



Involving Young People as Volunteers with Your Organisation

Introduction

This information sheet offers some guidelines for things to consider when involving young people aged 14 – 25 as volunteers within your organisation.

The benefits

It may appear that there are lots of things to consider, particularly for young volunteers aged 14 – 18, but the benefits to your organisation, young people and the wider community make it really worthwhile.



Benefits to your organisation

Hosting young volunteers can provide your organisation with opportunities to:

- Access skills your organisation might not have
- Gain fresh perspectives, energy, enthusiasm and new ideas
- Diversify your volunteer base
- Ensure your service is meeting the needs and interests of young people, particularly valuable if young people are your service users
- Access new partnerships and networks - young people can raise awareness and champion your organisation's work amongst their peers, teachers, parents and the wider community
- Source funding.

By involving young people, you can help society to create a culture of volunteering. Young people are the future older volunteers. They may return to your organisation or support it in other ways if they have had a good experience. A report from The Jubilee Centre concluded that young people developing a 'habit of service' (volunteering) are twice as likely to form a 'habit of service' in later life.

Benefits to young people

There is significant evidence that volunteering can provide a young person with opportunities to:

- Better understand their community and take an active role in it
- Develop new skills, confidence and interests
- Build professional and personal skills
- Have fun, develop new networks and friendships
- Break down barriers between generations
- Gain relevant work-experience - adding depth to personal statements and CVs
- Access references
- Gain qualifications

- Contribute to a cause they care about.

Generation Change identifies that young people are already volunteering through:

- Digital social action e.g. code clubs
- Structured programmes e.g. National Citizenship Service (NCS)
- Local clubs and services e.g. youth clubs
- Social enterprises e.g. setting up businesses and enterprises
- Schools and education
- Public service e.g. libraries
- Outdoor and other activities e.g. sport clubs
- Federated organisations e.g. Young Farmers
- Training and development e.g. Duke of Edinburgh.

They note the categories suggested are not exhaustive and can over-lap.

The practicalities

Young people under 18 can volunteer!

There are currently no legal restrictions around volunteers and age. The issues, more often, are around what roles are suitable and the practicalities surrounding those roles.

Health and Safety

When involving young people under 18 in your activities you have a *Duty of Care* towards them and their health and safety. Risk assessments need to consider their level of maturity as this may not be the same as for an older volunteer. Employment Law requires individual risk assessments for young employees and whilst this isn't required for volunteers, it is good practice to undertake individual volunteer risk assessments.



Insurance

It is worth checking if your organisation's current insurance for volunteers has a lower age limit of 18 or if it offers reduced benefits for those under 18. If this is the case, it is suggested that you contact your insurance company and find out if the age can be lowered.

Volunteers should be insured under either Public or Employers' Liability cover. Your insurance policy should explicitly mention volunteers, to ensure they are covered.

If younger volunteers are volunteering in the same activities as your other volunteers there should not usually be an additional charge for changing the age limits of your policy.

Volunteering hours

The number of hours a child can work in a week does not currently apply to volunteering. We already know that in many cases young people volunteer in their free time, on evenings and weekends and for example in youth clubs which take place after 7pm.

The Working Time Regulations (1998) implemented the European Working Time Directive into UK law. The rights of young workers - those over the minimum school leaving age but under 18 years, and those under the minimum school age on approved work experience schemes - differ in the following ways:

- There is a limit of eight hours working time a day and 40 hours a week (unless there are special circumstances)
- Young people are not usually allowed to work either between 10pm and 6am or between 11pm and 7am (except in certain circumstances)
- There should be 12 hours' rest between each working day
- There should be two days' weekly rest and a 30-minute in-work rest break when working longer than four and a half hours.

Young volunteers and state benefits

As a general rule, volunteering does not affect state benefits as long as it is in a not-for-profit organisation and only out-of-pocket expenses are reimbursed. It is advised, however, that before anyone starts volunteering, an individual contact their Job Centre or coach to confirm this.

Community First Yorkshire understands that, under current legislation, if a young person is on job seekers allowance or universal credit they usually need to be available to attend an interview at 48 hours' notice and to be actively seeking work. Those receiving carers allowance can volunteer as long as they are still able to provide care for at least 35 hours a week. More information about volunteering and state benefits can be found on the [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk).

Safeguarding

Your organisation should have a named person who is responsible for any child protection issues.

Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a definition of a child as 'every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.'

Young volunteers need to be safeguarded whilst volunteering. Similarly, there are safeguarding issues when the young person themselves are working with vulnerable groups including other children.

A safeguarding policy *must* be in place particularly when you involve anyone under the age of 18, whether as a volunteer or service user, before they start working with you. It is also a good idea to have a 'social media safeguarding guide for young volunteers' which sets out how your organisation will ensure safe use of social media and the various platforms young people are likely to use.

Any volunteering activity that has substantial unsupervised access to vulnerable groups, including children, is not advised for volunteers under the age of 18. However, if a young volunteer over the age



of 16 is involved in such activities you will need to consider if they should undergo other safer recruiting procedures such as Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) checks. Further information on DBS and a provider checking services is available from [Community First Yorkshire's website](#).

Parental consent

It is good practice to get parent/guardian consent for anyone under the age of 18 who is volunteering with your organisation. The parent/guardian should be informed about the organisation's activities and what the young person will be doing, when and where. It is important that the young volunteer and their parent/guardian fully understand what the volunteer role entails. If possible, a copy of a risk assessment for the role should be shared. If you are hoping to use photos of young volunteers for publicity purposes you need to obtain the young person's permission and, if they are under 16, you need to get the permission of their parent/guardian to use them.

If a young person is over 16 and living independently of parents or social services, they can provide their own consent.

Community First Yorkshire has a [sample consent form for a young person under 18](#) which you can adapt for your own purposes.

Young people friendly roles and descriptions

If you are keen to involve young volunteers, but at present only have volunteer roles suitable for over 18s, you might want to consider adapting existing or developing other opportunities.

When thinking about roles, particularly for young people, it is helpful to consider the:

- **Purpose of the role** – why it needs doing and what impact it could have for your organisation and a young volunteer?
- **Tasks and activities** needed in order to fulfil the purpose of the role. Would these be appropriate for a young person?
- **Skills and experience** needed - could young volunteers be supported to develop these?
- **Benefit of the role** - what will a young person potentially gain?
- **Appeal of the role** – would it be interesting and engaging for a young volunteer? If not, what could be done to support this?
- **Need for the role** - would a young volunteer have a chance to see authentic results and gain a sense of achievement?
- **Expected time commitment and timing** – would a young person be available and able to get there?
- **Location of the role** - is this appropriate/safe for a young person?



- **Possibility of working with others** - If the volunteering role is for an individual young person, could it be done by a family, an existing group or a group created to undertake the volunteering?

The [#iwill campaign](#) promotes six principles that define good social action for young people.



Getting young people involved

- Ideally, give young people a say in the development of the volunteer role, show you respect their opinions and want to listen to them
- You might like to get them involved in co-producing volunteering roles or co-producing projects within your organisation. This can give them a sense of ownership, create a real connection between their role and your organisation's aims and it will also offer new funding potential
- Let them know if out-of-pocket travel expenses will be paid and the procedure for claiming these
- If a young person expresses interest in a role, it is recommended that you discuss other commitments they may have, such as school and employment pressures when considering the amount of time they have to volunteer.

Talk to them

- As part of an informal chat when they enquire about volunteering
- During one-to-one or group support sessions
- By developing a youth forum so that your young volunteers can come together to offer feedback and advice
- By inviting young volunteers to team meetings or as advisors to your board if they under 16 years of age
- Invite them to join the board. Young people are under-represented on charity boards. It is estimated that, nationally, only 2% of charities have young people on their board. Check your

governing document (e.g. constitution) to make sure you are within the rules of your organisation. If not, you may like to consider amending them. Charity law states: a young person must be at least 16 years old to be a trustee of a charity that is a company or a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO), or at least 18 to be a trustee of any other charity.

If you are considering developing specific opportunities for young people

- Why not encourage a group with young people to help you with a campaign to raise awareness? This could be in their schools and with their peers or in the wider community
- If you have trouble keeping up with all the ever-changing technology, you could ask a young person to show you how the internet and other digital platforms work or perhaps help you promote your activities through social media?
- Ask for their help to design a newsletter/website or a system to keep up with all your volunteers
- Think about fully supervised group activities you offer that they could help with
- If a young person enquires about your opportunities but you don't feel you have anything suitable, ask them what they can do or what they had in mind
- As well as enthusiasm and energy, young people have many skills that would be valuable to your organisation, sometimes they just forget to mention these.

Not all volunteering opportunities may be suitable for young people, but with consideration, there are many roles and tasks young people can contribute to with appropriate training, support and supervision.

Consider best practice in volunteer management for all volunteers, including young volunteers, by offering an induction which clearly outlines what your organisation, team and other volunteers do and which makes reference to your volunteer involving policies and procedures including training, support and supervision arrangements.

How to recruit young volunteers?

You can find these skilled, dedicated young people everywhere. Here are just a few examples:

- Sign up to promote your volunteering opportunities through the [Volunteering in North Yorkshire \(VINY\)](#) directory. This online directory enables volunteers across age ranges, including young people, to search for volunteering opportunities in their area and contact prospective organisations
- Contact [Community First Yorkshire](#) to help your organisation develop more and better-quality volunteering opportunities for young people. We can help with ideas on how to recruit and place young people into these opportunities
- Contact organisations that already engage young people. Schools, colleges, universities, youth clubs, Scout and Guide units, youth networks such as [North Yorkshire Youth](#) and [North Yorkshire Sport](#), job centres, youth offending services, Health and Social Care services and many more. Ask if you can speak to young people themselves about your opportunities, take along all relevant information and application packs for them to take away. Consider education institutions offering courses that are particularly relevant to your roles, where young people can gain practical experience of, say, the health sector or working with children



- Make contact with the local Duke of Edinburgh, Princes Trust and National Citizenship programmes, as volunteering is part of these programmes
- Exhibitions and events such as fresher's fairs and careers events.

Considerations in getting young people involved

- Consider your existing publicity. Does your publicity appeal to young people? Are your activities geared towards older volunteers? Do you show or state that you are seeking young volunteers? Young people will often assume that your activities are not for them unless you say otherwise. Tell young people what you are doing, say what the lower age of your volunteers can be and highlight the benefits of your opportunities to make them appealing to young people; ensuring young people understand the role and can commit
- If at interview you are unsure if a young person understands the role, invite them to a training session and give them an opportunity to find out more and demonstrate what they understand
- Offer a taster day so that potential young volunteers can come into the office or take part in a group activity to see if it's the right role for them.



Retaining young people as volunteers

You can show your young volunteers that you are committed to them and encourage them to continue to volunteer with you by:

- Considering why they are volunteering - if it is to gain new skills, make friends, add to their CV, give something back or feel they are making a difference, you can help fulfil these needs by offering training and the chance to develop their roles or create new ones. If your training is not accredited externally you could accredit it internally by setting several standards and outcomes for the young person to achieve. [North Yorkshire Council's Adult Learning Skills Service](#) may be able to offer you support and advice about this
- Organising social events can help young volunteers settle in, meet others and create a social network
- Offering references - where appropriate this shows that you are committed to helping them further their career or education.

Recognising young volunteer achievements

This is a great way to make them feel valued and to celebrate their success. North Yorkshire Council runs annual [community awards](#) and there are also similar award ceremonies in each district.

Finally, don't forget to let young people know that you and your organisation really appreciate that they are giving their time. Seeing the difference they make and knowing that it is valued can help a young person to become more confident, feel part of the community and have a sense of responsibility. Showing appreciation can be as simple as saying thank you, giving a card or certificate, or nominating them for an awards ceremony to



celebrate their contributions. With their permission you may also like to use them as part of a press story or as a funding case study.

Further reading and resources

This guide has been prepared with reference to the following documents about involving young volunteers:

City of York Council - [Involving Young Volunteers](#) – Good Practice Guidance

Volunteer Edinburgh – [Guidance for organisations to support young volunteers](#)

Wales Council for Voluntary Action – [Involving young people as volunteers](#)

Greater London Volunteering – [A Practical Guide to Involving Young Volunteers into your Volunteer Programme](#)

East Sussex Guide – [Young People and Volunteering](#)

General information and advice regarding involving young volunteers can be found at:

[National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children \(NSPCC\)](#)

Health & Safety Executive: Voluntary and community sector: [keeping children safe](#)

[National Council for Voluntary Organisations \(NCVO\)](#)

Guidance on [involving young trustees](#)

Additional Support

Community First Yorkshire can advise you on how to recruit and support your volunteers. Find out more about the volunteering support we offer on our [website](#), or simply fill in an [enquiry form](#) and we'll get back to you.

Don't forget, you can advertise your volunteering roles for free on our [Volunteering in North Yorkshire \(VINY\)](#) directory?

Updated: CG/15/05/2024