

Volunteering for Young People – Advice and Information

Young volunteers can bring a skill set that can really benefit a voluntary organisation. There is no legal reason why a young person aged 16 or 17 cannot volunteer. However, children are classed as a vulnerable group, so any organisation that takes on young volunteers must be careful to protect them.

It is important that when you are looking for a volunteer opportunity you are aware of your own safety and rights within that opportunity, and that you feel comfortable with what you are being asked to do. Parental permission if you are 16 or under must be sought by the organisation you are seeking to volunteer with before you take up that opportunity.

Technically parents are responsible for their child until the age of 18 but the nature and extent of the responsibility is blurred for 16-18 year olds. It is considered advisable to seek parental consent for anyone under 18. In addition to parental consent, young people of compulsory school age are not permitted to volunteer during school hours without the permission of the school.

Volunteering can be a great way to gain skills, experience and references to support pathways into higher education and vocational training, but we also recognise that many young people are interested in building their skills for work. Therefore, towards the end of this briefing we have included pre-employment and training services that build skills and confidence in preparation for job applications and paid employment, for young people and young adults aged 16-24.

Richmond Volunteer Service, managed by [Richmond CVS](#), delivers volunteering services in Richmond for people 18+. This briefing is intended to give you some ideas about where, if you are under 18, you might look to find volunteering opportunities, and some of the things you should be aware of when choosing an option that's right for you.

Where to start?

A good place to start is to think about what your interests are, what you like to do, what skills you are looking to develop, the time commitment you have available. Often things you are already involved in – your sports club, uniformed group, school activity – may have opportunities for you to help out. If you are looking to complete your Duke of Edinburgh (DofE), be clear what's required of you, how many hours you have to achieve, what skills you will need to be able to demonstrate through the assessment process. Does the volunteering opportunity support you to achieve this? Are you looking to develop skills and experience for your CV? Make a list of all your requirements and this will help you search more effectively for an opportunity that's right for you.

Opportunities

Volunteering with children and young people

Skylarks provide activities and therapies for children with disabilities and additional needs. They welcome enthusiastic and motivated young people aged 14+ to volunteer as part of the DofE scheme Bronze, Silver or Gold award. Young volunteers with or without additional needs help at sessions for children with additional needs and siblings on Tuesdays after school in Twickenham during term time until 6pm (commitment is for one term at a time). As part of their placement they are involved in many activities ranging from playing with children and encouraging involvement in drama, cookery, karate, music therapy or art classes, and setting up and putting away toys and equipment. There are also ad-hoc opportunities to volunteer at other times and locations such as fairs and fetes, visits to Kew Gardens, Marble Hill Park or Richmond Park, holiday activities including nature trails, family fun days, ice skating and visits to Father Christmas. [See the Skylarks website](#) for further details. They can only accept a limited number of DofE volunteers at a time, so it is best to plan ahead and contact them as early as possible. Young people need to complete a different application form, so please email info@skylarks.charity to express an interest.

Girlguiding has a Rangers section for girls aged 14-18 and also offers volunteering places for Young External Volunteers aged 13-18 as part of a programme such as DofE. As part of a Ranger Unit you would meet up regularly, have fun doing activities together and be recognised for achievements with badges and awards. You would also be able to access Girlguiding membership opportunities including social activities, festivals and concerts. As a Ranger you can also be a Young Leader (aged 14-17) at a Unit for younger girls (Rainbows, Brownies or Guides), where you will receive training, mentoring, and support from the rest of the Unit team. As a Young External Volunteer you would be able to be a Young Leader as part of a volunteering programme (for example DofE), but you would not have access to as many membership activities as if you were also a member of a Rangers Unit. Click on the titles below to find out more.

[Girlguiding - Rangers](#)

[Girlguiding - Young Leader Qualification](#)

[Girlguiding - Become a volunteer](#)

[Girlguiding – Duke of Edinburgh Awards](#)

Richmond and Kingston BuddyUP Richmond Advice and Information on Disability (RAID) is looking for volunteer buddies aged 16+ to help young people aged 14-17 with disabilities enjoy their leisure time by travelling with them to activities in the local area and then sharing the experience with their 'buddy'. More information can be found at the [RAID Voluntee With Us webpage](#) or you can [email info@richmondaid.org.uk](mailto:info@richmondaid.org.uk).

Arts and Heritage

Turners House in Twickenham was designed by and built for one of England's greatest landscape painters JMW Turner in 1813. If you have an interest in arts and heritage, they offer a variety of volunteer placement opportunities for those aged 16–25 including DofE, and work experience placements for students in years 11-13. For more information [visit the Turners House Get Involved webpage](#).

The **Museum of Richmond** offers volunteer placements for those aged over 16, including DofE. They recommend getting in touch at least two months in advance of when you would like the volunteering opportunity to start, as they get a lot of requests. Find more details at the [Museum of Richmond Volunteering webpage](#).

Kingston Hospital offers a range of volunteer opportunities for those aged 16+, for example Dining Companion or Patient Experience Volunteer. More information can be found at the [Kingston Hospital Volunteering webpage](#). If you email KHFT.volunteering@nhs.net you can go on their waiting list and they will contact you when roles come up. You'll need to give your full name, telephone number, email and the roles that are of interest.

West Middlesex University Hospital (Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust) have roles such as Responder and Ward Helper for those aged 16+. They require a six-month commitment of one 3-4 hour shift a week. This is a great way to get experience for a young person considering a health or social care career. For more information [visit the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust website](#).

Princess Alice Hospice, Esher have roles for young people aged 16+ in their shops, including through the Gold DofE. Twice a year there is a programme for 17-19 year olds called Ward Support Volunteer. The next cohort will be starting in March 2023 with recruitment beginning November 2022 and interviews in December and January. Please contact volunteering@pah.org.uk or call 01372 461856 for more information.

Emergency Services

Richmond Police Cadets - for 13-18 year olds. Volunteer Police Cadets offer an inspiring and challenging environment in which you can make new friends, work as part of a team, get involved in exciting activities, gain valuable knowledge and skills. You do not need to have an aspiration to have a career in the police force in order to join. 11-13 year olds can join Junior Volunteer Police Cadets. [Visit the Volunteer Police Cadets website](#).

St John Ambulance Cadets: Young People aged 10-17 can join a local Cadet Unit to take part in volunteer work and learn valuable life skills. They have a leadership programme, peer educators and a residential summer camp. DofE is also available. More information can be found at the [St John Ambulance Cadets webpage](#) or email London-Volunteering@sja.org.uk.

The **London Fire Brigade Fire (LFB) Cadet** programme is a FREE nationally recognised programme for 13-17 year olds that offers young people the opportunity to gain a BTEC Level 2 Award in Fire Rescue Services in the Community. It develops interpersonal skills, interview skills and confidence and provides the ability for an outstanding professional reference. Within the programme itself, each young person is presented with the ability to go up the hierarchal ranking system, eg. Leading Fire Cadet and Sub-Officer Cadet, which emulates the hierarchy in the London Fire Brigade itself. Each rank has their own responsibilities and can go to more prestigious events and trips. For example, officers can go to Morton on Marsh Fire Academy to train for the weekend in real fires. In Fire Cadets you are training in real operational Fire Stations, using real fire-fighting equipment and using them in drills, whilst also playing supportive roles within the community partaking in charity work. If you are interested in joining LFB Fire Cadets, please get in touch by emailing lfbfirecadets@london-fire.gov.uk to discuss the next steps.

Volunteering at local charity shops

Many charity shops can offer time-limited volunteering for those doing their DofE awards, see Princess Alice Hospice entry above. You will need to visit your local charity shop to discuss this with them. Those aged under 16 will need parental permission and you will need to complete an application form and supply references.

General

The **National Citizen Service (NCS)** government-backed programme brings together young people aged 15-17 from diverse backgrounds, providing them with strong skills for life, work and adulthood. The focus of the programme is during the summer school holidays. Some paid work placements are available for 18-24 year olds. For more information and to sign up, [go to the NCS website](#).

For those seeking apprenticeships and employment (aged 16-25)

Did you know that volunteering can count for up to half of your job search activities if you are on Universal Credit? Volunteering is permitted on other state benefits also. Click on the following link for more information: [NCVO Volunteering and Benefits](#)

Achieving for Children (AfC) provides children's services on behalf of Richmond and Kingston. Their Pre-Employment Support service offers four different programmes with a range of support for those aged 16-24 not in employment, education or training (NEET) and young people with special education needs and disability (SEND). Support includes:

- building confidence and interpersonal skills
- preparing and completing English and maths functional skills
- searching for jobs, apprenticeships or training
- CV writing, applications and interview practice
- gaining hands-on work experience
- achieving industry specific certifications
- financial support for travel and work clothes

More information can be found at the [AfC Pre-Employment Support webpage](#).

Step-Up South London (SSL), delivered by Groundwork London works with young people who are termed NEETS (Not in Education, Employment or Training). They cover **Croydon, Merton, Sutton, Kingston and Richmond** and are based in Croydon. They offer a range of support to young people aged 16–24 years old to improve their skills and increase their access to employment and vocational training. They focus on young people who are in care or leaving care, or who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, or who have two other vulnerabilities such as substance misuse, problem debt, criminal activity, lone parent or young carers. Their free services include peer mentoring, short courses and skills packages, access to literacy, numeracy and English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) support and interview skills and work experience. For more information [email Bright Agyemang-Baah, Employment Advisor](mailto:Bright.Agyemang-Baah@groundwork.org.uk) or [visit the Step-Up South London website](https://www.step-up.org.uk).

Constructing South London is a collaboration between the Mayor's Construction Academy and the South London Partnership to connect people to jobs, training and skills in the construction industry. Its activities and the support available include Richmond. For more information [visit the Constructing South London website](https://www.constructingsouthlondon.org.uk).

Transform Work Life is a new series of seminars delivered by Richmond libraries aimed at developing knowledge of your personal and professional skills. Over six in-person interactive seminars, participants will learn skills and self knowledge that will enhance employability, and encourage potential transformation in your work and life situation. The course is free to Richmond residents and applicable wherever you are on your employment journey, be that your first job or looking to make a career change. [Visit the Transform Work Life webpage](https://www.transformworklife.org.uk).

Choice Support Richmond and Wandsworth supports residents with disabilities aged 18+ to find work including people with learning difficulties, those affected by mental ill health, sensory impairment, physical disability and autism. They provide pre-employment support and support when you get a job, including attending interviews with you if needed and advocating for adjustments once employed. Call 020 3697 7134 for more information or [visit the Choice Support Richmond and Wandsworth webpage](https://www.choicesupport.org.uk).

Richmond Workmatch, a Richmond Council service, supports people to access local jobs and training. It gives access to jobs across Richmond, Wandsworth and Kingston and provides training for borough residents to increase their employability. More information can be found at the [Richmond Workmatch website](https://www.richmondworkmatch.org.uk).

For those aged 18+

Richmond CVS provide the volunteering service in Richmond. You can register your details and search for opportunities online at www.richmondcvs.org.uk.

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