

**Involving Young Volunteers**

**70% of volunteers who registered with Volunteer Midlothian in the last two years were 18 and under. This is over 1000 young people!**

This is a quick guide on how to involve volunteers who are under 18, or even under 16. Most of the guide is relevant to involving volunteers of any age. Not all roles are suitable for under 18s, but many are and your organisation may be discriminating against young people if you exclude them from volunteering for your organisation.

A recent survey\* by Volunteer Scotland on Young People and Volunteering in Scotland found that:

* Nearly half of young people aged 11-18 are volunteering – no other age group in Scotland has such a high rate of volunteering
* Young people have a very positive perception of volunteering
* Young people are more likely to volunteer regularly

**What young people can bring to your organisation**

* Large numbers interested in finding out about volunteering
* Commitment, hard work and reliability
* Enthusiasm and fresh new ideas
* Skills in new technology: social media, website design, mobile phone communication
* Likely to return in the future to volunteer.
* Involving young people is attractive to funders and many grants are available to organisations that involve young people.

**What young people want from an opportunity**

* There are many different reasons why young people decide to volunteer, all of which are valid. For many, volunteering is a way of gaining something to put on their UCAS statement or CV. Young people will tell you what they want from volunteering, so if you ensure that they receive it, they are far more likely to stick around.
* They want an opportunity that is fun
* They want to feel valued and that their contribution is making a difference
* They want an opportunity that is flexible – not long-term requiring a high level of commitment
* They would like the opportunity to take part in taster sessions to ‘try it and see’
* They would like more group-based volunteering opportunities
* They would like to volunteer close to home



**Simple steps to increase the number of young volunteers at your organisation**

* When someone enquires about volunteering for your organisation, first impressions are vital. Ensure you give a quick, friendly and consistent response.
* Meet with them for a chat before they decide to volunteer. That way both you and the young person can decide if the role is right for them.
* Have a consistent recruitment policy. If this is a long process, have a think whether every stage is necessary. Young people want to volunteer as soon as possible.
* At every stage of recruitment and volunteering ensure that they have a named contact, this will be the person who they will go to if they have any issues
* Provide them with adequate training to do the role
* When they begin volunteering give clear instructions so they know what they should be doing
* Allow flexibility
* Offer a reference if they commit to a period of time and are a good volunteer; i.e. two months
* Allow young people to volunteer with friends – two for the price of one!
* Value your young volunteers. Thank them for the time and work they are putting in
* Reimburse expenses to your volunteers – bus fares!

**Insurance**

* A simple phone call to your insurance provider and your organisation should be able to involve volunteers under 16 at little or no extra cost.

**PVG Scheme**

* Protection of Vulnerable Groups is a membership scheme that allows organisations to ensure volunteers or staff are not on a list barring them from working with children or vulnerable adults. It also shows spent and unspent criminal convictions.
* **There are no age restrictions for PVGs**; anyone can have become a member of the PVG scheme.
* Not all roles that involve vulnerable adults or children require volunteers to be a member of the PVG scheme. Double check that volunteers are doing regulated work to qualify them having to become a member of the PVG Scheme. You can contact Volunteer Scotland on 01786 84977 or visit <http://www.volunteerscotland.net/disclosure-services/resources/> for more information.

**Saltire Awards**

* Any person under the age of 25 can gain a Saltire Award. They just need to keep track of the number of hours that they volunteer for and register and request awards at [www.saltireawards.org.uk](http://www.saltireawards.org.uk). As a volunteer supervisor you need to be able to verify hours to enable the young person to receive their award.
* Summit Awards – Peer-assessed award for outstanding commitment to volunteering for 12 -25 year olds. Young person has to have completed at least 50 hours of volunteering. Summit Awards are presented at our Volunteers’ Week Awards Ceremony in June. Only 12 can be given out in Midlothian per year.

**Points to Consider**

* A large proportion of young people can only commit to a few months of volunteering. It can be helpful to speak to a volunteer about how long they are able to commit for in the first instance, as it can help you plan services better.
* If a volunteer does decide to stop volunteering, don’t treat it as a failure or a negative outcome. You have helped a young person on their way. If they have had a good experience they are likely to come back in the future or recommend it to friends. For most organisations, if you are prepared for short volunteering placements it shouldn’t negatively affect your service delivery.
* Volunteer Midlothian can provide your organisation with help and advice to allow you to involve young volunteers and get the most out of them. We can also assist young volunteers who you maybe feel require some extra support for their first couple of volunteering sessions.

**For more information contact the Transform Team at Volunteer Midlothian:** **info@volunteermidlothian.org.uk** **or 0131 660 1216**

\*Volunteer Scotland Survey can be found here: <http://www.volunteerscotland.net/policy-and-research/research/young-people-and-volunteering/>