





Working with young people

A toolkit for organisations looking for young volunteers

Who are we referring to?

Young volunteers in this context are:

- **Young people aged between 14-17 years old**
- **Up to age 25 for those with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)**

Young people under 18 are legally still children. This means organisations must take additional safeguarding, supervision and duty of care responsibilities into account when involving them as volunteers.

Involving young people as volunteers provides organisations with fresh perspectives, energy and new skills. At the same time, it offers young people valuable experience, confidence and personal development opportunities.

What do we need to consider when involving young volunteers?

When planning to involve young people under 18, organisations should ensure that volunteering opportunities are safe, meaningful and compliant with legal requirements.

The following areas should be carefully considered:

Recruitment

- Volunteering is **not paid employment** – this must be clear in all communication.
- Recruitment processes should be age-appropriate and accessible (**Note: 16–18-year-olds, may have little to no previous work experience**).
- Avoid overly complex forms or processes that may deter young applicants.
- Be clear about expectations, responsibilities and time commitments.

Safeguarding & DBS

- Ensure appropriate **DBS checks** are in place for staff and volunteers who will be working with young people.
- Undertake all relevant safeguarding checks and ensure policies are up to date.

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- Provide safeguarding training for staff supervising young volunteers.

Right to Volunteer & Eligibility

- International students may require **Right to Work/Right to Volunteer checks** depending on visa status ([Volunteers from overseas | NCVO](#))
- Ensure volunteering arrangements comply with Home Office guidance where applicable. ([Involving volunteers in your organisation - GOV.UK](#)).

Hours & Flexibility

- Consider how many hours a young person can reasonably volunteer alongside education and family commitments.
- Offer flexibility during school holidays, evenings and weekends where possible.
- Avoid overburdening young volunteers.

Insurance

- Check whether young volunteers are covered under your organisation's **Public Liability Insurance**.
- Confirm whether your insurer requires notification or policy updates for under 18s.

Risk Assessment

- Complete a **role-specific risk assessment** for volunteers under 18. ([Young volunteers and safeguarding | NSPCC Learning](#))
- No lone working.
- Clear supervision arrangements must be in place.
- Identify any additional safeguarding measures required.

Expenses

- Reimburse reasonable out-of-pocket expenses (e.g. travel, meals).
- Consider “there and then” reimbursement where possible to remove financial barriers.

Data Protection

- Ensure compliance with **GDPR regulations**, particularly around consent and data storage for under 18s.
- Consider parental/guardian consent where appropriate.

Organisational Capacity

- Do you have the time and staff capacity to provide appropriate supervision and support?
- Are you able to offer a meaningful experience rather than tokenistic involvement?

Training & Induction

- Provide a structured and engaging induction process.

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- Ensure young people fully understand their role and responsibilities.
- Offer training appropriate to their level of experience.

Expectations

- Set reasonable, age-appropriate expectations.
 - Recognise that young people may need additional support and guidance.
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What can young people offer your organisation?

Young volunteers bring significant value to organisations and communities.

They can offer:

- Fresh perspectives and innovative ideas
- A strong understanding of youth issues and peer experiences
- Digital skills, social media awareness and content creation expertise
- A wide range of developing skills and talents
- Enthusiasm and willingness to learn
- Motivation to gain experience and build responsibility
- Insight into new and modern ways of working

Young people are not “just helping out” — they can actively shape services, improve engagement with other young people, and strengthen community connections.

What support will young people need?

Young volunteers often require additional guidance, reassurance and structure to thrive in their roles.

Organisations should consider providing:

Accessible Recruitment

- Support with applications
- Clear role descriptions
- Alternative formats such as video applications
- Acceptance of school or college references

Induction & Early Experience

- A welcoming and engaging induction

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- Shadowing opportunities
- Informal starter tasks to build confidence
- Clear explanation of organisational culture and expectations

Ongoing Supervision

- Named supervisor or clear point of contact
- Regular check-ins and feedback sessions in their preferred format
- Open communication channels
- Safe spaces to raise questions or concerns

Confidence & Development

- Encouragement and positive reinforcement
- Recognition of achievement
- Celebration of contributions (including social media shout-outs where appropriate and consented)
- Training opportunities
- Constructive feedback to support future employment or education e.g. supplying a reference for a young person.

Providing consistent supervision support at the beginning can significantly improve confidence and retention.

What are the common barriers for young volunteers?

Young people may face barriers when accessing volunteering opportunities, including:

- Lack of experience
- Limited references
- Low confidence or self-esteem
- Limited availability due to education
- Organisations lacking appropriate DBS processes
- High supervision requirements
- Financial constraints (travel costs)

Some young people may feel intimidated by formal processes or adult environments.

How can organisations address these barriers?

To create a welcoming and inclusive volunteering programme for young people:

- Promote volunteering as a safe learning opportunity
- Be flexible with references and experience requirements
- Offer flexible volunteering times
- Provide prompt expense reimbursement
- Create a supportive, kind and inclusive environment
- Ensure staff and trustees understand the value of youth volunteering
- Develop roles that are meaningful and skill-building
- Avoid tokenistic involvement — ensure young people’s contributions are valued
- Smile, encourage and actively support young people to enjoy their experience

Embedding a “young people welcome” message within your volunteering culture will strengthen both recruitment and retention.

Final considerations

Involving young people under 18 requires thoughtful planning, strong safeguarding practice and genuine commitment.

When done well, youth volunteering:

- Builds confidence and life skills
- Supports community cohesion
- Develops future leaders and skilled workers
- Strengthens your organisation with energy, insight and innovation

A meaningful, supported and inclusive approach ensures that both your organisation and your young volunteer’s benefit.

Useful Links for support and information

[Volunteering for under 18s - VCES](#)

[Engaging and supporting young people to volunteer | NCVO](#)

[Resources for people under eighteen - MindOut](#)

[Young volunteers and safeguarding | NSPCC Learning](#)

[Young Volunteer's Toolkit](#)

Volunteering Resources – Involving young people as volunteers

This information sheet is part of a toolkit of resources for involving volunteers. For further advice and support on developing youth volunteering opportunities, please contact your local Volunteer Centre or volunteering support organisation.

 <p>volunteering academy</p>	<p>Volunteer Academy www.mvda.info/volunteering Tel: 01642 803613 Email: hello@volunteeringacademy.org.uk</p>
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