



The Opportunities & Challenges to Meaningful Youth Volunteering for 14-25 year olds.

Conference Report, 8 December 2021

Appendix 1:

Benefits of Volunteering

- Growing up through volunteering develops into a natural progression to keep volunteering as you get older.
- Young people bring new ideas and are full of enthusiasm.
- When growing up in scouts/youth club etc. with volunteer leaders this embeds volunteering from a young age and motivates the young person to give something back to their group.
 - Helps give you experience of skills that you may not need now but will need in the future
 - Life Skills / Work Skills / Critical skills
 - Create a social network
 - More resilient / more generous
 - Universally important
 - Gives a voice to young people
- Good for overall wellbeing
- A chance to give back to the community
- Opens up opportunities- opportunities to travel, training, experience in a particular role
- Helps you to build confidence and resilience
- Helps you to make friends and it's fun
- New opportunities
- New skills, training and accredited course to help with their chances for paid part-time work plus to enhance their CV & University UCAS – personal statement
- Meeting new people & making friends
- Builds self esteem, confidence and a sense that they can do it!
- The opportunity to take on a role within their youth club/group and aid them to have a meaningful part to play within their community
- Trips away, having their voice heard,

Barriers

- In some cases volunteering is 'not cool' and 'social action' sells volunteering better.

- Time management- Hard to balance volunteering with social life as well as school work and other hobbies and activities.
- Young people might prefer to get paid/work- Some discussion around this and the confusion between volunteering and paid work experience. What could an alternative incentive be? Suggestion that certificates were not an ideal/productive incentive.
- Lack of clear pathways in some organisations to keep young people interested and continuing to develop into different roles with more responsibility.
- Young people moving away for uni and not continuing to volunteer or fail to return to their role when they have finished uni.
- Difficulty with schoolwork / exams / study & time to themselves & their interests
- Not aware of all the volunteering opportunities that are open to them
- Lack of experience, fear of the unknown, a lot of bother

Challenges

- Lack of training i.e. child protection/safeguarding in relation to how to deal with issues such as bullying and knowing who the designated safeguarding lead is within the group.
- Discussion around shorter volunteering opportunities - more flexible roles.
- Roles that have varying time commitments.
- Some suggested that organisations should try to keep their young people within them for their whole life course. Others believed that this was not realistic and that roles should be more flexible to allow people to come and go depending on their life circumstances (moving location, health, family responsibilities).
- Pathway to volunteering doesn't always suit the young person and life challenges often get in the way. More temporary type volunteering roles.
- School and pressure from school was raised. Need to find a way of keeping the young volunteers
- Pathway – to further education / University course that is paid for them by the organisation – this evoked great conversation.
- Volunteers want to see their efforts recognized, to be valued by opportunities to enhance them.

Evaluation

The Conference was excellent, our young people really enjoyed participating. The young people said that they enjoyed sharing their own experiences of volunteering. They also said they were proud that they were able to do it well.

I felt that the Conference was really well organised and excellent how it was young people led.