

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, **if** the role, time and activity expected is suitable and appropriate for their age group.

The legal definition of a child is anyone aged under 18. Children are categorised as a vulnerable group, so any organisation that takes on young volunteers must be careful to protect them. This includes risk assessing the activity and having appropriate child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures in place that are relevant to the activity and function of their organisation. Prior to involving a young person in any volunteering, it is recommended that the parent/guardian makes their own assessment of the organisation and the suitability of the role for the child.

*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 those aged 16-18. 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. There are also restrictions about the type of activity and the level of supervision required. For example, it is not appropriate for children to be sent to volunteer in individual homes or to conduct door-to-door surveys or fundraising.*

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 (www.richmondcv.org.uk), 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 and their families. They welcome enthusiastic and motivated young people aged 14+ to volunteer, usually 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, karate or music therapy, and setting up and putting away toys and equipment. [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 and visit with a parent before they start, so please email info@skylarks.charity to express an interest.

Girlguiding has a Young Leader Rangers programme for those aged 14-18 and also offer 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 be a Young Leader (aged 14-17) at a Unit for younger girls

(Rainbows, Brownies and Guides), where you will receive training, mentoring and support from the rest of the unit. Here are some links for more information on their national website - www.girlguiding.org.uk/get-involved/ and [young external volunteers](#).

Richmond and Kingston Buddy Up 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 at <https://richmondaid.org.uk/volunteer-with-us/> or email info@richmondaid.org.uk.

Bookmark Reading have extended their reading mentor programme to 14-18 year olds, it involves reading with primary school children and can be done via your school - <https://www.bookmarkreading.org/volunteer/reading-mentors>.

Arts and Heritage

Turners House in Twickenham was designed by and built for one of England’s greatest landscape painters, J M W 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 one-week work experience placements for students in years 11-13. For more information, visit <https://turnershouse.org/get-involved/>.

Museum of Richmond offers work experience placements and volunteering for those over 16, including DofE. They require at least two months’ notice via an expression of interest and sometimes close the programme to further applications for a time as they get a lot of requests - <https://www.museumofrichmond.com/get-involved/volunteering/>.

Health

Kingston Hospital offers a range of volunteer opportunities for those aged 16+, for example Dining Companion, Dementia Volunteer, Gardening or Admin Support Volunteer. More information can be found at <https://www.kingstonandrichmond.nhs.uk/get-involved/volunteering/volunteer-roles>. Most roles require commitment to a weekly shift over at least six months and ID checks and references are required. There is an online application form. They open to applications five times a year. [Visit the website](#) or email KHFT.volunteering@nhs.net for more information.

West Middlesex University Hospital/Chelsea and Westminster Hospital have roles such as Responder and Ward Helper for age 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 see <https://www.chelwest.nhs.uk/about-us/work-with-us/what-will-i-be-doing>.

Princess Alice Hospice, Esher has roles for young people aged 16+ in their shops, including through the Gold DofE. Twice a year there is a programme for those aged 17-19 called Ward Support Volunteer. The next cohort will be starting in March 2025 with recruitment for the next round beginning in May/June 2025. Please contact volunteering@pah.org.uk or call 01372 461856 for more information.

Emergency Services

Police Cadets - the Metropolitan Police is not currently accepting referrals for Volunteer Police Cadets and do not currently run Junior Volunteer Police Cadets. They suggest checking their website for updates - <https://www.met.police.uk/police-forces/metropolitan-police/areas/c/careers/police-volunteer-roles/volunteer-police-cadets/overview/>. When the programme is running, Volunteer Police Cadets are for 13-18 year olds and offer an inspiring and challenging environment in which you can make new friends, work as part of a team, get involved in exciting activities, and gain valuable knowledge and skills. Young people aged 11-13 years can join Junior Volunteer Police Cadets in participating areas. You do not need to have an aspiration to have a career in the police force in order to join.

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 at <https://www.sja.org.uk/get-involved/young-people/cadets/>.

London Fire Brigade (LFB) Fire Cadets - is a FREE nationally recognised programme for those aged 13-17 that offers young people the opportunity to gain a BTEC qualification whilst developing their interpersonal skills, interview skills, development in confidence, and also 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, for example, Leading Fire Cadet, Sub-Officer Cadet, etc, which emulates the hierarchy in the London Fire Brigade itself. Each rank has their own responsibilities and can go to more progressively more prestigious events and trips. 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 by taking part in charity work. If you are interested in joining LFB Fire Cadets, please get in touch by emailing fbfirecadets@london-fire.gov.uk to discuss next steps, or visit <https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/community/young-people/fire-cadets/joining-fire-cadets/>.

Charity shops

Volunteering at local charity shops: Many charity shops can offer time limited volunteering for those doing their Duke of Edinburgh awards (see Princess Alice Hospice entry above), as well as ongoing volunteer roles or over-16s. You will need to visit your local charity shop to

discuss this with them. Those under 16 will need parental permission, and you will need to complete an application form and supply references.

Outdoors

Habitats and Heritage run a Youth Volunteering programme with regular nature conservation volunteering sessions one Saturday a month for those aged 14-25. There is so much to get involved in from planting, to invasive species removal and bird box building, to litter picking. Whether you are looking to start your environmental career, build up volunteer hours for your DofE, or just to give back to your local environment, volunteering with Habitats & Heritage is a great way to meet like-minded young people and improve your physical and mental wellbeing. Email charlotte@habitatsandheritage.org.uk for more information and to sign up to the Youth Volunteering programme or visit <https://habitatsandheritage.org.uk/events/>.

For those seeking training, apprenticeships and employment (age 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 - see the following link for more information:

<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/involving-volunteers/volunteers-and-the-law/volunteering-and-benefits/#/>

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

- building confidence and interpersonal skills
- links to local jobs, apprenticeships or training
- gaining hands-on work experience.

More information is available at

<https://kr.afcinfo.org.uk/pages/local-offer/information-and-advice/training-and-employment/pathways-programme-pre-employment-support>
employability@achievingforchildren.org.uk.

The Daniel Spargo-Mabbs (DSM) Foundation are an Approved Activity Provider (AAP) for the Skills section of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE). The Foundation is a drug education charity established in 2014 following the death of 16-year-old Daniel Spargo-Mabbs from an accidental overdose of ecstasy. His family felt that he simply hadn't known enough to be able to make decisions that would keep him safe and realised there was a huge gap in the resources and support available to schools. They set up the charity to spare other families going through what they had experienced. The Safer Choices programme, run

by the DSM Foundation, is a self-study course accessible for ages 13+ and can now form part of a young person's Bronze or Silver DofE Award. It provides relevant, age-appropriate, up to date and evidence-based information about drugs, so that young people can make choices that will keep themselves and their friends as safe as possible. The course is chargeable (£20) and can be downloaded from the DSM shop - <https://www.dsmfoundation.org.uk/product/dofe-safer-choices/>.

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* areas and are based in Croydon. SSL offers a range of support to young people 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 ESOL support and interview skills and work experience. For more information email Bright Agyemang-Baah, Employment Advisor at bright.agyemangbaah@groundwork.org.uk.
<https://www.groundwork.org.uk/projects/step-up-south-london/>

South London Partnership has a comprehensive Skills and Job section which includes The Mayors Green Skills Academy and the No Wrong Door integration hub which helps people get into work and training - <https://southlondonpartnership.co.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 five in-person interactive seminars, participants 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 - https://www.richmond.gov.uk/transform_work_life

Kingston Advocacy Group (KAG) offers free mentoring to 17-25 year olds in Richmond and the surrounding areas who are NEET. The KAG Case Worker support includes:

- CV building
- application support
- functional skills support (English/maths)
- job search support
- Further Education support.

It offers tailored support and there is no limit on how much support you receive. Email rights@kag.org.uk and visit www.kagadvocacy.org.uk.

The King's Trust is dedicated to empowering young people by providing access to training, mentorship and opportunities to help them thrive in their careers. Through its programmes, the Trust focuses on equipping young people with essential skills, building confidence, and supporting their personal and professional development.

Key Initiatives Include:

- tailored training and development for young people
- mentoring and guidance from industry professionals
- opportunities to enhance employability and build skills.

To learn more about how the King's Trust is making a difference in young people's lives and to explore the various opportunities available, visit [The King's Trust website](#).

Choice Support Richmond and Wandsworth supports residents with disabilities 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. <https://www.choicesupport.org.uk/find-support/find-support-near-you/richmond-wandsworth>.

Richmond Work Match, an Richmond Council service, supports people to access local jobs and training. It gives access to jobs across Richmond, Wandsworth and across South West London, and provides training for borough residents to increase their employability. More information available at www.richmondworkmatch.org.

For those 18+ Richmond CVS provides the volunteering service in Richmond. You can register your details and search for opportunities online at www.richmondcv.org.uk.

Prepared by Richmond Volunteer Service

www.richmondcv.org.uk

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Updated January 2025