



VSB is a local volunteer development agency with 40 years of experience supporting, encouraging and promoting citizenship and participation through voluntary activity. As the Volunteer Centre for Belfast, Castlereagh, North Down and Ards, VSB helps to enable individuals to access voluntary opportunities, matching volunteers with voluntary placements, and maximising mutual benefits. VSB provides support each year for 3000 volunteers and 600 organisations whose work involves volunteers.

Young Citizens In Action is the Youth Department within Voluntary Service Bureau (VSB). The project aims to resource, support and empower young people aged 16-30 to make a valid contribution to their community through volunteering. Volunteers make a unique contribution to this programme.



Check out our Website!

The Young Citizens in Action Website is found at www.youngcitizens.org.uk It is specifically aimed at 16-25 year olds in Northern Ireland, and provides information about issues regarding citizenship and volunteering opportunities. It also contains latest news articles about matters affecting young people. The Website is interactive, and attempts to gauge the opinions and attitudes of young people through our "Question of the Week" and online discussions via our message board about social, political and environmental issues.

'Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, the environment, or individuals outside one's immediate family. It is undertaken freely by choice, without concern for financial gain.'

[Make a Difference:1995]



BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

ensure you are recruiting, retaining and adequately supporting all young volunteers within your organisation

The following guidelines will enable you to implement best practice to ensure that you are recruiting, retaining and adequately supporting all young volunteers within your organisation. If you need further assistance or advice contact Roisin Timlin at VSB on 028 90 200 850 or roisin@vsb.org - this is free.



DEFINITION

VSB have found over many years that young people have a lot to offer others and that volunteering is a two-way process in that there are many benefits to be gained from volunteering. We define volunteering as *'Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, the environment, or individuals outside one's immediate family. It is undertaken freely by choice, without concern for financial gain.'* (Make a Difference:1995)

VOLUNTEER POLICY

It will be beneficial to your organisation to have a volunteer policy in place. A policy is essentially a thoroughly practical tool, giving direction and providing a structure for good management in the values and plans on which procedures are based. A volunteer policy should outline how volunteering is promoted and managed within your organisation. (As good as they give: 2001)

VOLUNTEER ROLES

- Identify clear, progressive and varying volunteer roles for young people that provide benefits to young people in terms of skills, new challenges and work experience. Volunteers need a Role Description that outlines the purpose, task, where and when the volunteer is required, who they will be with, what support is on offer and what they could get out of the role. A volunteer specification outlining the skills and experience is also required.

Volunteering delivers real benefits to local organisations, to young volunteers and to the wider community.

BENEFITS TO YOUR ORGANISATION

- Young people can bring new ideas and increased capacity to your organisation.
- Young people can raise awareness and champion your work amongst their peers, teachers, parents and the wider community.
- Local media love stories of young people doing positive things and this can bring positive coverage of the work of your organisation.

BENEFITS TO YOUNG PEOPLE

- Learning by doing-volunteering can complement young people's formal education and allow them to develop existing and new skills.
- Employers value volunteers experience very highly.
- Putting volunteering on a college or university application demonstrates and interest outside of school.
- Volunteering gives young people a stake in their communities.
- Volunteering can help to promote young peoples' participation in wider society and in the democratic process, allowing them to develop their skills to speak out about issues that matter to them, and giving them the personal drive and confidence to effect change.
- Volunteering should be fun and offers the chance to meet new people.

ATTRACTING VOLUNTEERS

Organisations can attract young volunteers by offering the following:

Taster Sessions:

These sessions offer a short-term, structured activity over a few hours, a day or a weekend and can take the form of a mass volunteering day, give it a do day or shadowing.

Advantage of taster opportunities

- Engage first time volunteers and hard to reach young people and provide a gateway to further volunteering
- Showcase your organisation, demonstrating the fun and the value of what you do.
- Bring young people together from different backgrounds to break down barriers between racial or social groups.

PART-TIME VOLUNTEERING

Four to five hours a month, an hour a fortnight, one afternoon a week, one Saturday every month...part-time volunteering offers a huge amount of flexibility. Opportunities for part-time volunteers can be based around:

Helping to maintain a service – doing a regular shift on a 24 hour telephone helpline or drop-in service or perhaps volunteering to help professional youth workers at a regular youth club.

Meeting short-term needs of an organisation– volunteering over a specified time frame organising an event, or producing and distributing promotional materials.

Fulfilling a key role within an organisation – as a secretary, treasurer, publicity officer or web-master

Advantages

- Because of their flexibility, part-time opportunities can be accessible to a wide range of potential young volunteers, who may have study and work commitments.
- The offer of a small but regular commitment can engage first time volunteers who don't have to make a big initial commitment.
- Part-time volunteers can gradually take on a greater role and more responsibility as their confidence increases.

FULL-TIME VOLUNTEERING

A substantial commitment over a longer period of time .Therefore organisations offering full-time volunteering opportunities will aim to place volunteers where their help, skills and enthusiasm are needed most.

Advantages

- Organisations can get a huge amount of help towards fulfilling their core aims and objectives plus fresh perspectives and new ideas.
- The benefits of full-time volunteering for young people can be huge, new skills, confidence and experience.

Because full-time volunteering does represent a major commitment by young people, organisations need to be even more careful that they are offering a high quality volunteering opportunity, which: Makes a real contribution to their core mission – not just sweeping up or washing dishes. Benefits both the volunteer and the community. Provides the volunteer with adequate induction, training, supervision and support. Is not seen as job substitution – 'taking away paid jobs from local people'.

ATTRACTING YOUNG VOLUNTEERS

Improving awareness and ease of access.

Making young volunteers feel welcome

Making volunteering flexible

Offering incentives.

Make sure young volunteers are never out of pocket ensure expenses are available for travel, meals etc. Consider whether re-imburements in advance can be made.

More young people could get involved if they had a greater awareness of:

- The potential benefits of volunteering.
- What they can gain from the experience.
- What is available
- How to get involved.

RETAINING VOLUNTEERS

Young people need to feel welcomed and valued and this can be achieved through the following:

Induction: Providing the volunteer with a Volunteer Role Description, background to the organisation and directions pre-arrival to starting their volunteering will make the person feel welcomed and prepared.

Organisational Induction: It is important to explain to volunteers the goals of the organisations as this will help the volunteer understand where they fit within the organisation as a whole.

ONGOING SUPPORT:

Having a named person who a young volunteer knows they can go to with any questions or concerns will give them the some reassurance during their volunteering role.

Consult and involve young volunteers in the development of their volunteering in order to give them ownership and as much control as possible.

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

- Ensure recognition of what young volunteers do, either by providing accreditation on the forma of a qualification or simply providing a reference or a record of achievement, stating skills and experience gained while they were volunteering.
- Celebrate the involvement of young volunteers on a regular basis, thank them and acknowledge the contribution they have made.
- Provide training and ask the young volunteer what training they would like.
- Create opportunities for young volunteers to come together socially.

HEALTH AND SAFETY:

- Organisations have a legal duty of care towards everyone that comes into contact with their organisation, including young volunteers.
- Organisations need to provide a safe place of work, a **safe system of working, adequate supervision, adequate induction, training and information to give volunteers sufficient skills and knowledge to carry out their work safely.**
- Your organisation should have a health and safety policy in place as a matter of good practice. This policy will outline the organisation's commitment to good health and safety procedures, practices and responsibility to both employees and volunteers.

CHILD PROTECTION

- The need for good practice in Child Protection when involving young people under 18 is essential
- Seek written parental permission to involve young people under 16 as volunteers.
- Visit www.volunteering-ni.org or actiononaccess.org for related document on child protection.

This booklet is available as a download from www.youngcitizens.org.uk

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