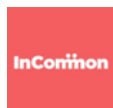




Webinar created by in collaboration with **THE MAP MURMURATION PROJECT**



This handout summarises some practical tips from Cambridge CVS's webinars on intergenerational project delivery. [You can watch this webinar here](#)



All About TODAY

ENGAGING AND SUPPORTING YOUNG VOLUNTEERS

- WHY?
- WHAT DO I NEED IN PLACE?
- HOW?
- WHERE CAN THEY VOLUNTEER?
- WHEN AND HOW LONG?

Objectives:

- Explore how to engage young volunteers safely, meaningfully, and inclusively
- Understand barriers and cultural contexts
- Build practical strategies for recruiting and supporting young volunteers

Summary

The objectives focus on exploring effective ways to engage young volunteers in a manner that is safe, meaningful, and inclusive. This involves understanding the unique barriers young people may face, such as cultural differences, lack of confidence, or practical challenges like transport and time constraints. By gaining insight into these factors, organisations can develop practical strategies that not only attract young volunteers but also provide the right support to help them thrive.

The goal is to create an environment where young people feel valued, empowered, and able to contribute in ways that suit their abilities and circumstances. Additionally, it is important to consider the legal and practical requirements related to young volunteers, including safeguarding policies, parental consent, age-appropriate supervision, and health and safety regulations. Identifying and designing suitable roles that match young people's age, skills, and interests ensures their volunteering experience is both rewarding and compliant with legal standards.

What do young people say?

“Volunteering as a young leader in my scout group makes me feel proud and like I truly belong.”

— Z., 16

“Every year, my dad and I volunteer to clean up the brook in Cherry Hinton. I really enjoy it—it’s great to see the difference we make, and it’s a nice way to spend time with him. I just wish my friends would join us too.”

— C., 14

“I was struggling at school and felt anxious around others. Volunteering at a charity shop helped me build confidence, make friends, and discover my passion for fashion.”

— A., 17



The first step is truly about **listening to what young people say**. Their voices, experiences, and ideas are essential in shaping opportunities that are relevant, accessible, and empowering. This means not just asking for input, but creating spaces where young people feel safe, heard, and taken seriously.

Young people who volunteer often value much more than just the activity itself. For many, volunteering is meaningful when it happens in **familiar and safe environments**—places where they feel welcome, respected, and understood. This sense of psychological and physical safety encourages them to step out of their comfort zones while knowing support is available. Schools, youth groups, and community spaces they already know can provide these essential entry points.

Family volunteering plays a significant role in this. When young people volunteer alongside a parent, sibling, or guardian, it not only strengthens family bonds but also lowers anxiety about unfamiliar settings. It creates a shared sense of purpose and shows volunteering as a “normal” and valued activity within their household or culture.

The **need for socialisation** is another major motivator. Many young volunteers are looking to connect with others—whether peers or adults—especially outside of school or work environments. Volunteering provides structured yet informal opportunities to meet new people, practice social skills, and feel part of something bigger.

Crucially, young people also value volunteering as a **pathway for personal growth**. The chance to try new things, learn practical skills, and take on responsibility helps build their confidence and identity. For some, it becomes a first step toward employment, education, or overcoming personal barriers. For others, it’s a way to feel empowered, make a difference, and find their voice.

Together, these elements—safety, connection, growth, and purpose—help ensure that volunteering is not just a “good deed” for young people, but a meaningful and rewarding experience they want to return to.

Listening builds trust. It helps organisations understand what motivates young volunteers, what barriers they face, and what kind of support they need. When young people see that their feedback leads to real changes — whether that’s in how roles are structured, how they’re trained, or how their time is recognised — they’re more likely to stay engaged, grow in confidence, and take on greater responsibility over time.

Involving young people isn’t just about giving them roles. It’s about **co-creating** the experience with them — and that always begins with listening.

How to **Start** and **Why?**

Recognise the need and motivate young people to volunteer for personal growth and organisation benefits.



Why Involve Young Volunteers?

Involving young volunteers brings valuable benefits to both the individuals and the organisations they support. For young people, volunteering helps build confidence and social awareness, improves their CVs and future opportunities, and encourages a lasting connection to their community. It also offers practical training, supports wellbeing, and helps develop essential life skills. For organisations, young volunteers bring fresh perspectives, energy, and innovation. They often contribute digital and tech skills, support staffing needs, and help organisations better reflect and represent their wider community.

How to Start

To successfully engage young volunteers, organisations should create a flexible and inclusive volunteering culture that welcomes diverse participants. It's important to offer roles that are meaningful and suited to young people's interests and availability. Providing clear training, support, and regular recognition helps sustain engagement, while encouraging feedback fosters a culture of continuous improvement. Organisations should remain open to adapting and evolving their approach based on input from young volunteers themselves, ensuring the experience stays relevant, supportive, and rewarding.

USEFUL LINKS:

[Involving Young People in Volunteering](#) (Career & enterprise company)

[5 reasons volunteering builds career skills](#) (Vinspired)

[The impact of volunteering on young peoples personal development](#) (Vinspired)

Barriers



- Culture
- Lack of roles
- Confidence
- Time
- Transport
- Application process
- Expenses

Considerations:

Young people face several barriers to volunteering that organisations need to consider. There's a widespread perception that volunteering isn't for them, and a lack of accessible information and visible role models. Many organisations are hesitant to offer roles to under-18s, which further limits opportunities. Young people themselves may struggle with confidence, social exclusion, or stepping outside their comfort zones, all of which can make getting involved feel daunting. Their schedules are usually fixed around school or family routines, meaning they have less control over their time. Transport can also be a significant challenge, as many don't drive, may lack confidence using public transport, or are unfamiliar with the local area. Application processes can be another barrier—long, formal forms, the need for references, long waiting times, and poor communication can all be discouraging. Finally, since most young people aren't financially independent, any upfront costs related to volunteering (like travel or materials) can make participation harder or impossible without support.

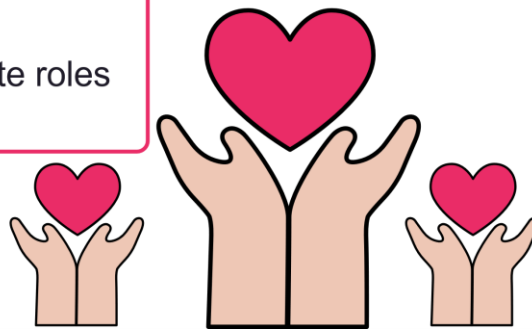
USEFUL LINKS:

[Youth Volunteering the benefits and Barriers](#) (Voluntary Support North Surrey)

[Volunteering among the global majority](#) (Time Well Spent NCVO)

What should you have in place?

- Inclusive and welcoming culture
- Legal considerations
- Meaningful, age - appropriate roles



To successfully recruit young volunteers, an organisation should first foster an inclusive and welcoming culture that values diversity and makes young people feel respected and supported from the outset. This involves creating an environment where their voices are heard, their backgrounds are acknowledged, and barriers to participation are actively removed. Alongside this, organisations must carefully consider legal requirements to ensure the safety and wellbeing of young volunteers. This includes understanding safeguarding laws, obtaining parental or guardian consent for minors, conducting appropriate background checks where necessary, and adhering to health and safety regulations. Finally, it is essential to offer meaningful and age-appropriate roles that align with the abilities, interests, and maturity levels of young volunteers. These roles should provide clear tasks and opportunities for growth, allowing young people to contribute in ways that are both rewarding and suitable for their development stage, which in turn helps sustain their engagement and enthusiasm.

While it may seem daunting at first, breaking the process into manageable steps makes it far more approachable for organisations working with young volunteers.

USEFUL LINKS

<https://befriending.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Young-Volunteers-Good-Practice-Guide.pdf>

<https://www.volunteerfirst.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Young-Volunteers-Toolkit-2-1.pdf>

<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/involving-volunteers/>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-duties-for-charity-trustees>

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/working-with-young-volunteers>

INCLUSIVE CULTURE

Recipe

Ingredients:

- 2 cups of **Open-Mindedness**
- 1 litre of **Listening Ears**
- A pinch of **Representation**
- 5 tbsp of **Kind Language**
- 3 sprinkles of **Flexibility**
- A bowl of **Safe Spaces**
- Endless **Curiosity**
- Optional: **Laughter & Snacks!**



Method:

1. Preheat with warm **welcomes** and remove assumptions.
2. Mix in **diverse voices**. Stir gently.
3. Fold in **flexibility** to suit all needs.
4. Season with **accessibility and clarity**.
5. Sift out jargon, stir in **kindness**.
6. Simmer with **patience** — adjust often.
7. Garnish with **celebration and recognition!**

♥ Chef's Tip: "People don't need to fit in — they need to belong."

How to Create an Inclusive Culture

Creating an inclusive culture for young volunteers begins with representation. It's essential to involve youth voices from diverse backgrounds in planning and decision-making, such as through a youth advisory group or regular feedback forums. Organisations should assess the diversity of their staff, volunteers, and leadership, and take action to address any gaps. Assumptions about what young people want or are capable of should be avoided; instead, a range of role types should be offered, including behind-the-scenes, public-facing, and creative roles, all tailored with flexibility for different interests, availability, and comfort levels.

Using inclusive language is also key. Communications should avoid jargon or overly formal tones and be made youth-friendly and accessible. Recruitment materials should include inclusive imagery and relatable examples, with key documents available in easy-read formats or translated where necessary. Establish open communication right from the start: i.e. encourage them to get in touch before applying to ask any questions or find out more. Offer them to come to visit your organisation with a family member or friend. Call the interview a "chat" and share beforehand questions that you might be asking. A warm welcome helps to build a sense of belonging—staff and volunteers should be trained in inclusive, bias-aware behaviour, and induction processes should be clear and supportive. Buddy systems or mentoring can ease the transition for new volunteers.

Flexibility and accessibility must be built into all volunteering opportunities. Offering one-off events, remote roles, or shorter commitments can lower barriers to participation. Support with transport, food, or other costs is crucial, and volunteers should be asked directly what they need to take part. Listening and adapting are ongoing responsibilities. Organisations should offer regular check-ins, create anonymous feedback options, and most importantly, act visibly on the input they receive from young people. Recognising their contributions further reinforces a culture of respect and inclusion.

Lastly, safeguarding must also be inclusive. Policies should reflect the diverse needs of young people, including considerations around mental health, LGBTQ+ safety, and cultural sensitivity. Staff should be trained in trauma-informed and culturally competent practices to ensure that all young volunteers feel protected and understood.

USEFUL LINKS:

<https://cambridgecvs.org.uk/support/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-edl/>

<http://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/running-a-charity/equity-diversity-inclusion>

<http://www.iwill.org.uk>

<https://volunteermatters.org.uk/what-we-do/youth-social-action>

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/professionals/involving-young-people>

<https://www.byc.org.uk>

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/voluntary-community-groups>

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/inclusive-workplaces/resources-creating-lgbtq-inclusive-workplace>

<https://theredcardhub.org/>

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/professional/resources/>

<https://freecoursesinengland.co.uk/free-online-diversity-and-inclusion-courses/>

<https://www.inclusiveemployers.co.uk/training/cultural-awareness/>

Legal Considerations

- Parental/guardian consent
- Safeguarding policies & lead
- DBS checks for adults (where eligible)
- Risk assessments (separate for young volunteers)
- Insurance coverage
- Working time limits (U16)
- Data protection, social media policy and confidentiality compliance



Legal Considerations

1. Parental/Guardian Consent

- For volunteers under 16, written **parental or guardian consent** is essential.
- Keep consent forms up to date and securely stored.

Parental/Guardian Consent

For volunteers under 16, obtaining written parental or guardian consent is essential to ensure safety, transparency, and shared understanding. Consent forms should clearly outline the nature of the volunteering role, the location, dates or schedule, and any supervision or travel arrangements involved. This helps build trust with families and reassures them that the young person will be

supported in a safe, appropriate environment. Forms should be kept up to date, reviewed regularly, and stored securely in line with data protection policies. Separate consent may be required for off-site activities or changes to usual arrangements.

2. Safeguarding

- Must have a **Safeguarding Policy** in place that explicitly covers children and young people.
- Staff and adult volunteers working with under-18s should undergo **Enhanced DBS checks**, including **child barred list checks** if appropriate.
- Appoint a **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**.

When writing a safeguarding policy for a charity involving young volunteers, it's essential to follow trusted legal and sector-specific guidance. Key sources include the NSPCC, UK Government safeguarding guidance, and Charity Commission advice, all of which offer clear frameworks for protecting children, young people, and vulnerable adults. Additional support can be found through organisations such as NCVO, which provide practical guidance on involving young volunteers safely. Model policies from the Safe Network and the Children's Workforce Development Council can also serve as helpful templates.

Your policy should clearly define safeguarding and outline who it protects, detail the responsibilities of staff and volunteers, and describe safe recruitment practices, including when DBS checks are needed. It must also cover training, reporting procedures, confidentiality, and appropriate behaviour standards. Referencing relevant legislation—such as the Children Act and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act—adds legal grounding.

Young volunteers must always be supervised and never left unattended. Any higher-risk activities should have continuous adult oversight. Parental or guardian consent is required for under-18s, with forms clearly outlining the role, responsibilities, location, and schedule. Additional permission should be sought for any off-site activities.

3. Health & Safety

- Conduct a **risk assessment** for every role that involves young people.
- Ensure tasks are suitable for the volunteer's age, ability, and training level.
- Volunteers must receive a **health and safety briefing** before starting.

Risk assessments for young volunteers are essential to identify potential hazards they might face while volunteering and to put measures in place to keep them safe. The process involves looking at the environment, tasks, and interactions involved in their volunteering role and considering how these might affect their health, safety, and well-being.

First, you need to identify any risks related to the physical environment, such as unsafe equipment, travel arrangements, or access to facilities. Then, assess the tasks young volunteers will undertake to make sure they are age-appropriate and do not expose them to harm or excessive stress. You should also consider risks linked to working with others, including staff, other volunteers, and members of the public, ensuring appropriate supervision and safeguarding measures are in place.

After identifying risks, you determine how likely these are to happen and how serious their impact could be. Based on this, you put controls in place—such as training, supervision, safe working procedures, or protective equipment—to reduce or eliminate risks.

It's important to involve young volunteers in this process where possible, to help them understand the risks and how to stay safe. The risk assessment should be documented, regularly reviewed, and updated especially if the volunteering activities change.

4. Child Employment Restrictions (if under 16)

- Volunteering must not resemble or replace paid work for those under 16.
- Volunteers must not exceed hours that would breach child employment laws.
- Avoid late-night hours, high-risk tasks, or anything unsuitable for minors.
- No legal restriction on the number of hours 16- or 17-year-olds can volunteer, provided they remain in part-time education or training until age 18.

5. Insurance (see more below)

Organisations should verify that their public or employer liability insurance covers volunteers under 18, as some policies include lower age restrictions. It is essential to confirm coverage before involving young volunteers in any activities.

<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/involving-volunteers/planning-for-volunteers/getting-volunteer-insurance/>

6. Data Protection

- Securely store personal data of young volunteers.
- Ensure **consent is obtained from parents/guardians** for under-16s regarding data collection, photos, or online involvement.
- Be transparent about how information will be used (align with **UK GDPR**).

DBS and Safeguarding Considerations for Young Volunteers (Aged 16–17)

When involving young volunteers aged 16 or 17, organisations must carefully assess whether a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check is required for the adults supervising them. This depends on the nature of the activity, the level of supervision, and whether the role falls under the definition of *regulated activity*.

If a 16- or 17-year-old is involved in regulated activity—such as unsupervised work with children or vulnerable adults—their supervisor will likely require an Enhanced DBS check, including a barred list check. However, not all roles qualify as regulated activity. For example, if a young person is volunteering or working in a non-regulated role and is being supervised, trained, or instructed as part of that employment or voluntary role, the supervisor may not be in regulated activity and may not require a DBS check, according to guidance from GOV.UK.

The level of supervision is also a determining factor. Volunteers who are not supervised—such as those working independently in a school—are more likely to be in regulated activity and will require appropriate DBS clearance. In contrast, a supervisor providing general support or induction as part of a young volunteer's role may not need a DBS check if the role itself is not considered regulated activity.

In summary, whether a DBS check is required for supervisors of 16- or 17-year-old volunteers depends on the specific role and level of supervision. A clear risk assessment should always be conducted to evaluate whether the young person, or others they may work with, could be at risk.

When in doubt, please contact:

DBS helpline: 03000 200 190

Email customerservices@dbb.gov.uk

DBS customer services
PO Box 3961
Royal Wootton Bassett
SN4 4HF
United Kingdom

USEFUL LINKS:

<https://cambridgecvs.org.uk/support/safeguarding/>

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/voluntary-community-groups>

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

<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/safeguarding/specific-aspects/getting-started-with-dbs-checks/overview/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-check-eligible-positions-guidance>

<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/safeguarding/>

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/writing-a-safeguarding-policy-statement>

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2019/safeguarding-child-protection-standards>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/charities-how-to-protect-vulnerable-groups-including-children>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/669e7501ab418ab055592a7b/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2023.pdf

<https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/2234/involving-young-volunteers-handbook-good-practice-guidance>

<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/safeguarding/getting-started-with-safeguarding/law-rules-duties>

<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/governance/responsibilities-for-boards/helping-your-board-meet-their-responsibilities/how-to-manage-risk/>

<https://www.futurelearn.com/info/courses/general-data-protection-regulation/0/steps/32413>

<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/uk-gdpr-guidance-and-resources/data-sharing/a-10-step-guide-to-sharing-information-to-safeguard-children/>

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-protection-system/children-the-law>

Volunteer Policy

- Purpose of the Policy
- Definition of a Volunteer: rights and responsibilities
- Eligibility and Age Requirements
- Recruitment & Selection
- Volunteer agreement
- Induction and Training
- Supervision and Support
- Safeguarding & Child Protection
- Health & Safety
- Expenses and Inclusion
- Data Protection and Confidentiality
- Copyright
- Problem Solving / Concerns
- Recognition and Progression
- Review and Updates



A volunteer policy is a formal document that outlines an organisation's approach to involving volunteers in its work. It sets out the values, principles, and procedures that guide how volunteers are recruited, supported, supervised, and recognised. A comprehensive volunteer policy ensures clarity, consistency, and accountability for both the organisation and the individuals who freely give their time.

When a volunteer policy includes younger volunteers—typically individuals under the age of 18—it must consider the additional responsibilities and legal obligations that come with involving minors. These include safeguarding, parental consent, supervision, age-appropriate role design, and compliance with child employment laws. The policy must also reflect a commitment to creating a safe, inclusive, and positive experience for young people who are still developing socially, emotionally, and physically.

Incorporating young volunteers into the policy requires clearly defining who qualifies as a young volunteer, which often includes those aged 12 to 24. The policy should describe how these volunteers will be welcomed into the organisation, including any tailored recruitment, induction, or training processes. It must outline how risks are assessed and managed, and how the organisation ensures that young volunteers are only asked to perform tasks that are safe and suitable for their age and experience level.

Consent is a vital part of involving young people. The policy should explain when and how consent is obtained from parents or guardians, particularly for those under 16. It should also include how data is collected, stored, and shared in accordance with data protection regulations, with extra care taken for minors.

Supervision arrangements are especially important and must be clearly defined. The policy should explain who is responsible for the safety and wellbeing of young volunteers while they are active, and what procedures are in place for support, feedback, or raising concerns. In addition, the policy should outline how safeguarding will be upheld, including the requirement for enhanced DBS checks for any adults working directly with children or young people.

A good volunteer policy that includes young people also recognises the value they bring. It should set out how their contributions will be acknowledged, whether through references, certificates, progression opportunities, or informal appreciation. It should also address how the organisation will

make volunteering accessible—for example, by covering expenses or adjusting for school schedules or transport challenges.

Ultimately, a volunteer policy that includes young volunteers demonstrates that the organisation takes its duty of care seriously. It supports trust, transparency, and safety, and helps ensure that young people have a positive and meaningful experience that benefits both them and the communities they serve.

USEFUL LINKS:

<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/involving-volunteers/planning-for-volunteers/writing-a-volunteer-policy/>

<https://www.volunteerfirst.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Young-Volunteers-Toolkit-1.3.pdf>

<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/engaging-and-supporting-young-people-to-volunteer/>

<https://supportcambridgeshire.org.uk/on-demand-training/>

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/risk-assessment-template-and-examples.htm>

<https://www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information/health-and-safety/>

<https://befriending.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Young-Volunteers-Good-Practice-Guide.pdf>

<https://cambridgecvs.org.uk/support/data-protection/>

<https://cambridgecvs.org.uk/support/communications/social-media/>

<https://cambridgecvs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Safeguarding-guidance-July-24.pdf>

Volunteer Policy Key Points

Policy Section	Standard	With Under-18s
Recruitment	Open and fair	Includes parental consent, legal task limits, age-appropriate advertising
Safeguarding	General safety rules	Full safeguarding policy, DSO appointed, training for adults
Roles and Responsibilities	Clearly defined	Must be suitable, safe, supervised, and compliant with youth labour laws
Supervision	Periodic	Continuous or regular; mentor/buddy system
Training	Standard induction	Tailored, interactive, and youth-friendly
Hours and Shifts	Flexible	Must align with legal limits and school obligations
Insurance	General coverage	Must explicitly cover minors

Key points

Recruitment should be open, fair, and accessible to young people. This means promoting opportunities through youth-friendly channels and ensuring the process is welcoming and inclusive. Clear communication is essential, including the need for parental or guardian consent for under-18s. Advertising and role descriptions must be age-appropriate, and recruitment must stay within legal limits regarding what tasks young people can undertake.

Safeguarding goes beyond general safety rules. A comprehensive safeguarding policy should be in place, with a designated safeguarding officer (DSO) appointed. All adults involved must be trained in safeguarding, with particular attention to the needs and vulnerabilities of younger volunteers. Procedures for reporting concerns and ensuring young people are never left alone or unsupervised must be clearly outlined and followed.

Roles and Responsibilities must be clearly defined and appropriate for the volunteer's age and maturity. Tasks should be safe, meaningful, and in line with youth labour laws. Supervision must always be available, and young volunteers should never be asked to take on duties beyond their abilities or legal limits.

Supervision should go beyond occasional check-ins. Young volunteers benefit from consistent support through regular supervision, ideally with a mentor or buddy system in place. This helps them feel safe, guided, and connected throughout their volunteering experience.

Training should include a basic induction, but also be tailored to young people's learning styles. It should be interactive, engaging, and easy to understand. Training should cover role-specific tasks, organisational values, and clear expectations, while also giving young volunteers confidence in their responsibilities.

Hours and Shifts must be flexible and aligned with legal working limits for young people. Shifts should accommodate school schedules, exam periods, and other youth commitments. Shorter, manageable volunteering blocks are often more suitable for young volunteers.

Insurance needs to be checked carefully. Standard policies may not automatically include under-18s, so organisations must ensure their public and employer liability insurance explicitly covers young volunteers. This protects both the organisation and the young person in case of any incident.

Insurance

WHAT DO YOU NEED?

- Public Liability – covers harm caused by the volunteer
- Employers' Liability – recommended

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

- Disclose volunteer age range when applying
- Get written confirmation under-18s are covered
- Ensure safeguarding and supervision policies exist
- Check for activity-specific exclusions (e.g., tools, outdoors)



Public Liability Insurance:

- This insurance protects the organisation from claims made by members of the public, including volunteers, for incidents that occur in connection with the organisation's activities.
- It covers compensation for personal injuries, loss of or damage to property, and death.
- Volunteers may be considered third parties under a policy, so it's crucial to ensure public liability insurance covers claims from them.
- Must explicitly include volunteers under 18.

Employers' Liability Insurance (recommended for those with employees)

- This insurance protects the organisation from liability for injuries or diseases suffered by volunteers during their placement.
- While not legally mandated for volunteers, it's advisable to have this coverage, as a volunteer could potentially claim negligence against the organisation.
- Organisations should ensure their employers' liability policy specifically includes volunteers, or for organisations without employees, that similar coverage is provided under the public liability policy.

USEFUL LINKS:

- <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/running-a-charity/insurance/>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charities-and-insurance-cc49/charities-and-insurance>
- <https://www.zurich.co.uk/charity-insurance>
- <https://www.markeluk.com/charity-insurance>
- <https://ansvar.co.uk/not-for-profit-insurance/>
- <https://www.unityinsuranceservices.co.uk/charity-insurance/childrens-youth-group-insurance>

How can volunteers be supported?

Volunteer's Journey



- Application process: **emotional connection**
- Induction, Shadowing/ Supervised volunteering: build **trust** and set **boundaries** and **expectations**
- Independent tasks, Reflection and Feedback: **create engagement**
- **Progression and re-engagement** (i.e. peer mentor roles)
- **Recognition:** i.e. certificates, references, thank you events, digital badges
- Capture and share personal and community **impact**

The volunteer journey begins at the application stage, which is a crucial opportunity to establish an emotional connection with prospective volunteers. This means creating a welcoming, inclusive, and inspiring experience from the outset. The application process should communicate the organisation's values clearly and help applicants understand the impact their involvement will have. By sharing stories, testimonials, or videos that highlight the difference volunteers make, candidates are more likely to feel personally invested and motivated. Asking questions during application that invite reflection on why they want to volunteer also helps build this connection early on.

Induction, Shadowing, and Supervised Volunteering: Building Trust

Once a volunteer joins, a comprehensive induction is essential. This introduces them to the organisation's mission, policies, and their role, but more importantly, it lays the foundation for trust. Induction sessions should be supportive and interactive, providing space for volunteers to ask questions and express concerns. Following induction, a period of shadowing or supervised volunteering allows volunteers to observe and learn in a safe environment, which further builds confidence and trust between the volunteer and the organisation. During this time, clear communication and responsive support from supervisors help volunteers feel valued and secure, knowing they are supported as they develop new skills.

Setting Expectations, Independent Tasks, Reflection, and Feedback: Creating Engagement

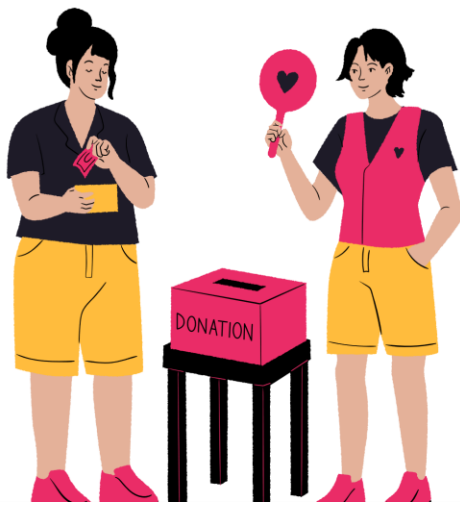
As volunteers become more comfortable, setting clear expectations is key. Volunteers should understand their responsibilities, boundaries, and the impact of their work. Providing opportunities to take on independent tasks—appropriate to their skills and confidence—encourages autonomy and ownership. Regular reflection and feedback sessions promote engagement by allowing volunteers to discuss their experiences, celebrate successes, and identify areas for growth. This two-way communication not only supports learning but also helps volunteers feel heard and connected to the organisation's goals, boosting motivation and satisfaction.

Progression and Re-engagement: Developing Leadership and Peer Mentoring Roles

Sustained engagement comes through offering progression pathways. For young volunteers especially, creating opportunities to take on more responsibility, such as peer mentor roles or leadership positions, can be highly motivating. These roles empower volunteers to support others, develop new skills, and deepen their connection with the organisation. Re-engagement initiatives, such as inviting past volunteers to training events or social activities, help maintain relationships and encourage ongoing involvement. Recognising and celebrating volunteers' contributions through

awards or public acknowledgment also reinforces their value and encourages long-term commitment.

Suitable Roles



- Reflect motivations
- Low friction
- Flexible
- Accessible through familiar channels
- Fun/engaging
- Worthwhile
- Offer recognition
- Offer progression

Designing Volunteer Roles for Young People (Ages 12–24): Principles and Examples

When developing volunteer opportunities for young people aged 12 to 24, it's important to tailor roles to their developmental stage, interests, and practical needs. This means offering age-appropriate roles with the right level of supervision, providing accessible and low-barrier entry points, and ensuring the experience is engaging, safe, and meaningful.

Key Principles for Young Volunteer Roles

Young volunteer roles should be carefully designed with key principles in mind to ensure they are meaningful, safe, and engaging. Roles need to be age-appropriate, matching the volunteer's skills, maturity, and experience. For example, younger volunteers aged 12 to 15 often require simpler tasks and closer supervision, while those aged 16 to 24 can handle greater responsibility and work more independently. It is important to involve young people through familiar networks such as schools, youth clubs, families, and community groups, as these trusted environments help encourage participation.

Supervision and the type of role should be tailored to the volunteer's age and experience. Younger volunteers usually need direct oversight, while older volunteers may benefit from mentor support and more autonomy. Practical considerations like accessibility, transport, and safety must also be addressed; providing travel support or safe transport options can make a significant difference. For remote or online volunteering roles, regular check-ins and opportunities for peer interaction are essential to maintain engagement and prevent feelings of isolation.

Volunteers thrive when given clear, manageable tasks that they can confidently complete. It's also important to keep roles low-friction, meaning they should be easy to start with minimal barriers such as lengthy training or high time commitments, helping to reduce dropout rates. Making volunteering fun and engaging through creative, social, or hands-on activities increases motivation. Offering a variety of settings—including outdoor, home-based, and digital options—caters to different preferences and circumstances.

Family volunteering opportunities can encourage shared experiences and support, strengthening bonds between family members. Facilitating social interaction among volunteers through group activities, events, or peer mentoring helps build connections and a sense of community. Establishing healthy boundaries by clearly communicating expectations around behaviour, time commitments, and safeguarding protects young volunteers' wellbeing. Finally, offering opportunities for progression and change allows volunteers to take on new challenges, leadership roles, or move between roles as their interests and skills develop.

Examples of Volunteer Roles by Age Group and Setting

Ages 12–15 (with supervision):

- **Community Gardening Helper:** Assist with planting, watering, and tidying community green spaces.
- **Event Assistant:** Help set up and support community or school events with supervision.
- **Peer Buddy:** Support younger children in after-school clubs or youth groups.
- **Digital Ambassador:** Share and promote safe online messages about community initiatives via social media under guidance.

Ages 16–18 (more independent roles):

- **Youth Mentor:** Provide peer support and guidance to younger volunteers or children.
- **Admin Support:** Help with data entry, newsletter writing, or managing social media content.
- **Environmental Campaigner:** Lead local clean-up events or awareness campaigns.
- **Fundraising Volunteer:** Assist with planning and running fundraising activities.

Ages 19–24 (leadership and specialized roles):

- **Peer Mentor or Trainer:** Mentor younger volunteers or lead training sessions.
- **Project Coordinator:** Support managing volunteer projects or community programs.
- **Digital Content Creator:** Produce videos, blogs, or podcasts highlighting the organisation's work.
- **Advocacy Volunteer:** Represent youth voices in community forums or campaigns.

Family Volunteering Roles:

- **Community Clean-up:** Families work together on local environmental projects.
- **Holiday Event Helpers:** Families support festive community events through setup, hosting, or activities.
- **Intergenerational Projects:** Families volunteer in projects that bring different generations together, such as storytelling or craft sessions.

Clearly **Communicate** roles

- Appealing role title
- Why help us
- Why we love this role
- Some of what the volunteer will do
- What training and support you will offer
- What skills and qualities the volunteers need or will have a chance to improve
- Quick requirement check



Clearly Communicating Volunteer Roles: A Step-by-Step Guide

1. Appealing Role Title

Start with a clear, engaging, and descriptive title that captures attention. Avoid jargon or overly generic terms. Instead, use language that feels active and meaningful, such as "Community Garden Helper," "Youth Event Coordinator," or "Digital Storytelling Volunteer." An appealing title helps potential volunteers quickly understand what the role involves and sparks interest.

2. Why Help Us?

Explain the purpose and impact of the organisation or project in a compelling way. Describe why the cause matters and how the volunteer's contribution makes a difference. For example, "Join us to help improve green spaces in your community and create welcoming places for everyone to enjoy." This helps volunteers connect emotionally and understand the bigger picture.

3. Why We Love This Role

Share what makes the role enjoyable or rewarding. This could be the social aspect, the chance to learn new skills, the fun activities involved, or the satisfaction of helping others. For example, "You'll get to work outdoors, meet new friends, and see the garden bloom thanks to your efforts!" This builds enthusiasm and shows the role's unique benefits.

4. Some of What the volunteer will do

Provide a concise list or summary of key tasks and responsibilities. Make it concrete and easy to picture, avoiding vague descriptions. For example:

- Plant and water flowers and vegetables
 - Help organise community gardening events
 - Support visitors and answer questions
- This helps volunteers know what to expect and decide if the role fits their interests and abilities.

5. What Training and Support you will offer

Outline any training, induction, or ongoing support provided. Emphasise that volunteers won't be left to work alone without guidance. For example, "You'll get a full introduction to gardening basics,

safety guidelines, and ongoing support from our friendly team.” This reassures volunteers, especially younger ones, that help is available.

6. What Skills and Qualities the volunteers need or will have a chance to improve

List any essential skills or qualities needed (e.g., reliability, enthusiasm, teamwork) and highlight skills they will develop (e.g., communication, leadership, organisation). For example, “No experience needed—just a positive attitude! You’ll learn valuable gardening skills, teamwork, and event planning.” This encourages applicants who might worry about not having experience.

7. Quick Requirement Check

Include any must-haves or eligibility criteria clearly and briefly. For example:

- Age 12+
- Able to attend ideally weekly, but with some flexibility
- Comfortable working outdoors
- Parent/guardian consent required (if under 18)
This helps volunteers quickly assess if the role is suitable for them, reducing confusion or mismatched expectations

Example Role Description Using This Framework

Role Title: Community Garden Helper

Why Help Us?

We’re transforming local spaces into vibrant gardens where people can relax and connect with nature. Your time will help make our neighbourhood greener and healthier.

Why We Love This Role

It’s hands-on, fun, and a great way to meet people while spending time outside in the fresh air.

Some of What You’ll Do

- Plant and care for flowers and vegetables
- Help set up community gardening events
- Greet visitors and share information

What Training and Support You’ll Get

Full training in safe gardening practices and ongoing support from our volunteer coordinator and experienced gardeners. Also, travel expenses available and all necessary kit is provided.

What Skills and Qualities You Need or Will Improve

No prior experience needed! You’ll develop teamwork, gardening skills, and event planning abilities.

Quick Requirement Check

- Age 12+
- Able to attend ideally weekly sessions on Saturday
- Parent/guardian consent required if under 18

When and how long for ?



1.
 - Be mindful of school terms, exams, and holidays
 - Avoid late/evening shifts where transport is limited
 - Offer short, manageable shift lengths
2.
 - Flexibility is key
 - Short term is valuable
 - Pause rather than stop
 - Different perception of time

Scheduling Considerations for Young Volunteers

Be mindful of young volunteers' school terms, exams, and holidays to avoid clashes with their academic commitments. Avoid scheduling late or evening shifts when transport options are limited to ensure their safety and accessibility. Offer short, manageable shifts (1–2 hours) to fit their busy schedules and reduce fatigue. Providing flexible, clear schedules helps young volunteers balance school, life, and volunteering successfully.

Understanding Their Needs and Realities

Flexibility Is Key

Young people often have fluctuating schedules due to school, college, exams, family commitments, social life, and part-time work. Offering flexible volunteering options—such as varied shift times, remote or in-person roles, and the ability to choose when and how often they volunteer—helps accommodate these changing demands. Flexibility ensures volunteering fits naturally into their lives rather than feeling like an added burden.

Short-Term Commitment Is Valuable

Not all young volunteers are able or willing to commit long-term. Short-term volunteering opportunities, such as one-off events, project-based roles, or seasonal campaigns, can be just as meaningful. These provide valuable experiences, skills, and a sense of contribution without requiring a long-term obligation, making volunteering accessible to more young people.

Pause Rather Than Stop

Young volunteers may need to take breaks during busy periods, such as exam seasons or personal challenges. Encouraging them to pause rather than end their volunteering leaves the door open for future involvement. This approach reduces pressure and helps retain volunteers long-term by respecting their life circumstances.

Different Perception of Time

Young people may experience time differently from adults, often valuing spontaneity and new experiences over long-term planning. Recognising this helps organisations design volunteering opportunities that are flexible, varied, and responsive. Providing short, engaging bursts of activity rather than lengthy, rigid commitments aligns better with their lifestyle and keeps motivation high.

Takeaways

- Create an inclusive culture, adapt and follow best practices
- Design meaningful roles for young volunteers
- Support and mentor them to grow
- Celebrate their impact and progression
- Collaborate with schools and local groups
- Listen, communicate, recognise the effort



Your next step?

Final Thoughts

Create an Inclusive Culture, Adapt, and Follow Best Practices

Foster a welcoming environment where all young volunteers feel valued, respected, and safe regardless of background, identity, or ability. Continuously adapt your policies and practices to reflect current safeguarding standards, accessibility guidelines, and youth engagement research. This commitment to inclusion and best practice builds trust and encourages sustained involvement.

Design Meaningful Roles for Young Volunteers

Develop volunteer roles that are purposeful, engaging, and tailored to the interests and abilities of young people. Meaningful roles provide a clear sense of contribution and connection to the organisation's mission, motivating young volunteers and enhancing their experience.

Support and Mentor Them to Grow

Provide ongoing support, guidance, and mentoring to help young volunteers develop skills, confidence, and leadership. Regular check-ins, feedback sessions, and opportunities for peer mentoring create a nurturing environment that encourages personal and professional growth.

Celebrate Their Impact and Progression

Recognise and celebrate the contributions and achievements of young volunteers. This can include certificates, awards, public acknowledgment, or showcasing their stories. Highlighting their progression into more responsible or leadership roles inspires commitment and pride.

Collaborate with Schools and Local Groups

Partner with educational institutions, youth clubs, and community organisations to reach more young people and provide volunteering opportunities that complement their learning and social development. Collaboration helps align volunteering with young people's schedules and interests.

Listen, Communicate, Recognise the Effort

Maintain open channels of communication to listen to volunteers' feedback, ideas, and concerns. Responding respectfully and promptly shows that their voices matter. Regularly recognising effort—not just outcomes—builds morale and a positive volunteer culture.

The bigger picture

Young volunteers are often the future changemakers of our communities. Through volunteering, they gain valuable experiences that help shape their values, skills, and sense of responsibility. Engaging in meaningful activities allows them to develop leadership qualities, empathy, and a deeper understanding of social issues, all of which empower them to become active and informed citizens.

By contributing their energy, ideas, and unique perspectives, young volunteers bring fresh innovation to organisations and causes. This involvement nurtures a lifelong commitment to making a positive difference, encouraging them to advocate for change and take on leadership roles in their communities as they grow.

Supporting young volunteers today means investing in tomorrow's leaders who will drive social progress, promote inclusivity, and inspire others to get involved. Their early experiences in volunteering can spark confidence, resilience, and a passion for service that fuels sustained impact throughout their lives.



Appendices

The following are examples of policies and frameworks that, while intended as helpful guidelines, may not be suitable for every situation. Organisations should carefully assess their relevance and adapt them to fit their specific context.

Support Cambridgeshire (<https://supportcambridgeshire.org.uk/>) offers guidance and support to charities on safeguarding matters, including policy development and training opportunities. They also provide information on governance and legal responsibilities for trustees.

If you need further guidance, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

Appendix 1

Volunteer Policy (Including Young Volunteers) example

Purpose of the Policy

This volunteer policy outlines our organisation's approach to engaging volunteers of all ages, including young volunteers. It establishes the principles, procedures, and commitments that guide our work with volunteers and ensures a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment. The policy is designed to support the wellbeing of volunteers, clarify expectations, and ensure compliance with safeguarding and legal requirements.

Definition of a Volunteer: Rights and Responsibilities

A volunteer is an individual who freely chooses to give their time and energy for the benefit of others without financial compensation. Volunteers contribute to the mission and goals of our organisation but are not a replacement for paid staff. All volunteers have the right to be treated with respect, to work in a safe environment, and to receive appropriate support. In return, volunteers are expected to follow organisational policies and conduct themselves in a way that upholds our values and code of conduct.

Eligibility and Age Requirements

We welcome volunteers from age 12 and up, with roles designed to suit different age groups. Volunteers under the age of 16 must have written parental or guardian consent. Some roles may be limited to volunteers over the age of 18 due to health, safety, or legal requirements. We are committed to creating inclusive opportunities that match a volunteer's age, interests, and abilities.

Recruitment and Selection

Prospective volunteers will be invited to complete a simple application or have an informal conversation to assess their suitability and interests. Where appropriate, we will carry out basic checks, including references or DBS checks, particularly for roles involving young or vulnerable individuals. We aim to ensure that recruitment is fair, inclusive, and accessible to all.

Volunteer Agreement

All volunteers will be offered a volunteer agreement, outlining the expectations of both the volunteer and the organisation. This is not a legally binding contract but a mutual understanding of roles, responsibilities, support, and commitments. For volunteers under 16, the agreement must be co-signed by a parent or guardian.

Induction and Training

All volunteers, including young people, will receive an induction appropriate to their age and role.

This will cover key information about the organisation, the volunteering environment, health and safety, safeguarding, and communication expectations. Ongoing training will be provided as needed to support skill development and confidence.

Supervision and Support

Each volunteer will be assigned a named supervisor who is responsible for offering guidance, checking in regularly, and addressing any concerns. Young volunteers will receive additional support, including group volunteering options, buddy systems, and structured feedback opportunities to promote a positive experience.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

The safety of young volunteers is our priority. We follow a comprehensive safeguarding policy that aligns with national legislation and best practice. All staff and volunteers working directly with under-18s will undergo Enhanced DBS checks, and all concerns will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Safeguarding training is mandatory for relevant staff and volunteers.

Health and Safety

We conduct risk assessments for all volunteer roles and activities to ensure they are safe, appropriate, and clearly understood. Volunteers will be briefed on relevant safety procedures, and tasks will be adjusted to match their age, ability, and training. Emergency procedures will be communicated clearly to all volunteers.

Expenses and Inclusion

We believe volunteering should be accessible to everyone. We will reimburse pre-approved travel, meals, and activity-related expenses. Volunteers will not be out of pocket due to their involvement. We actively remove barriers to participation by offering flexible arrangements and additional support where needed.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

Volunteer data will be collected and stored securely in line with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). We are committed to confidentiality and transparency in how personal information is used. For volunteers under 16, parental or guardian consent is required before collecting and using personal data, including photos or videos.

Copyright

Any original work created by a volunteer during their time with us, such as written materials, designs, or media content, may be used by the organisation for internal or public purposes. Volunteers retain the moral rights to be acknowledged for their contributions, and all copyright use will be discussed openly where applicable.

Problem Solving and Concerns

Volunteers are encouraged to raise any concerns with their supervisor. We are committed to resolving issues promptly and fairly. A clear process is in place to address complaints or concerns in a way that respects confidentiality and aligns with our safeguarding obligations.

Recognition and Progression

We value the contributions of every volunteer. We regularly acknowledge and celebrate volunteer efforts through certificates, references, public thanks, and opportunities for progression, including ambassador or mentor roles for more experienced volunteers.

Review and Updates

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Volunteer Coordinator and Safeguarding Lead to ensure it reflects current best practices, legislation, and the needs of our volunteers.

Appendix 2

Volunteer Agreement for Young Volunteers example

The Organisation

accepts _____

to work as a volunteer, starting on _____.

The Organisation agrees:

- To provide clear information, training, and support to help the volunteer carry out their tasks safely and confidently.
- To provide appropriate supervision and regular feedback about their volunteering.
- To be reasonable and flexible about the type and amount of work, considering the volunteer's age, availability, and abilities.
- To respect the skills, dignity, and individual needs of each volunteer and do its best to meet those needs.
- To listen positively to any suggestions from volunteers about how to improve the work.
- To treat volunteers as equal partners and work alongside paid staff to achieve the organisation's goals.
- To ensure the safety and wellbeing of young volunteers at all times, including following safeguarding policies.

The Volunteer agrees:

- To volunteer on the days and hours agreed below (if applicable):
- To tell the organisation as soon as possible if they cannot attend or need to change their volunteering hours.
- To follow the organisation's volunteer policies, including those on confidentiality, behaviour, and safeguarding.
- To respect others and work as part of the team.
- I understand that the organisation will collect and store my personal information for volunteer-related purposes and that this information will be handled in accordance with data protection laws and the organisation's confidentiality policy.
- To keep confidential any sensitive information I learn through my volunteering.
- For volunteers under 18: I confirm that my parent/guardian has given permission for the organisation to collect and use my personal data as described above.

Parent/Guardian Consent:

I give permission for my child to volunteer with the organisation and confirm that I have read and understood this agreement.

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Signed (Volunteer): _____

Date: _____

Signed (Organisation Representative): _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3

Risk Assessment for Young Volunteers example

Organisation:

Activity/Location:

Date of Assessment:

Assessor's Name:

Step 1: Identify Hazards

Hazard	Who might be harmed?	Risk Level (Low/Med/High)	Control Measures	Action Required	Responsible Person	Date Completed
Example: Slippery floors	Young volunteers	Medium	Put up warning signs, ensure footwear suitable	Check floors regularly	Supervisor	Ongoing

Step 2: Assess Risks and Implement Controls

- Check the environment for physical hazards (e.g., equipment, access routes).
- Review tasks to ensure they are safe and suitable for young volunteers.
- Make sure appropriate supervision and support are in place.
- Provide training on safe practices and emergency procedures.

Step 3: Review

- Review the assessment regularly, especially if activities change or new risks arise.
- Update control measures as needed.