

Toolkit: Working with young volunteers



Young volunteers can bring something very special to a museum or heritage organisation. Fresh energy and ideas, new areas of expertise, more visitors, and opportunities for succession planning to name just a few.

This toolkit will help you to identify why young volunteers would benefit your organisation, how you could benefit them and how to go about recruiting. It will also provide you with tools, templates and tips to ensure everyone has a safe and positive experience.

Some tools appear in the body of the toolkit, others are included in a resource pack.

For further advice and support contact the team at Museums & Heritage Highland:

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Before you go any further, work out your 'Why?'

Why do you and / or your organisation want to engage with young volunteers?

- What have you done already, what do you want to achieve and why?
- What has worked before and what hasn't?
- What does a 'young' volunteer mean to your organisation? Different ages have different requirements.
- What might the barriers be going forward, how do you plan to overcome them?
- Is everyone on board - trustees, board members, front-facing staff and other volunteers?
- Do you have young people working or volunteering in your organisation. Can you involve them in the process?

TOP TIP: Taking some time at this stage to think about why you want to do this and to get everyone on board (or at least willing to join the conversation) can make things a lot easier at later stages.

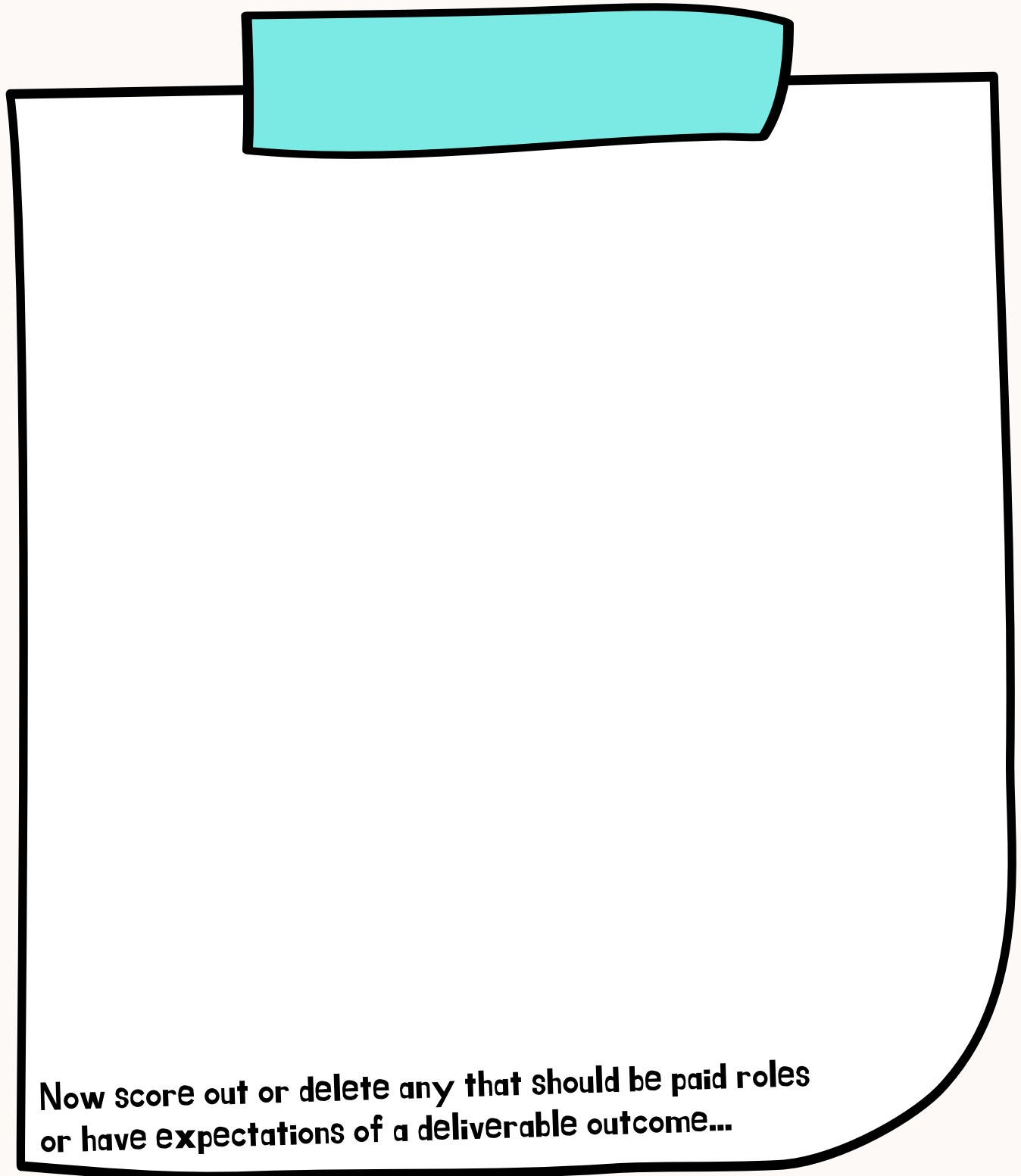
TOP TIP: If you already have a young person involved with the organisation, involve them, ask them, listen to them!

"Young Volunteers bring a dynamic energy packed with enthusiasm and ideas. Take the time to encourage and listen to them"

Anne - Dingwall Museum

What would you like them to do?

In an ideal world, what are the things you are hoping a young volunteer could do in your organisation? Use the space below to brainstorm.



Now score out or delete any that should be paid roles or have expectations of a deliverable outcome...

How can you benefit them? This is key to attracting young volunteers. Why would they want to volunteer? How could the experience be of benefit to them?

Choose between 1-3 roles that you'd like to take forward

Finding your young volunteers.

Once you have decided your 'why', you need to find your young volunteers. Each age range will have different considerations and support needs. Younger and vulnerable age groups will have PVG requirements.

Reach out, connect, listen

Getting ready:

- What have you tried already? What worked / didn't work? What did you learn from this?
- What might the barriers be and how do you plan to overcome them?
- Is everyone on board? Trustees, board members, staff, volunteers - involve them in the process.
- Take time to ensure that everyone understands your 'why'.
- If you already have a young volunteer or staff member, involve them heavily in the process. Ask them for suggestions and listen.

Finding your potential volunteers?:

- Contact partner organisations that you already have connections with - schools, youth groups, young archaeology groups...
- Visit groups that you don't have a connection with or hold a 'young volunteer open day' at your organisation.
- Consider flexible ways of volunteering - in person, hybrid and remote.
- Ensure that advertising is engaging and focuses on why someone might want to volunteer.
- Make it as easy as possible to enquire about volunteering (drop-in, email, call, social media message) and make selection process an informal chat rather than a formal interview.
- Take steps to ensure advertising material is inclusive and accessible to all. Also consider this when deciding where to display adverts.
- Check out Make your Mark's [inclusive volunteering toolkit](#)



Working with your young volunteers.

Recruiting young volunteers is the first step, retaining them is the next. A supportive induction, warm & welcoming environment, and a flexible approach are key.

Induction

General areas to be covered in an induction process:

- Practicalities to support comfort
- Introductions to supervisor, colleagues and other volunteers
- Use 'About Me' worksheet to learn about your volunteer and share team worksheets with them
- Breakdown of tasks including risk assessment and safe ways of working
- The structure of the organisation.
- Important policies such as safeguarding, health and safety, and volunteer policy
- What to do in an emergency
- How to deal with problems
- A training schedule
- Volunteer support and preferred communication channels
- Details about history or organisation

Tips for successfully managing an induction:

- Pace the induction appropriately according to individual's needs. Start with the basics (comfort and safety) and then move onto their role and the organisation's mission. Policies and plans can be introduced gradually.
- Don't overload people with reading or formal meetings early on.
- Be aware of different learning styles and personalities and cater for all. Different induction opportunities could be: reading a blog; reading a website or handbook; touring the museum / heritage organisation; team catch up; doing practice queries; shadowing...
- Be open to different opportunities for people to make connections across the organisation. Make time to check understanding over the first few weeks – don't rush things.

Templates (see resource list)

- Example Volunteer Policy
- Example Volunteer Induction Checklist

All about me...

I like to talk about...

My name is...

Things that I find stressful are...

I prefer to communicate by

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

My favourite cuppa and snack is

If I am stressed I need...



Volunteers might only be with you for a short time ... and that's ok



Identify a young volunteers champion to provide support, guidance and direction

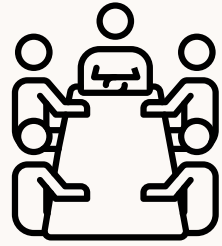
If possible have a group of young volunteers



Be flexible - remote or hybrid volunteering might be the best solution



'I have been able to volunteer because the museum allowed me to volunteer remotely and come into the museum when I'm home.'
Beth - Dingwall Museum



Consider a young person's rep on your board

It is a great opportunity to learn. Welcome suggestions and listen.



TIPS FOR WORKING WITH YOUNG VOLUNTEERS

Additional Resources

This page contains a directory of additional resources and information to help you work with young volunteers

Templates and tools - [download resource pack](#)

- Example Volunteer Policy
- Example Volunteer Induction Checklist
- Example Social Media Policy
- Example Volunteer Agreement
- Example Role Description
- About Me Worksheet

Additional resources

- [More information about Saltire Awards](#)
- [Scottish PVG scheme - information about PVG disclosure requirements for working with young volunteers](#)
- [YouthLink Scotland - for organisations working with young volunteers](#)
- [Scottish Government Youth Volunteering Guidelines](#)
- [NSPCC - Young volunteers and safeguarding](#)