Assistant or administrative aide.

A Personal Adviser is expected to be introduced to a young person while they are aged 17, though while a young person who is a child in care is under 18 they will additionally have an allocated social worker.

At the end of 2025, about 630 young people are entitled to support from the Supporting Independence Team as care leavers, and about 450 actively receive it.

Other partner agency support, with who we work

- (i) Cheshire West and Chester Council has a Young People's Service (YPS). Workers from YPS can be allocated to work with a young person to support next steps in education, training or employment. This is particularly applicable for those under 20.
- (ii) Cheshire West and Chester Council has a Skills and Employability Service with specialist workers and programmes to support young people into work
- (iii) The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) provides a job coach/work coach for each young person on Universal Credits to help them consider how to take the next step into work. They also have designated workers who support with concerns that care leavers have.
- (iv) Some Housing Providers offer employability support, such as Weavervale.
- (v) Young people who have their own tenancy will probably have a social housing landlord. There are a number of these, and each operate slightly differently. However, there will be an allocated Housing Officer and probably a separate Income Officer. They do tend to have different teams managing sign-up, ongoing tenancy, maintenance and income. The Housing Officer should be able to direct any queries.
- (vi) West Cheshire Homes manage the applications for social housing, and are a good point of contact within the Council for any queries and support.
- (vii) Housing Options is the Council's team supporting prevention of homelessness.

As a mentor, you will not be alone in getting alongside and supporting the young people in Triumph Together. However, you do have a very valuable contribution to bring. You bring a natural, community-based connection, one that does not have a statutory function. You provide a trusted adult within the local community who invests time and relationship to give a sense of stability, value, meaning, opportunity.

The Need?

Each individual young person will have their own goals. The need for which a mentor will really make a difference may related to health, or self-belief and getting into employment, or managing moving to live in their own tenancy, or confidence socially. For example, in each 6-month period, there will be 40-50 care leavers turning 18, of whom 16-20 will not be in education, employment or training. About 5 these young people won't be actively seeking work, some of them choosing this due to pregnancy or parenting, and some due to having very complex chronic or acute illness or disability. Each 6-months, 11-15 young care leavers are turning 18 and are missing this sense of routine, purpose and achievement.

In each 6-month period, of those 40-50 care leavers turning 18, 3-4 will be supported in accommodation by Adult Social Care due to the level of their care and support needs, 5-6 are staying with their foster carers into adulthood, 4-5 are living with parents or relatives. Each 6-month period, 28-35 young care leavers turning 18 are expected to have got their own tenancy and to be living alone, managing all this responsibility.

Having someone alongside them, within the community, not part of 'the system', giving encouragement and support will be hugely valuable.

Appendix 3: Mentor Role Description

A Mentor within Triumph Together is a volunteer who makes themselves available to get alongside a child in care or a care leaver to support them.

The mentor role usually includes one or more of the following elements:

- Encouragement:
- Moral support: Reminding them that seeking support is a strength and giving them positive encouragement such as helping them find purpose, address issues and make changes, looking to build on their strengths.
- Travel Accompanying: Helping out with them growing in confidence with appointments and helping them understand what is being said and what it means for them. Note: This should be done bearing in mind the aim to achieve long-term sustainability for them in managing their own appointments and pursuit of interests and work. It does not include giving a lift I-I in your own car.
- Training or Employment Connections:
- Community Connections and accessing groups and networks within the community:
- Advocacy: Helping their voice to be heard and understood. Note: If this is a primary need, then a referral to the Children's Society for an Advocate should be considered.

This is a volunteer role and a mentor does not receive reimbursement for the role. Though expenses related to fulfilling the role may be reimbursed.

The essential criteria for a Mentor are:

- Be over the age of 18 years; stable, mature and law abiding.
- Be free from any negative impact of the use of substances e.g. drugs or alcohol
- Refrain from any potentially damaging behaviour towards a child or adult.
- Be consistent and reliable regarding arrangements made with young people and communication with Triumph Together organisation.
- Be positive: about the community, purposeful activity, emotional and physical health and well-being.

A mentor will be someone good at listening, who shows empathy, is compassionate, non-judgmental and strength focused.

They should recognise the impact of trauma and seek to work positively to build a young person's confidence, self-esteem and positive support network within the community.

Appendix 4 – Volunteer Code of Conduct

A high level of conduct is expected within Triumph Together.

The following are taken from the duties expected within the field of social care.¹

Triumph Together volunteers must:

- act in the best interests of those receiving Triumph Together support.
 - Make decisions according to their best interests, with their safety as of paramount importance.
 - Treat them all with respect and dignity, committed to the highest standard of Triumph Together support, irrespective of age, gender, race, disability, sexuality, social or economic status, lifestyle, culture, religion or beliefs.
- respect the confidentiality of the young people with Triumph Together.
 - acting according to laws, Triumph Together procedures and best practice
- communicate effectively with young people, and with those leading Triumph Together.
- keep high standards of personal conduct.
- keep Triumph Together informed of any issues or incidents arising relating to conduct or competence as a volunteer involved.
 - For example, any criminal offences or police cautions, disciplinary proceedings or work suspensions.
- maintain an appropriate level of knowledge and competency.
 - making use of available training and requesting support and/or training as needed
- act within the limits of knowledge, skills and experience, if necessary referring matters on to others.
- limit work or stop if performance or judgement is affected by their health
- keep accurate records, according to designated and secure recording procedures
- deal fairly and safely with the risks of infection
- behave with honesty and integrity and make sure that behaviour does not damage the public's confidence in Triumph Together .
- Make sure that any advertising of Triumph Together is accurate.

Appendix 5 - Volunteer Agreement

Purpose of the agreement:

To give confidence to Triumph Together leadership, young people and to each volunteer that there is shared understanding of aims, expectations and responsibilities.

Expectations for Triumph Together in support of volunteers:

- Provision of a contact available for advice and support.
- Allocated Triumph Together Project Manager with oversight for the programme and smooth running.
- A commitment to tailor the volunteer's role to be within the volunteer's competencies and close to preferences expressed.
- To promote training and development for each volunteer within the Triumph Together role.
- Public liability insurance in place to cover claims made by members of the public if damages occur due to Triumph Together operation.
- To conduct fair investigations into any complaints or difficulties, according to procedures.

Expectations of volunteer conduct:

- Only lawful conduct in all areas with any impact on Triumph Together.
- To be familiar with procedures and to abide by them, with particular care to be taken in all aspects of safeguarding, confidentiality and information sharing.
- To have completed the mandatory safeguarding and data protection training.
- Not knowingly to allow someone who has been identified as a risk to children to have any unsupervised contact with a young person.
- At all times to maintain healthy and safe relationships with young people.
- To remain connected to the Triumph Together community network for sustainable support, for the benefit of the volunteer and the young people.
- To remain in regular contact with the Triumph Together Project Manager and to be honest about challenges, concerns and any accidents or incidents of concern in relation to Triumph Together.

Agreement

- I confirm that I have read and I understand the operational policies and procedures for Triumph Together.
- I am in support of Triumph Together’s aims and principles.
- I agree to conduct myself according to the expectations detailed above.
- I agree to inform Triumph Together if there are any changes to my contact details, availability for Triumph Together involvement, or concerns that would be raised by an Enhanced DBS check, or that would warrant considering by a LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer).

Signatures

Volunteer: _____ Date: _____

Confidentiality Agreement

I agree

- To treat all information regarding children in care, care leavers and all those involved with Triumph Together with respect and in the strictest confidence.
- To maintain confidentiality of information at all times.
- To follow Triumph Together procedures and guidance for information sharing. Only to share information received in Triumph Together participation, or about someone else involved with Triumph Together, according to specific consent given to do so, or within specified circumstances in which consent is not required.
- Not to keep any paper records relating to any young people involved in Triumph Together; to record using only the designated portal forms.

Signatures

Volunteer: _____ Date: _____

Volunteer Emergency Contact Details:

Name:

Relationship to the volunteer:

Tel/Mobile:

Email: