

Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations

Your local county voluntary council

4. Volunteers

4.16 Involving young people as volunteers



Involving young people under the age of 18 can seem a daunting prospect for some organisations but the benefits to organisations, the young people and the wider community can certainly make it very worthwhile.

Benefits to young people:

- work experience
- can get references
- develop social skills
- break down barriers between generations
- have fun!
- access to job market
- feel valued
- gain qualifications

Benefits to organisations

- funding
- fresh ideas and enthusiasm
- honesty (feedback)
- diversity
- ability to relate to clients
- access to different networks
- they are the future older volunteers and may return at a later age if they have had a good experience with the organisation

Below are a few guidelines and recommended resources to help you in involving young people in your activities:

Can under 18's volunteer?

The short and simple answer is yes. There are no legal restrictions around volunteers and age. The issues, more often, are around what roles are suitable and the practicalities surrounding this. It is recommended that you discuss other commitments young people may have, such as school and employment pressures when considering the amount of

time they will volunteer. It is also advisable to check any bylaws in your area as some local authorities require charity shops to apply for child employment permits.

The number of hours a child is allowed to work in a week does not apply to volunteering and in many cases young people volunteer in their free time which is evenings and weekends and opportunities such as helping at youth clubs take place after 7pm, but **for information** these are the time limitations outlined in the European Working time directive:

'The number of hours a child is allowed to complete in a week should not be more than those stated in the European working time directive. This is an average of 48 hours a week over a 17 week period for over 18. Young people aged 16 and 17 may not ordinarily work more than 8 hours a day or 40 hours per week, nor at night between 10pm-6am or 11pm to 7am. If a young person is 16 and still at school they may not work before 7am and after 7pm on a weekday and no more than 8 hours on a weekend day'.

Insurance

Some organisations will find that their current insurance for volunteers has a lower age limit of 18. If this is the case, contact the company and request that the age is lowered. Volunteers should be insured under either Public or Employers' Liability cover and the insurance policy should explicitly mention volunteers, as they may not be automatically covered. If your younger volunteers are volunteering in the same activities as your other volunteers there should not normally be an additional charge for changing the age limits of your policy.

Safeguarding and vetting information

Safeguarding and recruitment

There has been a review of the plans to require all those working with children and/ or vulnerable adults to register with the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) and Vetting Barring Scheme. The scheme will **not** now go ahead but criminal records at an appropriate level will still be available for those working with vulnerable groups.

The Protection of Freedoms Bill proposes legislation for a scaled back VBS and reforms to CRB checks. There will be a duty to check volunteers or paid staff in certain circumstance where they have close and regular contact with vulnerable groups. A barred person will not be able to work with vulnerable groups in such situations and an Enhanced Level Disclosure (CRB check) will show whether a volunteer or paid employee is on either or both barring list(s). The intention is for CRB checks to be continuously updated and portable, and that the functions of the ISA and CRB are merged into a single body.

The Bill is passing currently through parliament and government intention is that the new arrangements will be in place in 2012. In the meantime voluntary organisation can check volunteers and paid staff if the role is eligible (e.g. if it is regulated activity under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act)

To find out the latest information on the proposed new arrangements or to check current eligibility for CRB checks contact the WCVA Criminal records Unit.

Criminal Records Checks

Many organisations working with young people use criminal records checks as part of best practice to safeguard young volunteers. An organisation is eligible to ask for an enhanced disclosure (CRB check) for any staff or volunteers who are working in regulated activity with a young person under the age of 18. Regulated activity is defined under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act and covers such activities as teaching, training, guidance, health and personal care as well as some roles carried out in specific places such as schools and children's centres. In some cases the young person themselves might be asked to undergo a CRB check if their volunteering to work is regulated activity with other children or vulnerable adults.

However, any volunteering activity that has substantial unsupervised access to children is not advised for volunteers under the age 18

Child protection

It is good practice to have in place a child protection policy when you involve anyone under the age of 18, whether as a volunteer or service user. The extent of how much detail and guidance your policy will provide will depend upon the size of your organisation and the type of contact you have with children.

The statement itself may be brief, perhaps only 1 side of A4 paper. The details to be found in your procedures are particularly important and should clearly state what measures have been taken and what measures are to be developed or improved. It should be made known to the children themselves and available in an accessible format, as well as to parents, carers, volunteers and staff.

Consider the following areas when drawing up your policy:

- Why is a safeguarding policy important?
- Clarify that the policy refers to all children.
- Confidentiality statement.
- What safeguards are in place to protect children? Consider areas such as the level and type of supervision, providing clear guidelines and procedures involving parents and carers.
- How will the children be informed of their rights and what to do if they have any concerns?

- How will workers be supported in their understanding and awareness of safeguarding issues?
- How will the policy be put into practice?
- How will the policy be monitored and reviewed?
- How will confidentiality be kept should an allegation be made?

Decide who within your organisation will deal with allegations and make sure they get proper safeguarding children training. Everybody within the organisation should be aware of who this person is.

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 should be informed about the organisations activities and what their child will be doing, when and where.

When using 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.

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

Health and Safety

When involving under 18's in your activities you have a 'Duty of Care' towards them. Risk assessments need to take into account the level of maturity and not take for granted that it would be the same as an older volunteer. Employment Law requires individual risk assessments for young employees and although this is not required for volunteers it is advisable as it enables you to consider each volunteer's level of understanding and maturity.

Young Volunteers and Benefits

As a general rule volunteering should not affect benefits as long as it is in a not-for-profit organisation and only out-of-pocket expenses are re-imbursed. If a young person is on job seekers allowance they need to be available to attend an interview at 48 hours notice and be actively seeking work. Those receiving carers allowance can volunteer so long as they are still able to provide care for at least 35 hours a week. For more information regarding volunteering and benefits please see the link to the DWP information leaflet and CAB advice guide on volunteering and benefits in the resources section.

Ensuring young people understand the role and can commit

A common myth is that **all** young people are unreliable and immature. Young people are **people** and like everyone else and no two are alike. If at interview you are unsure whether they understand the role, why not invite them to training and give them an opportunity to find out more and demonstrate what they understand. Could you offer them a taster day to come into the office or take part in a group activity to see if it's the right role for them?

You will need to take into consideration pressures of schoolwork, jobs and social time. This can be discussed during the initial interview or even after training so that the potential volunteer can get an idea of the commitment you are looking for and decide if they can give this.

Ideas for involving young people

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

What about encouraging a group to help you with a campaign to raise awareness? This could be in their schools and with their peers or in the wider community.

Do you have trouble keeping up with all the ever changing technology? Does the world-wide-web seem just too confusing? How about asking a young person to show you how it works? Or perhaps they could help you to design a newsletter/website or admin system to keep up with all your volunteers.

Are there any group activities they could help out with, where they would be fully supervised?

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.

Retaining Young People as Volunteers

How can you show your young volunteers that you are committed to them and encourage them to continue to volunteer with you?

First consider why they are volunteering. Is it to gain new skills? Make friends? Add to their CV? Give something back and feel they are making a difference?

Can you help fulfil these needs by offering training and the chance to develop their roles or create new ones? If the training isn't accredited externally you could accredit it internally by setting a number of standards and outcomes for the young person to achieve.

Social events help young volunteers settle in, meet others and create a social network.

Offering references, where appropriate, shows that you are also committed to helping them further their career or education.

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

How to recruit young volunteers

So where can you find these skilled, dedicated young people? The simple answer is - everywhere. Here are just a few examples of ways to find young volunteers.

Making contact with organisations that already engage young people is a great way to start. Schools, colleges, universities, youth clubs, Scout and Guide units, youth networks, job centres, youth offending services, social services and many more. Ask if you can speak to the young people about your opportunities, take along all relevant information and application packs for them to take away. Do you know of education institutions which offer courses that are particularly relevant to your roles, where young people can gain practical experience of, say, the health sector or working with children.

Exhibitions and events such as fresher's fairs and careers events can be useful recruitment opportunities.

Use your local volunteer centre. At present in Wales there is a Youth Development Adviser based in each county who can advertise your opportunity to young people in the area. For details of your local adviser visit www.volunteering-wales.net.

Consider your existing publicity. Do your leaflets appeal to young people? Are your activities geared towards older volunteers? Do you in any way show or state that you are seeking younger volunteers? Young people will often assume that your activities are not for them unless you actually say otherwise. So tell young people what you are doing, say what the lower age of your volunteers can be and highlight the benefits of the opportunity that appeal to young people.

Further reading and resources

WCVA Criminal Records Unit

Tel: 0800 0197391

cru@wcva.org.uk

www.wcva-cru.org.uk

NACRO – Involving Ex-Offenders in Volunteering;

www.nacro.org.uk/data/resources/nacro-2006101000.pdf

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)

www.nspcc.org.uk

Charity Commission guidance on Child Protection.

www.charity-commission.gov.uk/supportingcharities/protection.asp

Welsh Government – Safe from Harm: Safeguarding Children in Voluntary and Community Organisations in Wales.

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/guidance/safefromharm

Department of work and pensions

www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/stellent/groups/jcp/documents/websitecontent/dev_015837.pdf

CAB Advice guide on benefits and volunteering

www.adviceguide.org.uk/b_volunteering.pdf

Health & Safety Executive

www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople/law/index.htm

Open College Network (for accrediting courses)

www.ocnwales.org.uk

Millennium Volunteers (for recognising volunteering hours)

www.wcva.org.uk/volunteering

Youth Achievement Awards

www.youthcymru.org.uk/YAA_Home.html

The Legal Guide To Involving Young People As Volunteers by Clair Bryan and Esther Thompson, Islington Volunteer Bureau, February 2000. Available from

www.amazon.co.uk

Volunteers and the Law by Mark Restall, Volunteering England, June 2005

www.volunteering.org.uk/Resources/publications/volunteersandthelaw.htm

A Guide to Involving Young People in Voluntary Activity by Mark Jones, SCVS and Swansea 14-19 network

www.scvs.org.uk/volunteeringandcitizenship/volunteering/youthvolunteering/14to19.html

Volunteering England

Information Sheets:

www.volunteering.org.uk/Resources/goodpracticebank/Specialist+Themes/Youth+Volunteering/index.htm

Insuring volunteers

www.volunteering.org.uk/Resources/goodpracticebank/Information/Insurance+for+Volunteers.htm

Who is allowed to volunteer?

www.volunteering.org.uk/Resources/goodpracticebank/Information/whoisallowedtovolunteer.htm

Disclaimer

The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.

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