

A guide to recruiting young volunteers

Tips for not-for-profit organisations looking to attract and recruit young volunteers (13-25 years old)



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1. Introduction

Volunteering can offer a real sense of purpose for young people (13-25 year olds) and provide your organisation with a valuable and often untapped source of volunteer capacity: the [National Youth Social Action Survey 2019 \(p 5\)](#) shows that 88% of young people surveyed cared about making the world a better place and nearly three quarters believed they could make a difference (74%).

According to the [Duke of Edinburgh Award's Annual Statistics 2020/21](#), a remarkable 330,000 young people continued with their Duke of Edinburgh volunteering activities during the pandemic – dedicating 1.8 million hours, equating to an investment of almost £8.5 million to local communities at a time when they needed it most.

Why provide volunteering opportunities for young people?

- It provides opportunities for young people to make a difference and be active citizens.
- It helps develop skills and experience, supporting pathways to education, training and work.
- It introduces a fresh perspective and energy to organisations.
- It develops capacity within organisations, supporting them to thrive and be sustainable.

What are the benefits to them?

- Boosting their wellbeing while also making a difference to a cause in their community or an organisation they are passionate about.
- Meeting new people.
- Having fun.
- Gaining new skills and developing existing skills.
- Boosting their CVs, UCAS applications and employability prospects.
- Helping to develop their self-confidence and gaining a sense of achievement.

What are the benefits to your organisation?

- Young people bring different experiences and energy, bringing a more diverse range of skills, experience and knowledge to your organisation.
- Young people can bring a fresh perspective, enthusiasm and new ideas which can help you reach more beneficiaries and raise awareness about your organisation's cause, your profile and what you do.
- Young people can champion your work among their peers and advise you on how to involve and recruit other young people, undertaking peer recruitment by word-of-mouth or using social media.
- Young people can advise on how to keep your organisation up to-date with new media and improve your profile with younger audiences.

2. Assessing risk: keeping young people and beneficiaries safe

As with all voluntary placements, you should carry out a risk assessment to identify any potential safeguarding issues that might arise with the tasks that young people are asked to undertake. These include:

- the potential risks for exploitation of the young volunteers e.g. hours and types of tasks, sexual exploitation and grooming, and risks related to the beneficiaries of your group or organisation;
- the possible emotional impact of tasks;
- the impact of pressures young people might be experiencing in their lives such as during exams.
- if young volunteers are working with other children and young people or adults at risk of harm, it is important that volunteers understand their safeguarding responsibilities, know what it is that you expect from them, and what steps they should take if a safeguarding matter arises.

Further information on assessing risk in these areas can be found on the [NSPCC Working With Volunteers webpages](#) including its essential read, [Introductory guide to safeguarding and child protection for the voluntary and community sector: A step-by-step guide to help you set up safeguarding measures in your group or organisation](#). Additional advice for not-for-profit groups can also be found on Community Impact Bucks website: [Safeguarding for Voluntary Groups](#) including links to [free resources](#).

3. Recruiting young volunteers of different ages

3.1 Recruiting young people under 16

- If you are recruiting young people under 16 years old, they are not eligible for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and may need more supervision and support.
- In the case of [Regulated Activity with under 16s](#), staff will need an Enhanced DBS check. If you are managing young volunteers in a charity retail setting “teaching, training, instructing, caring for or supervising a child who is under the age of 16 in relation to their employment” for “more than 3 days in any 30-day period”, it is a regulated activity (see [Community First Young Volunteers Handbook p 5](#) and [GOV.UK](#)).
- You should check your public and employer’s liability insurance policies to make sure that it covers young volunteers, especially if they are under 16-years-old.
- It is important to ask a parent or guardian to sign a written consent form before the young person starts volunteering – [an example consent form can be found on the NSPCC Learning website](#). Make sure parents or carers are aware of your safeguarding policy and procedures.
- You must also get written agreement from young volunteers before they volunteer with your organisation ([NSPCC Learning](#)). A Young Volunteer Agreement can help to explain expectations of the organisation and volunteer and should be signed by the young person. [A template can be found in the Community First Young Volunteers Handbook, p 20-21](#).

3.2 Tips for involving volunteers under 16 years old:

- A great way to get under 16s involved is to design a programme to support them in their Duke of Edinburgh Awards.
- Guidance on what activities charity shop volunteers under the age of 16 can take part in can be found from the [Charity Retail Association](#).
- You should do everything you can to make sure that the young person's volunteering experience is positive. Young volunteers should not volunteer alone: under 16s are prohibited from making house-to-house collections for charities ([Community First Young Volunteers Handbook p 5](#)).
- You can learn from young volunteers; their experiences are very different from that of an adult.
- Think about offering opportunities after school/college, at weekends, during half terms and holidays.

3.3 Recruiting young people 16 and 17 years old:

- If you are recruiting 16-year-olds and over, a DBS check is required when taking part in volunteering which involves regulated activity with those under 18, even if the volunteer is under 18 and over 16 themselves – [find out more about DBS Checks for Under 18s on Care Check's website](#).
- The person who will supervise and train volunteers under 18 years of age requires a successful DBS clearance – [get further details of what is required in Community First Young Volunteers Handbook p12](#).
- Check that your organisation's Public and Employer Liability Insurance covers volunteers who are 16 to 17 years old.
- For young people aged 16 and 17, you should consider whether it is appropriate to obtain parental consent depending on the volunteering activity and the young person's circumstances. Even if you decide you don't need consent, you may want to still inform their parents that the young person is volunteering – see [NSPCC Learning's guidance](#).

3.4 Tips on involving under 16 and 17 year olds:

- Young people are still in education and will be actively looking for the 'next step' whether that be an application for an Apprenticeship, College or University and wanting to build their CV/UCAS application – think about how your volunteer opportunity could help them.
- Offer opportunities which fit in with their other commitments for example after school/college, at weekends, during half terms and holidays.
- Learn from your young volunteers – their experiences are so different from that of an adult – and ask their advice on how to recruit other young people to your organisation.
- [Read NCVO's five top tips for recruiting and retaining student volunteers](#).

3.5 Recruiting volunteers aged 18+:

- Tailor your volunteer role description: you may find it easier to create volunteer roles for those who are 18+ as they are legally adults but it is important to remember their experiences will differ from older adults. Consider highlighting specific skills – they may be looking to develop key skills and gain experience to help secure future employment.
- Register your organisation with [Vinspired - Leaders in youth volunteer opportunities](#) and start recruiting young people. Vinspired is a UK-wide youth volunteering programme that provides young people aged 14-30 with access to thousands of opportunities with not-for-profit organisations and charities, helping them to broaden their experience and help others.
- You can find a [range of resources on the Community Impact Bucks website](#), including information on the [Buckinghamshire Volunteer Matching Service](#) and on [We Need Volunteers](#). Also see contacts listed under Further Resources at the end of this guide, including Buckinghamshire universities to make contact with students as potential volunteers and youth volunteering charities in Buckinghamshire.

4. Induction and training

If some of your volunteers are young people, you should tailor your induction and training process so that it is accessible for them and covers any additional requirements or questions they might have. Make sure you include what a young person should do if they have a concern either about themselves or someone else – you can [find more information on the NSPCC Working with Volunteers webpages](#).

5. How to get started

Take the time to understand what young people care about and tailor your volunteer opportunities to these – your Role Description needs to be relevant to their experience, interests and what they want to get out of volunteering.

Have a look at a template Young Person Role Description (Appendix D) and [get tips on developing a role description in Community First Young Volunteers Handbook/ p 8](#) which include:

- **Be specific** about the skills they can learn in their volunteering role.
- **Be flexible** as young people have a lot going on in their lives – whether it is school, university, sports, family life, or making time for friends. You could also offer opportunities that only require a few hours a week or are project/task based with a definitive start and finish.

Example: Let them take over your Instagram account for the week, develop an Instagram Live with them or ask them to create a TikTok video for your channel where they talk about why they love volunteering and what they get out of it (have a look at Charity Digital's articles on charities using [TikTok](#) and [Instagram](#)).

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- **Offer tangible benefits** such as agreeing to be a reference, providing mock job interviews, or completing relevant Duke of Edinburgh, Scouts/Guides/Cadet Awards, School Citizen's scheme paperwork. You could also offer to help develop their CVs.

Example: At Community Impact Bucks [we published a case study about one of our young volunteers](#) to promote the benefits of volunteering to others, particularly younger potential volunteers. The case study also helped our young volunteer who linked it to his CV, and he had another opportunity to showcase his voluntary work – and practise his presentation skills – when he talked about his experience during Student Volunteering Week 2021.

- **Promote and market your roles differently** by thinking about what young people would want to achieve from a volunteering role and ensure that is clear in your marketing materials and volunteer job description.
- **Contact relevant outlets** for example schools, universities, and groups where young people meet. The appendices contain some templates and tips that you can use to produce an information pack which will include a covering letter, organisation overview, poster, and role description.
- **Provide an information pack for parents** – [see the Parents Information Packs parts 1 & 2 developed by London Plus \(previously Greater London Volunteering\)](#) for useful ideas.
- **Promote volunteering opportunities through community Facebook pages and via platforms that young people use.** Traditional methods such as posters are great to put up where young people meet (think karate club, dance clubs etc) but perhaps use a QR code which they can scan with their phones to find out more. [This article by QR Tiger explains how to generate a free QR code.](#)
- **Use volunteer programmes tailored to young people** – [Vinspired](#) is a UK-wide youth volunteering programme that provides young people aged 14-30 with access to thousands of opportunities with non-profit organisations and charities. To get started, [register on the Vinspired website and start advertising your vacancies for young people.](#)
- **Utilise widely recognised volunteer recruitment platforms** such as [Do IT Life](#) which lists over 1,600,000 volunteering opportunities both locally and nationally. Registration is easy: log onto the [Do IT Life website](#) and click the Join button to register your details. Use the search engine to look for specific roles in your area or add your vacancies to attract more young people locally.
- **Keep it simple** – think about your onboarding processes and simplify them as much as possible. Young people will not fill out a 20-page volunteer application form no matter how attractive the role is. See if the recruitment process can be via online forms so people can access and complete on their phones.

Resources: London Plus (previously known as Greater London Volunteering) has a useful practical guide on how to introduce young volunteers to your volunteering programme: read its tips in its guide, [Increasing Volunteering Opportunities for Young People.](#)

6. Where to recruit

You now know how to attract young volunteers to your organisation, but where do you recruit them from?

- **Schools, colleges and universities** – undoubtedly the easiest way to reach young people and engage them in your work is through places of education. For schools and colleges, ask if you can speak at an assembly to talk about your cause and your impact. This could be linked to an awareness day and gives you the chance to talk about the difference you make and how they could support your cause.
- **Selected departments within places of education** – if you are looking to recruit volunteers for specific roles, such as video editing, contact relevant departments at your nearest college or university to see if they could put forward students who have the skills and are interested in developing their skills or perhaps build a portfolio.
- **Link up with Student Unions** – see if you can partner with them.
- **Local Youth Groups** – offer to speak to young people where they come together for example youth groups, guides, scouts, cadets.

7. Top tips for keeping volunteers

1. **Offer flexibility** – for example the options of volunteering from home or in-person or a flexible approach to times and/or frequency of volunteering.
2. **Design a thoughtful induction** – providing a welcome pack and buddy is a good place to start.
3. **Show the impact of volunteering** – volunteers want to know that they are making a difference. Being able to demonstrate this will keep them engaged for much longer.
4. **Keep them connected** – give them regular updates, show how they are making a change so they can be proud of the achievements. Make sure they feel part of the team.
5. **Work together with them** – make use of their energy and enthusiasm and co-create a campaign, a new project or improve your services.
6. **Make the tasks clear** – be specific about their tasks, and how and when will they know they are doing it correctly.
7. **Provide quality training** – it is really important to provide essential training and resources required for the role. Consider providing information that gives volunteers a deeper insight into issues relating to your charity.
8. **Recognise their hard work** – recognition does not have to cost money: call or send a text or card to say thank you.
9. **Make recognition tangible** – offer to be a referee or provide a mock interview
10. **Treat volunteers as individuals** – remember that your volunteers are unique individuals.
11. **Understand their ‘why’** – listen to your new recruits and find out what motivates them, why they chose your charity, and what they hope to achieve by getting involved.
12. **Volunteering is for everyone** – make sure that there are no barriers to someone being able to volunteer. This may require a different, more flexible approach to meet their needs, for example you could consider offering online opportunities, phone and in-person support between staff and volunteers.

8. Further resources

- **Further details on young volunteer management:** information including managing allegations, raising concerns and supporting young volunteers can be found on the [NSPCC Working With Young Volunteers webpages](#).
- **Templates and policies:** have a look at the [Community First Young Volunteers Hand book](#) and resources from [London Plus \(previously Greater London Volunteering\)](#)
 - **Documents:** template Young Person Role Description, Exemplar letter for schools, Sample Poster Text – go to Appendices.
 - **Introductory guide to safeguarding and child protection for the voluntary and community sector:** visit the [NSPCC website](#) for a step-by-step guide to help you set up safeguarding measures in your group or organisation, and Community Impact Bucks for further information about [Safeguarding for Voluntary Groups](#).
- **Social media:** one of the best ways to recruit young volunteers is through social media but choose your platforms wisely. If you are aiming to recruit 16 – 24 year olds, follow the links from [Charity Digital](#) for a video presentation to get started: [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).
- **Buckinghamshire universities** to make contact with students as potential volunteers:
 - **Buckinghamshire New University**
volunteering@bnu.ac.uk
www.bucksstudentsunion.org/activities/volunteering/
 - **University of Buckingham**
info@buckingham.ac.uk
www.buckingham.ac.uk
- **Youth volunteering charities in Buckinghamshire:**
 - **Aylesbury Youth Action** – a youth volunteering charity which provides opportunities for young people aged 14-24 years old to gain transferable life and employability skills whilst helping the local community.
Tel: 01296 421149
Volunteer@aylesburyyouthaction.co.uk
www.aylesburyyouthaction.co.uk
 - **Wycombe Youth Action** – a youth volunteering charity which completes multi-generational and conservation projects to provide young people the chance to give back to their community and provide them with the chance to both challenge and change the stereotypes faced by young people today.
Tel: 01494 257357
info@wycombeyouthaction.co.uk
www.wycombeyouthaction.co.uk

Appendix

Appendix A: Example of covering a letter

We have prepared an example cover letter that you can use as a guide:

(Use your organisation headed letter)

Date:

*Amersham & Wycombe College,
Stanley Hill
Amersham
Buckinghamshire
HP7 9HN*

Dear _____

Volunteering Opportunities with _____

My name is _____, and I work for _____ a local charity supporting _____.

We are running a recruitment campaign to engage with young people aged _____ offering volunteering opportunities with us.

The types of volunteering roles we can offer include: *(add examples here)*

To find out more about us and the work we do please look at our website *(hyperlink to organisation website)*/see our attached information leaflet

Insert here detail about the volunteering commitment and the mechanisms you have in place to safeguard young volunteers for example: All roles are flexible and are after school, at weekends, during half terms and holidays to fit in with the needs of young people. We have a robust Safeguarding Policy; young people will volunteer alongside adults and will not work alone. All roles are risk assessed to ensure they are suitable and age appropriate.

Volunteering can offer a real sense of purpose for young people. Providing opportunities to make a difference and be active citizens, helping develop skills and experience that support pathways to education, training and work.

Volunteering with us can also support active citizen activity you may be delivering through your school community programmes.

We would love to attend an assembly or an active citizen's lesson to talk about the charity and our volunteering opportunities. If you would like me to do this, please do get in touch *(direct email address)* and let me know.

Cont.

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I also attach a copy of a poster/leaflet about volunteering with us and I would be hugely grateful if you could make this available to students and/or display on school notice boards. I can also provide some copy for your school newsletter.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Add name, signature, job title, email and phone number

Appendix B: Organisation Overview template

Provide an overview of your organisation, limiting it to one or two pages with key information and making it visual with images to appeal to young people. Information can include:

- What your organisation is about and how to find out more information.
- A list of ways in which you help people, and the how you do this through the activities/ services that you provide.
- Contact information.

Appendix C: Sample Poster Text

(Organisational Logo)

We need you!

Insert image here

If you are aged between we have volunteer roles waiting for you.

..... is a charity based in and we help/support.....

We have flexible roles available that can fit around time you have available. For example:

Insert role types here

We can provide you with opportunities to make a difference and be active citizens, helping develop skills and experience that support pathways to education, training and work.

We can help you complete the volunteering elements of your School's active citizen and community programmes or your Duke of Edinburgh, Scout, Guide and Cadet Awards.

Want to find out more?

Go to our website *(full website details and Hyperlink to volunteering page of your website)*

Call us: *(direct phone number)*

Email us: *(named person email address)*

Click on the QR code below

Appendix D: Young Person Role Description

(Insert the name of your organisation here)

(Insert volunteer role here)

e.g. Administration Support Volunteer

(Insert a short background of your organisation & its beneficiaries - if you have a website, add the details)

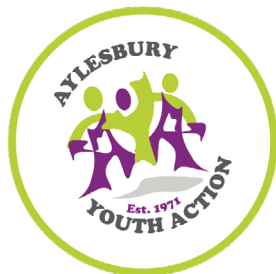
Aim of role	<i>(Define exactly what you would like the Volunteer to do)</i> e.g. To carry out a variety of administration activities.
Main contact	<i>(Insert role title here)</i> e.g. Volunteer Manager.
Start date	<i>(Insert starting date of role)</i>
Time commitment	<i>(Insert details)</i> e.g. 2 hours per week/weekends/holidays
Location	<i>(Insert location of role here)</i> e.g. Amersham office/home -based
Main tasks	<i>(Clearly specify the tasks you would like the Volunteer to perform)</i> e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update database with contacts from service users • Maintain spreadsheet of applications for assistance • Produce information for mailshots and send out • Answering telephone
Skills	<i>(Clearly specify the skills/experience you would like the Volunteer to have)</i> e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge using Microsoft Office / social media • Friendly and reliable Good communication skills

Volunteering will give you the opportunity to:	<p><i>(Clearly state what a Volunteer can gain from being involved with your organisation)</i></p> <p>e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Boosts CV, UCAS applications and employability prospects• Meet new people and make new friends• Develops self-confidence, a sense of achievement.• Having fun• Gaining new skills and develop existing skills• Making a difference to a cause in your community
Additional information	<p><i>(Include any other details relevant to the role, e.g. references and DBS checks if applicable)</i></p>
Get in touch	<p><i>(Insert either the name and contact details of a specific person within your organisation/your organisation's general contact details)</i></p>

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With thanks to Community First for permission to include and reference guidance from their [Community First Young Volunteers Handbook](#), and London Plus (previously known as Greater London Volunteering) to reference their [resources](#) and [Good Practice Guide](#).

Also thanks to:



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Social Media:

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