

The
'Can Do'
Guide to
Involving
Young
Volunteers



Involving Young Volunteers

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Rethinking young people involved in volunteering

Young people may want to get involved in volunteering for a number of reasons:

- to increase their confidence
- to gain knowledge, skills or experience
- to develop social skills and other 'soft skills'
- as a route to personal development
- to enhance their employability and gaining vital experience to increase their job prospects
- to access further education

Your organisation could be missing out on the advantages of having young people involved who can bring their own fresh and youthful dynamic to organisations if you don't involve them!

Indeed, your project may be unintentionally discriminating against younger people volunteering.

So what do younger volunteers want exactly?

- Shorter term projects with more flexibility tend to be more popular
- They may want to have more of a say in what they're doing
- Or be able to move around between different areas.
- If you can organise something where your young volunteers can work with their friends or in groups, then you're more likely to keep them motivated for longer

Sound hard?

We're not expecting organisations to go outside the aims and mission of their organisation to involve young people, just to think about the potential of involving younger volunteers and the possibilities they may generate.

It needs to be well thought out and planned before you involve younger volunteers. You also need to ask yourself if it would be appropriate for the services you offer or clients you support. Many organisations simply don't think of involving volunteers under 21, as they have never done so in the past. It could be a real culture change to do so, but why not at least consider it and discuss it with your colleagues?

It may be that you have been thinking about doing a certain project for a while, but need some new ideas or volunteers to help it along.

It can be about involving young people in a role that suits the organisation, but the way you do it might be different. For example, you might break up the volunteer role so it can be done in shorter slots. Say you have a Marketing Volunteer role, you could maybe break it down into various sub roles e.g. updating the website, producing a newsletter or social media. Many young people have great IT skills, so why not put them to good use? It's not about thinking of completely new roles for young people, just adapting them.

The key to successful placements is matching interests to roles. Use the young person's interests as a springboard. If the young person has come to you, that's even better. Find out what attracted them to your organisation in the first place, why they chose you in particular and what they are hoping to get out of it. That's the secret to a successful placement, making sure the young person is actually interested and you can maintain that interest.

Top tips

So you've decided you would like to engage young volunteers, what do you need to do next?

Promote the role

- You will need to target areas where young people gather to ensure maximum promotion, examples could include:
 - Princes Trust groups
 - Young people's projects
 - Job Centre Plus
 - Schools/Colleges
 - Careers Departments
 - Youth clubs
- Make sure you keep the language informal
- Ask young people to volunteer specifically e.g. 'we are looking for volunteers 14-18 years of age', as they may not realise that you take younger volunteers
- Consult young people on the best way to design recruitment materials and messages to reach as many young people as possible. Also for advice on what sort of roles young people would like to take up or develop within your project.
- Why not use social media or text to reach young people? Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr are popular

Devise clear role descriptions and expectations, and adjust them with the young person if need be!

- Make the roles simple and achievable
- Keep the roles within a young person's ability - don't create roles that require lots of experience
- Give them training to develop and progress in their roles within the project over time
- Allow the young person to learn from their mistakes without retribution, or negativity from other staff/volunteers
- Try to make sure the role is vibrant and fun if possible
- Try to make the role more flexible time wise, so that young people can get there - you may need to work around school or college commitments

- Try to be flexible with commitment - if you have short-term roles for events etc. these could be perfect roles for young people - setting up gazebos, tables, helping with refreshment stalls, the list is endless. Or you may need to offer shorter time-slots so they can juggle with their other commitments

Manage and support your young volunteers

- Make sure you make your young volunteers feel valued, from their first contact with the organisation and throughout their volunteering with you
- Provide a more casual atmosphere towards young people
- Designate a 'named' person for your young volunteers, so they can relate to the project through that named person and build trust, and respect through them
- Tailor support and supervision to meet the needs of your young volunteers. Does it need to be less formal or focus more on personal development?
- Reward your young volunteers verbally or practically e.g.
 - always say 'thank you' when they come into volunteer
 - talk about how much you appreciate their contribution during support/supervision
 - give them valued volunteer certificates along with your other volunteers
 - give them cinema vouchers etc. as a way of demonstrating that you appreciate their commitment

Always make the Benefits of Volunteering clear to them

- to increase their confidence and self-esteem
- to gain knowledge, skills or experience such as event planning, team working, sticking to deadlines
- to develop social skills and other 'soft skills'
- as a route to personal development
- to enhance their employability and gaining vital experience to increase their job prospects
- to access further education

Give young people space to try out new and interesting things

- Many young people will enjoy the opportunity to grow and progress, so ensure the project in which you involve them will give them opportunities to expand their roles and maybe take on other roles with support
- It's important to assess what their motivations are when they join your organisation and continue to monitor these through support/supervision - that way you will keep them motivated and interested in the project
- Why not link in with other projects and maybe develop joint projects? There may be opportunities to share young volunteers with different skills

Team them up with other young volunteers

- Can you get their friends interested too? Lots of young people would volunteer but not on their own, however, they would volunteer with their friend. This is particularly so in the 14-16 age group.
- Have you thought of approaching local schools or colleges to see if they would be interested in a community project? Maybe your organisation could offer a community project to a class or year group. It could be a one-off activity or maybe over a couple of sessions. Just think of the benefits to:
 - **your project** - lots of people with new ideas and energy, potential volunteers for the future
 - **the school** - a great way to build links with the local community and give their students an opportunity to understand about local communities, and the activity that goes on there
 - **the young people** - a chance to make an active difference in their local community, take on a challenge and still have the support of their peers and teachers

Age Limits

- In general there is no lower age limit for volunteers
- You may need to consider the type of role and responsibility that is appropriate for particular age groups
- Also consider if your project may be discriminating against a younger age group. Consider if the lower age group for the role is set too high and is there to discourage younger people from volunteering
- Check your insurance policy! You may find that it stipulates a minimum age limit
- You may also need to check internal organisational policies, to see if there are any minimum age limits
- [Volunteering England](#) give the following guidance on their information page 'A summary of legal issues involving volunteers':

"While there are legal restrictions on employing young people, they do not apply to volunteers. It is worth being aware of the legislation, even if you are not bound by it, and to remember that young people have other demands on their time outside volunteering, such as homework, socialising and so on.

Section 18 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 and subsequent amendments limit employment to those aged 13 or over. It states that no child under minimum school leaving age may be employed before 7 am or after 7 pm on any day or for more than 2 hours on any school day or Sunday. The legislation also requires that children must have a minimum of 2 weeks free from work during the school holidays.

Many local authorities have bye-laws further restricting the work young people may do. It is also important to bear in mind that while the Children and Young Persons Act and most local bye-laws define employment as involvement 'in any trade or occupation which is carried on for profit', some local authorities have taken the definition of 'for profit' to include, for example, charity shops."

- The Charity Commission gives guidance on children and young people being on management committees. For unincorporated organisations, under 18's cannot be on a management committee, but for companies, you can be on a management committee from age 16 (though the Charity Commission guides that the majority of committee members should be 18 or over). Organisations can have a youth representation body that can feed ideas into the management committee.

Young People and Volunteer Insurance

Volunteer Glasgow have produced an excellent publication around involving young people, so we have taken the information directly from their section on insurance:

- *“Your existing Public Liability or Employer’s insurance policy does not have to be a barrier to involving young people. If the minimum age is not as low as you would like, then you can ask them to lower it, quite possibly at no or little cost. The following are some other insurances which may cover young people involved in your work.*
- *Check if insurance:*
 - *Can be covered by the young person’s school. If in school permission from them or parent may be all that’s needed*
 - *Is covered as part of a leadership program (such as the Duke of Edinburgh’s Awards, Prince’s Trust, etc.)*
 - *If your organisation has a lower age limit*
 - *Students who are required to complete volunteering or community service are often covered by the school’s/college’s work experience insurance. You will need to confirm this with the school*
 - *Some pupils at school may have an Activity Coach through their 16+ Learning Choices resources provided by the Education Department. Their insurance may provide some assistance for cover.”*

Child Protection and young volunteers

- **Getting It Right - Standards of Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People**

“All organisations working with children/young people have a legal and moral responsibility to keep those children safe and as an organisation, you will want to provide the best possible care for them. A child protection policy will outline your organisation’s commitment to practice that protects children/young people from harm. The supporting procedures and guidelines will help you to put in place the measures to protect children and young people, support staff and volunteers, and create a safe and caring organisation that is committed to safeguarding children.

Getting It Right contains the minimum standards of good practice in safeguarding children and young people. These standards are recognised and endorsed by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety as a tool for organisations to measure their practice and to support organisations to continually improve and update their safeguarding practice.

Getting It Right outlines 7 minimum standards, the key information needed to meet each standard, and signposting information on all areas of good practice in child protection and safeguarding.”

Click here to download your free copy of [Getting It Right](#)

Checklist when involving young volunteers

Your organisation may need to:

- Discuss at board/management level if it is willing to make changes to engage and involve young volunteers
- Look at its structures to check they are more inclusive for young volunteers
- Look at existing age limits for volunteers. Are they discriminating against young volunteers?
- Check your insurance policy to see if it covers young volunteers, if not, you will need to discuss this with your insurance company
- Review your risk assessments for your volunteer roles to ensure you abide by your duty of care to young volunteers
- Review your Child Protection, Safeguarding and Health & Safety Policies, to ensure young volunteers are included and protected by them
- Review your marketing materials to see if they are young person friendly
- Consult with young people to see what sort of roles they would like to volunteer for
- Liaise with parents to remove any potential concerns about their children volunteering
- Think about what roles you already have that may be suitable for young volunteers
- If there are no suitable roles at the moment, could you create new ones?
- Have you got potential community projects, where young volunteers could join in along with their friends?
- Could young volunteers support your project by helping at an event such as an awareness session in their school/college?
- Review your induction documentation to include parental permission for under 16's
- Check that the staff/volunteers who will be supervising the young volunteers have experience or training in this area: if not arrange this
- Look at innovative ways to reward and recognise your young volunteers e.g. certificates/awards

Useful Links

- Volunteering England www.volunteering.org.uk
- Engaging Young People in your Organisation – Volunteer Aberdeenshire - <http://www.vcaberdeenshire.org.uk/youth.html>
- Volunteer Glasgow - <http://www.volunteerglasgow.org/downloads/Guide-to-involving-Young-People-as-Volunteers.pdf>
- Getting it Right – standards for Child Protection - <http://www.volunteernow.co.uk/training-and-standards/getting-it-right-standards-for-child-protection>

Further information and support

Contact Dudley CVS Volunteer Centre



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Dudley Volunteer Centre



www.volunteeringcounts.org.uk