

Involving Volunteers Under 18

A Guide for Volunteer Organisations in Bury

(V1)



Produced by Bury VCFA
www.buryvcfa.org.uk

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Introduction

Volunteering helps young people develop skills, gain experience for future jobs, give back to supportive organisations, and contribute to their community. Young volunteers bring valuable skills and fresh perspectives. When involving young volunteers, organisations must ensure their safety and create a positive experience while balancing the needs of the group and individuals they support.

Alongside this guide we offer a number of example policy documents and risk assessments which we can work with you to adapt for the work you do.

This guide should help you think about the things you should consider when involving volunteers who are under the age of 18. Requirements may vary depending on the work you do. If you are unsure please don't hesitate to reach out and ask us for further advice.

Contact Us

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Why Include Young Volunteers?

Young people bring energy, fresh ideas, and a unique perspective to your work.

They can:

- Offer peer support
- Help make sure young people's views shape your services
- Build connections with schools, youth groups, and local charities
- Spread the word about your work in the community

Volunteering also benefits young people and can be a life-changing experience. It helps young people to:

- Develop personal and professional skills
- Gain work experience in their chosen field
- Explore new opportunities beyond their usual routine
- Grow by shaping their identity, encouraging active, engaged citizenship and building social skills and networks

Involving Young People

Much like adult volunteers, it is important that your policies include young people.

This often means modifying or adding specific points to your current procedures.

Here are the key areas to consider:

Safeguarding and Child Protection

Organisations working with children must have a strong safeguarding policy. This should include:

- Using Safer Recruitment
- Clear screening procedures for potential volunteers
- DBS checks for roles with close or unsupervised contact with children or vulnerable groups
- DBS checks for staff or volunteer managers when needed

DBS Checks

Anyone over the age of 16 who works with volunteers under 18 may need a DBS check, depending on the role and the organisation's policies.

A DBS check is required for roles considered “Regulated Activity” – meaning regular (4+ days in 30 or overnight) unsupervised contact with children, or work in specified settings (e.g. schools, children’s homes). If a volunteer manager supervises the role, only they may need the check.

Guidance for who may need a DBS can be found here: [Regulated Activity \(children\)](#)

Safer Recruitment

It is important to note that there is not a “one size fits all” answer to this and so it is important to review your organisation’s needs. Safer Recruitment is a method to ensure the safety of young people and vulnerable adults which includes:

- **Clearly define the volunteering role**
- **Providing an applicant information pack** – outline the process so that candidates understand what information will be sought from them and why.
- **Self-Disclosure Form** – for candidates to tell you confidentially about any relevant criminal convictions, child protection investigations or sanctions.
- **References** - you should ask applicants to provide the details of at least two referees and check references as part of your vetting checks.
- **Online Checks** – you may carry out a search of shortlisted candidates for any information that is publicly available online. (This is not mandatory)
- **Interview** – Interviews to recruit people to work with children should always be conducted face-to-face.

If you need any support with what checks to complete on new volunteers, please contact us or see the DBS guidance [here](#).

Health and Safety Policy

Organisations have a duty of care to all of their staff and volunteers. Make sure you:

- Have an up-to-date health and safety policy
- Provide an induction to explain responsibilities and procedures
- Carry out risk assessments for each role (risks may differ with young people)
- Consider the need for trained first aiders (mandatory for under 5’s)

Risk Assessments

Each volunteering role should be risk assessed by a competent person to ensure safe working conditions. Examples of this can be provided to you by Bury VCFA.

Insurance

All organisations working with volunteers of any age, should have an insurance policy that covers them. If you are working with volunteers below the age of 18 or under the age of 16, you should check that your insurance covers everyone:

- **Public Liability Insurance** should cover claims from any third parties, including volunteers
- **Employers’ Liability** Insurance (if you have employees) may not automatically cover volunteers
- Verify your policy if working with volunteers under 16, as some policies have age restrictions

It is important to clarify with your Public Liability Insurer that volunteers are regarded as third parties and not as unpaid employees. Your public liability insurance also needs to cover you for claims from third parties harmed by the actions of your volunteers. Again, you should check with your insurance provider.

Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy

All Volunteer involving organisations should have a full equal opportunities and diversity policy.

Expenses

It is a really good idea to think about how accessible you can make your volunteering for young people and one of the ways to do this is to ensure that you are able to pay a volunteer's expenses to ensure that they are not out of pocket for giving their time to you.

Only reimburse volunteers for expenses actually incurred in the course of their volunteering. Expenses may include:

- Travel costs (to, from, and during volunteering)
- Food and refreshments
- Necessary materials and equipment

Keep detailed records of all expense claims.

Training

Much like adult volunteers, you should ensure young volunteers receive the training they need. As a standard approach we recommend:

- Provide an induction to explain their role and your policies
- Offer additional training tailored to their specific role (if required)

Volunteers Under 16

While there is no legal minimum age for volunteering, extra care is needed for volunteers under 16:

- Check that your insurance covers them
- Ensure the volunteering schedule suits younger people (e.g. weekends)
- Follow your child protection policy and complete thorough risk assessments
- Consider having a responsible adult (parent, guardian) accompany them
- Obtain written consent from a parent or guardian

