

Involving Young Volunteers

This factsheet is designed to help you involve young volunteers aged under 18 safely and in accordance with good practice, here we will look at the key points to consider.

Why Involve Young Volunteers?

Many young people who want to volunteer can find it difficult to find opportunities, they want to contribute and but can face barriers to this.

Involving young volunteers can seem overwhelming for some organisations but with some consideration and following the guidelines below you can empower young people and create a rewarding experience for both your organisation and the volunteers.

Legal Restrictions

There is no legal reason why a young person cannot volunteer, however organisations have a higher duty of care towards children and young people who are volunteering. It is important to discuss other commitments that the young person has when considering the amount of time they will volunteer. Whilst child employment restrictions do not apply to young volunteers it is sensible to bear this legislation in mind, for information please follow the link below.

<https://www.gov.uk/child-employment/restrictions-on-child-employment>

For charity shops who involve young volunteers you will need to check with your local council regarding any bylaws that mean you may need to apply for child employment permits. You can find the details for your local authority using the link below.

<https://www.gov.uk/child-employment/local-council-rules-for-child-employment-permits>

People under 16 years cannot take part in certain fundraising activities, for example house to house or street collections.

Risk Assessments

It is good practice to carry out risk assessments specific to the individual volunteer. If you would like help with doing a risk assessment please contact us.

Health and Safety and Duty of Care

Organisations have health and safety obligations towards their volunteers - as well as to their employees, service users and the general public.

The duty of care is a legal duty on all individuals and organisations to take reasonable care to avoid causing harm to people. Organisations have an enhanced duty of care towards young volunteers.

Parental Consent

It is good practice to get written consent from a parent or guardian for all volunteers under 18. When giving a consent form it is a good idea to include a role description, location of the volunteering, time commitments and any other information you feel is appropriate so that the parent/guardian is fully informed. If the young person will be volunteering away from the premises where they normally volunteer, additional permission should be sought.

Insurance

You will need to contact your insurers to make sure the policy extends to covering volunteers who are under 18, if it doesn't it is usually straightforward for them to update as long as they see no significant risk. Your policy should explicitly mention volunteers.

Safeguarding

A child safeguarding policy should be in place before you recruit young volunteers. Your safeguarding policy should include guidance on how you would manage an allegation against young volunteers – the [NSPCC](#) has helpful guidance for this.

Safeguarding training - The person managing the young volunteers and ideally the wider staff team should have safeguarding training.

A DBS check will need to be done for the person responsible for the young volunteers. To check the level of check required please see links below. If your young volunteers are supporting activities with vulnerable groups you will need to check if their role requires a DBS check. The lower age limit for a DBS check is 16.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dbs-eligibility-guidance>

<https://www.salfordcvs.co.uk/dbs-checks>

Safe recruitment is an important element of safeguarding and child protection. Salford CVS provides safeguarding training and can support you to develop safe recruitment practices.

It is best practice for a young volunteer not to be in a situation where they are alone with a staff member/volunteer/service user.

For more information about safeguarding and a policy template

<https://www.salfordcvs.co.uk/safeguarding-children-and-young-people-0>

Is the Role Appropriate?

Young volunteers may be more vulnerable and so you need to consider whether the role and the environment in which they volunteer will be appropriate. There are tasks/situations that are inappropriate including:

- Lone working
- Situations where they are alone with a staff member/volunteer/service user
- Physically demanding tasks
- Certain types of fundraising – house to house or street collections
- Roles that are unsupervised
- Volunteering with certain vulnerable client group's e.g. a front facing role in a homeless drop in centre
- Certain advice roles

If you are not sure if your volunteer roles are suitable please contact us for advice.

If you would like to involve young volunteers but your current roles are not suitable, could you consider other options? Some ideas include:

- Asking young people their ideas about how they would like to be involved
- Developing new roles and ways young people can support your service e.g. fundraising for your organisation through their networks.
- One off opportunities
- Projects with local schools or colleges
- Family volunteer opportunities
- Group volunteering opportunities organised with local youth clubs, scout, guides etc.

Recruiting and Managing Young Volunteers

Most of the advice on recruiting and managing young volunteers applies to volunteers of all ages but some particular tips are:

Publicity – tailor it to the audience you are trying to reach, think about where you promote your opportunities, can you get young people's opinions or get them involved in creating it?

Welcoming - make sure other staff and volunteers are on board with involving young people, give a thorough induction.

Benefits - emphasise the benefits the volunteers will get especially the skills they will develop through volunteering, tools such as a skills portfolio may be appeal to young volunteers.

Support - appropriate training, support and supervision.

Code of Conduct – this can help to make boundaries clear and may include things such as acceptable online behaviour e.g. what they can and can't share about their volunteering on social media.

Documents – keep application forms short and give a clear role description.

Communication – you may need to adapt how you send information or contact young volunteers, this needs to be balanced with your obligations around safeguarding, speak to the Volunteer Centre for further advice.

Flexibility – be mindful that volunteers' other commitments such as pressures from school work will change over time.

Recognition - recognise their achievements and thank them for their contribution, even one off activities can be recognised with a thank you certificate.