



# **Volunteer Appropriate Adults**

## **Annual Report**

**2023-2024**



**Appropriate  
Adults**

## Volunteer Appropriate Adult Scheme in Staffordshire

The Volunteer Appropriate Adult Scheme has been managed and facilitated by the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office since March 2020. The Scheme provided volunteer AAs to support vulnerable adults when they are in custody or being voluntarily interviewed.

### What is an Appropriate Adult?

An AA has an important and positive role in ensuring fairness in the justice system. They actively protect a person's rights, entitlements and welfare while they are in custody or being interviewed voluntarily. They are expected to:

- support, advise and assist the person whenever they are given, or asked to provide, information or participate in any procedure (including interviews)
- ensure police act properly and fairly, respecting the person's rights and entitlements
- assist the person to communicate, including respecting and supporting their right to silence
- protect the person's rights and help them to understand and use their rights.

An AA's advice does not include *legal* advice. Instead, the AA has a right to make sure a solicitor or legal representative attends to provide independent legal assistance. This is free for everyone.

### When is the appropriate adult needed?

The AA has a role throughout a person's time in custody or voluntary interview. In most circumstances, police must make sure an AA is in the room whenever they: -

- Undertake a procedure in which they give the person information (or ask for information from them)
- Are required to seek consent to carry out a procedure
- Advise the person of their legal rights & entitlements
- Caution the person before questioning them
- Conduct interviews or ask the person to sign a statement
- Carry out ID procedures such as fingerprinting, photographs and video identification
- Carry out Class A drug testing or take samples such as DNA swabs
- Conduct strip searches or intimate (body cavity) searches
- Review whether detention needs to be continued or extended for longer
- Tell the person they have to go to court (this is called 'charging')
- Put the person on bail while the Crown Prosecution Service decide whether to charge them
- Take action in relation to a Simple Caution or Conditional Caution (adults).

Sometimes certain procedures can be done without an AA but there are special rules. For example:

- The person's rights & entitlements must be repeated to them when the AA arrives.
- Strip searches can only take place without an AA if there is an *urgent risk of serious harm*.
- The police must make *reasonable efforts* to give the AA *sufficient notice* before reviews of detention or decisions about whether to charge, so that they can attend.
- If the AA cannot attend for charging, police should bail the person to return when they can.

## The Staffordshire Appropriate Adult Scheme

<b>Staffordshire Volunteer Appropriate Adult Statistics as at 31.03.2024</b>	
Operating Times	08:00- 22:00 seven days a week
Number of Volunteers in Total	15
AAs supporting Northern Area Custody Facility (NACF) only	6
AAs supporting Southern Area Custody Facility (SACF) only	6
AAs supporting both NACF / SACF	3
Total number of supported visits 2023-24	907
Average Weekly Visits	18
Average Length of Visit	2 hours
Number of Panel Meetings undertaken	3
Number of Induction/ Refresher Training Sessions undertaken	2
Highest number of visits by an AA	203

### The Future

The Staffordshire Volunteer AA scheme became member of the National Appropriate Adult Network (NAAN) in 2022.

NAAN is a charity working to create a fairer justice system for children and vulnerable adults through an effective appropriate adult safeguard. NAAN has defined quality standards for schemes and is able to provide guidance, information and training to ensure that AAs can comprehensively support the vulnerable whilst in custody or during voluntary interviews.

The Staffordshire Scheme is looking to align the scheme with the quality standards and to improve the service delivery.