



Volunteers: Be Heard. Be Helpful.

A Teacher Resource

WcVA
CgGC



Ariennir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
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Gwirfoddoli Cymru
Volunteering Wales

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What is this?

Over the last year Foothold Cymru has been running a project called Volunteers: Be Heard. Be Helpful which was all based on encouraging young people into volunteering.

As part of the project, the young people involved had helped co-produce a number of resources. This is our Teacher Resource for those in the Education Sector; to help demonstrate the importance of volunteering within the new school curriculum.



What is volunteering?

Volunteering Wales defines volunteering as:

“When you choose to give your time and energy to benefit other people without being paid for it.”

When we asked young people what they thought volunteering was, they often reported ‘Hearing the word’ but not knowing what ‘Counted’. Some definitions they came up with included:

- Helping others
- Selfless act
- Coming out of your comfort zone
- Giving to others
- Helping people out of the kindness of your heart



For the purposes of this resource, and the wider project, we will use one of the definitions provided by a young person:

“Volunteering is to put yourself forward with no motive apart from helping people without expecting anything more than a ‘Thank you’ - just doing it because you can, not because you’re being asked to or because you have to.”



Why are young volunteers so important?

Welsh Government states only 24% of young people are involved in any kind of volunteering in Wales; this number reduces every year - not just for young people but across all age brackets.

Yet volunteering is incredibly important by benefitting:

- Young people directly
- Charities and organisations utilising young volunteers
- The educational settings the young people come from



Benefits of young volunteers



Educational settings

- Supports the delivery of the new national curriculum
- Improves school reputations
- Connects schools with other organisations
- Supports the running of extra-curricular activities (e.g Duke of Edinburgh)
- Helps develop more rounded, skilled young people and young adults
- Supports young people to consider their post-school options

Voluntary / community settings

- Fresh perspectives and new ideas
- Increases creativity, energy and enthusiasm
- Raises awareness and champions work across their peers
- Helps recruit more volunteers
- Offers support with digital or social media-based elements
- Helps adapt communication methods and resources to be more young person friendly

Young people

- Skills development
- Character building
- Develop relationships which can 'Open the door' to long-term, future opportunities
- Get to 'Taste' or 'Try' a role or sector before deciding
- Builds their CV and supports application to university or college
- Feel good about themselves - "...it gives you that warm, fuzzy feeling"
- Supports mental health through providing distractions, connecting them with others and supporting others in their needs
- Increased appreciation of their community
- Sense of pride in their achievement and in their community



What was Volunteens: Be Heard. Be Helpful?

This project was part of the Strategic Volunteering Grant Round 2. Funded for one year by Welsh Government and administered through WCVA and Volunteering in Wales, the project ran from October 2022 - September 2023.

Young people took the lead right from the start, giving the project the 'Volunteens' name.





Volunteens was aimed at:

- Engaging young people in conversations around volunteering
- Identifying how to engage, develop and recognise young volunteers
- How the third-sector could recruit young volunteers
- Demonstrating how volunteering can be embedded and enrich the new national curriculum



Across the year:

Over 200 young people from across Carmarthenshire took part in Volunteens including participating in:

- Consultations
- Taster sessions to better understand what volunteering is and isn't
- Creating resources: films, bilingual toolkit for the third sector; a visual fashion piece and this teacher resource

The project also included a steering group of professionals including school representatives, third-sector organisations, statutory organisations and faith groups.

Achievements

Self-reported achievements:

- 99% of young people reported learning at least one skill on the project (on average, young people identified nine skills)
- 88% reported maintaining or improving their level of awareness about local issues
- 85% reported an increased sense of purpose
- 73% wanted to volunteer again

Anecdotal feedback:

School staff provided the following feedback:

- Some young people actively sought further volunteering opportunities and have credited Volunteers as their motivation
- Other young people have been noticeably more confident than before
- Many young people are more knowledgeable about volunteering
- Many young people have been putting themselves forward more in teams and for leadership roles
- Some young people have become more assertive, especially in communicating



Why does this matter for the education sector?

Ethical, informed citizens:

Through Volunteens young people were able to:

- Identify and evaluate issues around volunteering
- Form more positive views about their future
- Explore the impact their volunteering has on a wider scale
- Improve the reputation and reducing stigma around young people
- Increase own understanding and knowledge of their culture, community and society

Healthy, informed individuals:

Through Volunteens young people had the chance to:

- Improve their mental and emotional wellbeing
- Develop confidence
- Build trust and respect across generations
- Identify and overcome challenges
- Develop skills
- Improve their future options and career aspirations



Important life skills

Creativity and innovation skills:

This life skill includes the opportunity to “Explore, communicate, create plans and find solutions”.

On Volunteens, young people could:

- Explore volunteering through taster days
- Create plans for their own volunteering now and in the future
- Find solutions to problems that arose during the taster sessions

Personal effectiveness:

This life skill includes the opportunity to “Grow in confidence, become aware of different social, cultural and ethical views and learn from their mistakes”.

On Volunteens, young people could:

- Meet and interact with new people from different backgrounds, increasing their confidence, social and cultural awareness
- Learn about various social issues in their local area through the taster sessions
- Develop and learn from mistakes over the taster day

Critical thinking and problem solving skills:

This life skill includes the opportunity to “Ask questions, look at the evidence, make decision and solve problems”.

On Volunteens, young people could:

- Ask questions during the taster sessions
- Overcome various difficulties that arose over the course of the taster day such as limited ingredients, team working and conflict resolution
- Make decisions about further volunteering opportunities

Planning and organising skills:

This life skill includes the opportunity to “Manage their time, set goals, make decisions and check their work”.

On Volunteens, young people could:

- Consider independent volunteering
- Manage their time to arrive punctually and complete tasks correctly.
- Set and surpass goals on the taster session

How can we make it work? Practical steps

Now that you've found out about the project; heard the voices of young people and seen how it links in with the National Curriculum here are some **practical steps** you can take to support more young people into volunteering.

Pre-Volunteering Support

- Building confidence through on-going pastoral support and encouragement
- Developing key skills such as communication and leadership through daily school activities
- Support with identifying volunteering positions and learning about the roles in detail connecting with local organisations available in the area and connecting with Volunteer Coordinators (where possible)
- Interview practice with young people, helping them to develop skills and build confidence
- Connecting them with suitable volunteer placements and aiding with initial conversations with providers



During volunteering support:

- Helping with communication
- Providing a safe place to talk about any issues

Additional steps:

- Take young people seriously
- On-going pastoral support from start to end
- Take into consideration time commitments for volunteering and the impact on other areas (homework / attending after school clubs etc)
- If possible, support with costs of transportation and food (free school meal provision)
- Speak to local organisations to find out what they're doing and providing

Post volunteering support:

- CV writing workshops
- Identifying further volunteering options
- Recognise the success of young people



Other resources from Volunteens:

This teacher resource is just one of the resources created to support young people into volunteering positions.

Over the project young people have helped co-produce **other resources** which are available including:

- Short film co-designed by young people, for young people, aimed at providing more information on volunteering
- Toolkit for the Third Sector, allowing them to improve their ability to recruit and support young volunteers

We also had the whole project externally evaluated by Strategic Research and Insight Ltd which has provided important feedback which will support and inform our future projects.

If this, or any of our resources have been helpful, please let us know!

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