



How to ...

Enable young volunteering

Young people have a vast amount they can offer, and yet a lot of churches miss out on the opportunities afforded to them by young volunteers. Young people should not be excluded from volunteering in their churches because of their age, rather by investing in young volunteers the church is investing in the next generation of leaders, whilst at the same time benefitting from all the young people can bring to the church now.

Young people can bring a tremendous amount of energy, enthusiasm and commitment to a volunteering role. Not only does volunteering give them a recognised role with responsibilities, volunteering also provides young people with fantastic ways to build confidence, develop life skills and gifts, experiences that challenge and help their faith grow, and opportunities that can increase job prospects, vocation or access to further education.

Young people can be passionate about Church and many would love to be involved in all that goes on. Is your church missing out on the advantages of having young people involved who can bring their own fresh and youthful dynamic to the ministry, mission and outreach in your church?

Young volunteering is not about creating new roles for young people, but seeking out opportunities where young people can use their God given gifts and skills effectively the existing life of the church.

Investing in young volunteers does take time, patience and perseverance, but the results of all that effort will become evident as they begin to influence their peers, other volunteers and impact the wider church too.

The key to successful young volunteering is matching gifts, skills and interests to opportunities. Talk to the young people in your church and ask them about how *they* might like to volunteer and serve within the church. Through conversation opportunities will open up that serve the church and bless the young person too.

Things to consider

When thinking about creating opportunities for young volunteers, it is important to think about what support structures and policies you will need to support them:

- Make volunteering opportunities attractive and appealing to young people. Variety and fun are popular requirements;
- Identify volunteering roles and create role descriptions that clearly define the responsibilities, expectations, commitment required and support offered;
- Make sure the information you provide gives details about the benefits of volunteering such as building confidence, developing new skills or being part of the leadership team;
- Flexibility is also an important factor to reflect the diverse range of demands and influences on a young person's life. Offering short term, or fixed term opportunities can be important;

- Your existing insurance policies should not be a barrier to involving young people. Make enquiries with your insurer and if the minimum age is not as low as required, then ask them to lower it, quite possibly at no or little cost;
- Seek opportunities to directly ask young people to be involved – many young people feel they have never been asked to volunteer. Encourage young volunteers to invite their friends to get involved also based on their positive experiences;
- Recruit any young volunteer as you would if they were an adult. This includes an informal interview, character references and DBS check (if appropriate) This will be good experience as and when they seek employment in the future;
- Follow good practice guidelines in the management of volunteers providing support and supervision however ensure that the systems are as user friendly as possible. See our 'How to... Support and encourage volunteers' guide for more details;
- Provide a friendly and relaxed environment for young volunteers with appropriate support from an identified adult leader;
- Organise an induction session so that young volunteers have the opportunity to learn about their role, responsibilities and any expectations;
- Provide or signpost young volunteers to relevant training so that they, and adult leaders, can develop together and grow in their roles;
- Give praise, encouragement and feedback. Regularly celebrate the involvement of young volunteers, thank them and acknowledge their contribution;
- Commission young volunteers, alongside adult volunteers as part of a special service to affirm, promote and pray for them in their roles. Appropriate liturgy is available from the diocesan Youth and Children's Adviser.

If you have found this 'How to' guide useful and would like to follow-up on anything, Dan Jones (Youth & Children's Adviser) can provide further advice as well as extra support to help your church explore ministry with children, young people and families.

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