



VOLUNTEER

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Volunteering

Working With Young Volunteers

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Disclaimer: This information is freely given on behalf of VAST, however VAST does not accept any responsibility or liability for any of the information given and used. The information provided is to solely act as a guide for organisations accepting young volunteers. If further guidance is needed please contact volunteering@vast.org.uk

Introduction

This document has been put together as a tool for organisations across Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire to feel more confident working with young people and including them within their organisation. Within this document, we are classing young **people aged 13 – 25**.

- A young person is anyone under the age of 18
- A child is anyone who has not yet reached the official minimum school leaving age (MSLA), and pupils will reach the MSLA in the school year in which they turn 16.
- Although volunteers aged 18 - 25 are classed as adults, you may want to utilise information from this guide to help welcome them into your organisation and ensure they are appropriately supported.

Volunteering can be a great way for young people to learn about and engage with their local community whilst developing new skills and gaining experience for future employment. However, young people are more likely to have a less positive experience of volunteering ([*NCVO, Time Well Spent: Diversity and Volunteering 2020*](#)).

Involving young people, especially under the age of 18, can seem like a daunting prospect, but the benefits that young people can bring to organisations can certainly make it worthwhile.

Volunteering benefits to young people:

- It can let young people try something new which can lead to increased aspirations.
- It can build self-confidence and self-esteem and has a proven positive impact on mental health and wellbeing.
- It provides the opportunity to develop skills and gain experience which can be useful for applying for jobs, apprenticeships, or university. They can also gain references.
- Some opportunities provide free qualifications and training earned whilst volunteering.
- It allows young people to demonstrate that they are contributing to the society, and that they have things to offer other people.

Volunteering benefits to organisations:

- Young people can bring fresh ideas and enthusiasm.
- Young people are a hugely under-utilised pool of resources which could add to your teams considerably.
- Young people will provide different skillsets that may be missing in your organisations.
- Young people can have some great ideas about making changes so that the service you offer better meets their needs and interests.
- Young people are the future older volunteers and may return at a later stage if they have had a good experience with the organisation.

Case Study - Middleport Matters

Middleport Matters is a community organisation which aims to help make Middleport a safer, more welcoming, and thriving place to be. Middleport Matters aims:

- To bring people together and improve sense of belonging.
- To improve the health and wellbeing of local people.
- To improve the built and natural environment and enhance the local reputation.
- To support local businesses and encourage employment and enterprise.



**Middleport
Matters**

Middleport Matters originally started to work with young volunteers after a local student with Autism needed to volunteer for their Duke of Edinburgh Award. The volunteer started with an hour a week, then as their confidence grew – a more concrete role was developed. Middleport Matters now aims to develop roles based on the young volunteer’s skillset and goals. They tailor the training that they give all of their volunteers to be age-appropriate, but still beneficial for those involved.

Vicki, Operations Manager, says that involving young volunteers’ aids with community cohesion and developing mutual respect within the community. Vicki did discuss the important fact, that young volunteers can bring home issues within the organisation – so staff working with them need the skills and the confidence to handle this appropriately. This is why a high-quality safeguarding policy is key.

Jess, aged 17, started as a volunteer with Middleport Matters before moving into a paid part-time position within the organisation.

“Volunteering is morally a good thing to do. I felt so welcomed and comfortable when I started here. I was given a slow introduction before being ‘chucked in’. Flexibility is key when working with young volunteers. I volunteer because I want to learn”

Young volunteers need progression. They need to feel like they are developing new skills, and abilities. Progression may take shape in many different forms, which is why flexibility is key. For example, reducing hours during exam periods.

[For more information on Middleport Matters, see their website here.](#)

Practicalities and Logistics of Working with Young Volunteers

One of the most important factors to consider when working with young volunteers is the law. Volunteers are not covered under employment law, but it is sensible to still comply with the legislation and implement it where relevant.

Insurance



You should check your employer's liability insurance to make sure that it covers young volunteers, especially if they are under 16-years-old. Most insurance policies do cover under 16s, but you must check with your individual provider.

Hours and Type of Work



As mentioned above, there is no specific legislation about young people volunteering for a not-for-profit organisation. You should consider whether they are able to carry out the work and have everything they need to complete tasks.

Your assessment of this should consider the young person's age and stage of development, their circumstances, and any additional needs they might have.

For example, you may want to consider offering a reduction in hours during exam periods/coursework deadlines.

Assessing Risk



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

- The potential risks for exploitation of the young volunteers.
- The possible emotional impact of tasks.
- The impact of pressures young people might be experiencing in their lives (for example during exams).

One important bit of guidance to follow is that anyone aged under 14 cannot work for a profit-making organisation, even if they are not paid.

Practicalities and Logistics of Working with Young Volunteers



Young Volunteers Risk Assessment

Young people, especially those new to the workplace, may be facing unfamiliar risks from the job they will be doing and from the working environment. They can be seen to be particularly at risk because of their possible lack of awareness of existing or potential hazards, immaturity, and inexperience.

Volunteering is a great opportunity for young people to learn about the importance of health and safety which will serve them well throughout their working life. Particular focus points while carrying out the risk assessment are:

- To assess risks to all young people under 18 years of age, before they start volunteering.
- Consider the layout of the workplace and the particular site where they will volunteer.
- Consider the nature of any physical, biological, and chemical agents they will be exposed to, for how long, and to what extent.
- Assess what types of work equipment will be used and how this will be handled.
- To ensure your risk assessment considers their psychological or physical immaturity, inexperience, and lack of awareness of existing or potential risks.
- To introduce control measures to eliminate or minimise the risks, so far as is reasonably practicable.
- To identify what age group you feel the role is suitable for, and the level of oversight/supervision that is required.

Useful Links:

[NSPCC: Working with Young Volunteers](#)

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

[HSE: Volunteering: Guidance for employers; Risk Assessments](#)

Practicalities and Logistics of Working with Young Volunteers



Sexual exploitation and grooming

Forming healthy working relationships with adults and peers is an important part of being a young volunteer. However, you should be aware of the risks of grooming and other inappropriate behaviour. Measures you can take to mitigate risk include:

- Having a code of conduct that sets out how you expect young volunteers and anyone working with them to behave.
- Making sure young volunteers know who they can talk to if they have a concern and they feel safe to do so.
- Making sure young volunteers aren't left alone with anyone, unless as part of a designated support role.

You should also ensure that young volunteers are not being put at any risk by any beneficiaries of your group or organisation.



Communication

You need to consider how you are going to communicate with your young volunteers. Again, this should be considered on age and ability, and you must follow your organisations communication policy. For example, you may want to communicate via parents if a young volunteer is under 16.

Young volunteers should have an assigned, named supervisor within your organisation that they can speak to if they have any concerns, cannot attend a session, need to change their hours, or need any support within their role.

Practicalities and Logistics of Working with Young Volunteers

Volunteering Policies



Your organisation should also have a volunteering policy in place **before you accept any volunteers.**

It should include:

- An overview of your organisation.
- An overview of expenses guidelines, complaints procedures, confidentiality procedures and any other relevant procedures.
- Volunteer agreement.
- Induction and training process.
- Supervision and support.
- Volunteer involvement, and how they can feedback to your organisation.
- Insurance and health and safety.
- Equal opportunities.

VAST has premade templates and can offer support in helping organisations develop new and/or update premade policies.

You will need to make sure that your policies are written in clear and simple language, avoiding overcomplication or unnecessary jargon. You may also want to consider going through the policy with the young volunteer to ensure they have understood everything within the policy.

Managing Allegations



Ensure that you have a procedure in place for managing any allegations made against a young volunteer. These might include, for example, allegations that they have behaved in a way that has harmed, or might have harmed, another young person or member of the group.

Any allegations must be taken seriously and dealt with sensitively and promptly.

Practicalities and Logistics of Working with Young Volunteers



The difference between a student placement and volunteering

Many young people will volunteer as part of an award scheme, such as the Duke of Edinburgh, or to compliment their studies ready for future employment.

However, some young people will utilise the VCSE sector to complete mandatory student placement hours as part of their studies. It's important that you clarify a young person's volunteer motives before they start. This is because there are several key differences between a placement and volunteering.

The main difference is around DBS checks, as student placements are not eligible for a free volunteer DBS. You can ask the young person to clarify with their school, college, or university what their procedure is for DBS checks if it is a mandated part of their studies.

Another key difference is that a clear record needs to be kept of attendance such as keeping signed timesheets, whereas a volunteer may have a more informal record of attendance. Students may also be required to complete specific tasks as part of their placement, so it's important to make sure that you can accommodate these before accepting their application.

If in any doubt about supporting a young person on a student placement, you can ask to speak to a named contact at the place of education as they will be the best person to advise as each place will have their own processes.

Government guidance on student placements

Practicalities and Logistics of Working with Young Volunteers



Safeguarding policies and procedures

Your organisation should have written Child Protection policies and procedures, setting out your commitment to protecting children and young people from harm and explaining how staff, volunteers, and service users can raise a concern if they are worried about a child.

If you don't already have these policies and procedures in place, VAST can support you to develop policies that will be relevant for your organisation. We can also check existing policies to make sure they are fit for purpose.

The [NSPCC](#) also has [guidance on their website](#) about safeguarding young volunteers, which you might find helpful. It's important to make young volunteers aware of the Child Protection policies and procedures, particularly how they can raise a concern if they are worried about something. This should be done as part of their induction, the same as an adult volunteer.

NSPCC 'Learning'

Brief your team that when working with young volunteers at least one person should be present at all times who has a successful DBS clearance. Young people shouldn't be left alone with members of the public or other staff who are not DBS checked. In order to ensure all staff, have a clear understanding of safeguarding procedures and professional boundaries.



Looking for some support?

Contact VAST's Volunteering team at Volunteering@vast.org.uk or visit the [VAST Vault](#) for further resources!

Recruiting and Inducting Young Volunteers

Role Descriptions

If you'd like to have young volunteers volunteering for your organisation, it's important to ensure that the role will be appropriate for young volunteers.

In order to make your role seem attractive, you need to have a high-quality role description. We have an easy-to-follow template that you can utilise, and a copy is available at the end of this guide. We are also happy to read over any role descriptions and offer our professional opinion.

You may want to consider:

- What is the overall aim of your organisation and how does this role fit into it?
- What will be the volunteer be doing? You may want to include some of the individual tasks the young person will be expected to do.
- List a clear expected time commitment – can it be flexible if needs be?
- List a clear location for the volunteering and describe the type of environment as well such as 'office.'
- What skills would the volunteer need to have already?
- What are the benefits to the volunteer? List things that make it sound attractive, such as 'boosts your CV' or 'learn new skills.'
- What training will the volunteer be required to undertake? Training can help attract more young people to a role as they can use it to build skills for future employment.



Application Process

You may want to consider adapting your usual volunteer recruitment process to meet the needs of young people. This could be a slightly different application form or to hold a less formal interview. You could also offer for the young person to have an informal chat before they apply for the role.

You may want to consider asking for references but do consider that young volunteers may have less access to suitable references other than through their education provider.

Although a young person might have agreed to their involvement, there might be specific activities that they feel uncomfortable taking part in and you should discuss with them what alternative arrangements would be appropriate.

Recruiting and Inducting Young Volunteers

DBS Checks

Under 16s:

People who haven't reached their 16th birthday cannot have a disclosure check under any circumstances. Any young person who is volunteering in a role which would ordinarily need a DBS check cannot get a certificate in their own name. Organisations must think of other ways to keep their clients safe, and make sure that the under 16s are safe in their role too.

16 – 18-year-olds:

The same rules apply to 16- and 17-year-olds as they do to older volunteers. The work they are doing must fall under the legal definition of regulated activity in order for them to need a DBS check. Organisations are not allowed to exempt them from the checking process purely because of their age.

Parental/Guardian Consent

You must get written agreement from young volunteers who want to be involved with your organisation. This should set out what they will be doing and the organisation's expectations of them. The young person should sign this document. We have a simple draft consent form that you can see at the end of this guide.

You should also get agreement from their parents/guardians depending on the volunteer's age and the activities they will be doing.

Under 16s:

You should get consent from parents or carers for volunteers aged under 16 and ask them to sign a written consent form. Please also make sure that parents or carers are aware of your safeguarding policy and procedures. We also recommend speaking to the parent/guardian over the phone as well.

16- and 17-year-olds:

In most cases, parents/guardians have a legal responsibility for their child up to the age of 18. However, for young people aged 16 and 17 you should consider whether it is appropriate to obtain parental/guardian consent depending on the volunteering activity and the young person's circumstances. If you decide you do not need consent, then you should consider whether you should still inform parents/guardians that the young person is volunteering.

Recruiting and Inducting Young Volunteers

Photo Consent

If you want to use photos of young volunteers for publicity purposes you need to obtain their permission and, if they are under 16, the permission of their parent/guardian to use them. It is good practice to get this consent in writing, signed and dated, and you should also be aware that they can withdraw consent at any time.

Induction and Training

All volunteers should be given an induction and regular training, including safeguarding training. It's important that you consider tailoring the induction process so that it is accessible for young volunteers and covers any additional requirements or questions they might have. It is not enough to make the training available; you need to make sure that it has been undertaken, and that key messages have been understood.

This training should include a basic introduction to health and safety, for example, first aid, fire and evacuation procedures, safeguarding – who to go to if concerns arise, professional relationships, equal opportunities, and emergency procedures.

Points to consider:

- Who is going to take full responsibility for the young people and ensure full training and support is given to the young people and staff?
- Who is going to deliver training and when?
- Who is the contact for safeguarding issues?
- What is included in training – safeguarding, rights and responsibilities, professional boundaries, health and safety, communication, dealing with difficult situations?



Supporting Young Volunteers

Just like adult volunteers, young volunteers need support within their volunteering role. We have included two ideas below which can be utilised to ensure your young volunteers feel supported:



Mentoring

If you have the capability within your organisation, could you facilitate a mentoring scheme with a named adult for each young person. This could be another volunteer, and is a great way to share learning and development for both parties. It is important that the named adult is appropriate for this role by being both skilled and competent at supporting young people, and ensure safeguarding requirements are met.



Buddying

If you have a group of young volunteers, you could consider having a buddying scheme for those who have been in your organisation longer. This is where the young volunteers could offer each other peer support.

Please note that this should never be a substitute for adult support.

Emotional impact and other pressures

Every organisation is different. You may work with vulnerable groups of people, or your volunteers might undertake activities that are challenging or sensitive. You should consider the emotional impact of these on your young volunteers and make sure support is in place if they are ever worried or concerned about anything.

In addition, young volunteers might be facing other pressures at home or at school. For example, they might experience additional stress during exam periods or if they have caring responsibilities at home. Consider whether you need to make any adjustments to their role and make sure they know who they can talk to if they need to.

Supervision

Make sure that adequate and effective supervision is in place and that the volunteers know who they are reporting to and how to get in contact with them.

This gives the young person the chance to ask questions and start to build an effective relationship with their lead. It is good practice to provide training/information for staff before they undertake supporting young volunteers.

Supporting Young Volunteers

Raising Concerns

It's important that young volunteers know exactly what to do if someone tells them something that worries them, or they have a concern about their role or organisation.

Raising concerns should be within your Volunteer Policy/Handbook, but make sure you specifically talk it through with younger volunteers. They should have access to your complaints and whistleblowing procedures.

Recognising and Retaining Young Volunteers

All volunteers will have a different motivation for volunteering. Young people often volunteer for the below reasons:

- To gain industry-based experience.
- To gain suitable references.
- As part of their school curriculum, for example placement hours.
- As part of an award scheme, for example the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

When you first meet your young volunteers, find out the young persons motivations and what they want to gain from their volunteering. By having this conversation from the beginning, you can help ensure that the volunteers' expectations will be met. Ideally, review the role description with the volunteer to make sure that all parties know what is expected of them.

It is also important to show recognition to your volunteers. This does not have to be grand gestures, or anything costly. Often, a simple and genuine 'thank you' can make all the difference. If a volunteer hits a landmark with their progress, you may want to consider writing them a card or promote their amazing progress. At VAST, we love getting to write case studies to show volunteers progression during their time with us.

By recognising your volunteers, it can help retain them as they feel valued, wanted, and included.

Expenses

Money is tighter than ever, so if your organisation is able to, please consider what expenses you can reimburse back to your volunteers. For example, if there is a uniform involved are you able to provide this free of charge?

Many young volunteers will rely on public transport to travel to their volunteering which can be costly. If you are able to reimburse travel costs, this can have a large benefit to your volunteer.

YOUNG VOLUNTEER'S CONSENT FORM

Name of the organisation	
Volunteer start date	

Personal Details:

Young person's name	
Date of Birth	
Address and post code	

Parents' and carers' permission:

I give permission for my son or daughter to take part in the volunteering above, including all the activities involved. I have ascertained what activities are involved and this permission extends to all activities involved in this event.

I understand that although staff or leaders in charge of the activities will take all reasonable care of the party members, they cannot necessarily be held responsible for any loss, damage, or injury my son or daughter suffers as a result of their volunteering activity.

Your name	Signature
Relationship to the young person	
Address and postcode (if different from the young person's)	
Phone (day)	Mobile (evening)

If there is an emergency and we are not able to contact you, please give the details of someone else we can contact and sign below.

Name	Phone
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If your child becomes ill or has an accident requiring emergency hospital treatment, please authorise the organisation named above, or someone acting on their behalf, to sign any hospital written consent form needed if contact with you cannot be obtained and the doctor has recommended that such treatment is in the child's best interests.

Your Signature	Date
----------------	------

Medical Details:

Has your son or daughter ever had, or do they still suffer from, any of the following? This information will be kept confidential among the staff and/or volunteers in charge of the activity your child is participating in.

You are not obliged to give this information, but it is your responsibility to disclose any information that relates to your child's health, and we are not responsible if we have not been informed of a health-related matter.

Asthma or Bronchitis

Yes	No
-----	----

Heart condition, fits, fainting or blackouts

Yes	No
-----	----

Severe headaches or migraine

Yes	No
-----	----

Anxiety or depression

Yes	No
-----	----

Diabetes

Yes	No
-----	----

Epilepsy

Yes	No
-----	----

Allergies to any known drugs

Yes	No
-----	----

Please list any allergies:

--

Any other allergies, such as food?

Yes	No
-----	----

Please list any allergies:

--

Other illness or disability not named above

Yes	No
-----	----

Receiving any medical treatment

Yes	No
-----	----

If you answer 'yes' to any of these, please give full details

--

GP Details

Name and address of the young person's doctor	
Phone	

Dietary requirements:

Does the young person have any specific dietary needs such as vegetarian, low cholesterol, gluten-free or halal?

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, please give full details:

--

Photo permission:

May we use images of your young person for publicity?

Yes	No
-----	----

ROLE DESCRIPTION TEMPLATE

Name of organisation	
Brief description of organisation	
Roles and Responsibilities	
Skills & Experience desired	
Benefits to the volunteer <i>E.G Training, Expenses, Volunteer social events etc.</i>	

SUPERVISION TEMPLATE

Volunteer Name	
Supervisor Name	
Date	

Topic	Notes
<p>Health and wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>General check in; has the volunteer been enjoying their role?</i> • <i>Has your volunteer had any changes to their health which may require their role to change</i> • <i>Is their role affecting their health in any way (particularly if the role is challenging)</i> 	
<p>What's been going well?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Achievements your volunteer has reached</i> • <i>Ask your volunteer what they've done since your last supervision that they're proud of</i> • <i>Ask what your volunteer is enjoying most about their role</i> 	
<p>Any concerns?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Give your volunteer chance to speak on any concerns they may be having.</i> • <i>Voice any concerns which have been raised regarding your volunteer (e.g. low attendance)</i> 	
<p>Training and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If any concerns have been raised regarding your volunteer; can these be addressed with training, supervision, buddying etc.?</i> • <i>Are there any skills that your volunteer is looking to develop?</i> • <i>Are there any areas where your volunteer feels they need additional support?</i> 	
<p>AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Leave space for your volunteer to provide additional feedback or information.</i> • <i>Provide any information that you think is relevant or important.</i> 	

Topic	Notes
Actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="188 203 608 271">• <i>Agreed upon actions to be re-visited at next supervision.</i>	

Volunteer Signature	
Supervisor Signature	
Date	