

The V Word

Dundee's Youth Volunteering Research Project



Introduction:

We know that 100s of young people volunteer across Dundee, doing a range of different things. A lot of this activity goes unrecognised and often the people involved do not even think of it as volunteering (e.g. collecting money for charity as part of a school project).

A young volunteer is any person under 25 who gives their time to benefit others outside their immediate family. It is done by choice and without financial gain.

At Volunteer Centre Dundee we believe that volunteering has many positive influences on a young person's life and the work of young volunteers should be recognised, whatever form it takes.

We wanted to know more about where young people are volunteering in Dundee, what they are doing and what they think about it.

National level research and anecdotal evidence gives us several pieces of information that we want to test:

- On Average volunteers do around 2-3 hours per week.
- Young volunteers are involved in a wide range of activities.
- Word of mouth is the best way to find out about volunteering. Only a small percentage comes through a Volunteer Centre.
- Volunteering benefits people in many different ways.
- Young people are often motivated more by what they gain from volunteering than what they give.
- Volunteers want to be recognised and appreciated.
- There is a shortage of opportunities for young people under 16 to volunteer.

Research Method:

This research project was based around 2 surveys.

The first survey was for organisations/schools/groups that are involving people aged under 25 in volunteering. The aim of this survey was to get an overview of where young people volunteered and what they did. It also allowed us to identify which organisations wanted to receive a record of their volunteers' responses.

The second part was for young volunteers to complete. This was to give us an idea of why they volunteer, how they got involved and the impact that volunteering has had on them.

The volunteers' survey is based on the Volunteer Impact Assessment Toolkit and aims to capture the human and social impacts of volunteering on individual young people.

Both surveys were designed and distributed using the Survey Monkey system.

Results:

Organisation Survey: 17 organisations responded to this survey.

1. Why do you involve volunteers?

Organisations had a wide range of responses to this question but there were several themes that were repeated.

- Volunteers can build their own confidence and skills while making a valuable contribution at the same time.
- Volunteers increase the capacity of the organisation to deliver services and support clients.
- Volunteers have traditionally run or organised the group and it would not exist without them.
- Involving volunteers increases the diversity of an organisation and brings it closer to its community.

2. How many volunteers in your organisation/school are under 25?

0-5	6-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51+
37.5%	18.8%	18.8%	12.5%	0%	0%	12.5%

The majority of respondents had 5 or less young volunteers and 75% of them had less than 20 volunteers.

3. What is the minimum age that you would involve a volunteer?

Most respondents had a minimum age of either 16 or 18. Five organisations had a minimum age lower than 16. One of these involves volunteers as young as 9 and another has no age limit.

4. What age is your youngest volunteer?

The youngest volunteer of all respondents was 9 years old. On average the youngest volunteer was 17.

5. What activities are young volunteers involved with in your organisation/school (e.g. organising events, speaking to clients, running activities)?

The results indicated that young volunteers are involved in a wide range of activities:

- Working with and caring for animals
- Behind the scenes and performance work for drama groups
- Supervising young people in a variety of different activities including coaching and residential camps
- Supporting an organisation as committee members or by providing admin support.
- Organising and running events and activities
- Supporting individuals to learn and take part in activities e.g. using computers, horse riding and social activities
- Fundraising through charity shops and a wide range of other activities
- Delivering talks and workshops with groups of people, often other young people or younger children
- Meeting and greeting clients, serving food and drinks, cleaning up after activities and events

In many cases volunteers are working with other young people or younger children, but young volunteers are working with a wide range of clients including people with disabilities, elderly people, animals and the general public.

6. MV is a nationally recognised award scheme that recognises the contribution that young volunteers make. It is free and young people receive awards for 50, 100 and 200 hours of volunteering. The age range is currently 16-25 but this may be extended to younger volunteers in the future. Would you be interested in recognising your young volunteers through the MV Award?

Yes, already registered for MV 37%

Yes, interested in receiving more information 50%

No Thanks 12%

The reasons given for not taking part were the amount of work involved and that a young volunteer was not regularly involved.

7. Registration with the Volunteer Centre can help you recruit more volunteers as well as providing information on current volunteering practice and legislation. Registration is free. Are you interested in registering with us?

Yes, already registered 88%

Yes, would like more information 12%

No, thanks 0%

8. What do your young volunteers think? The next stage of this research is to find out young volunteers' views about what they do. Would it be possible to distribute a survey or come and speak to some of your young volunteers?

Yes, we want to know what our young volunteers think 80%

No, Thanks 20%

Although 80% of respondents wanted to know what their volunteers think not all of these had young volunteers who completed the questionnaire.

Volunteer Survey: 22 young volunteers responded to this survey from 9 different organisations.

1. What organisation/group/school do you volunteer for? (If there is more than one please tell us all of them)

Although the number of respondents was relatively small, they came from a range of different organisations. Three of the young people volunteered for two different organisations.

2. What kind of things do you do? (E.g. organise events, speak to clients, supervise activities, pupil council, raise money for charity)

The respondents do a lot of different things within their individual roles. Again a lot of the work is done with their peers or people younger than themselves but young volunteers do work with other client groups and the general public. The main areas in which the young people were involved were:

- Organising, supervising and helping with activities. This can include training and residential stays.
- Offering support, training and mentoring to clients and new volunteers.
- Organise meetings, activities and events. This includes helping to set up the event on the day and helping to clean up afterwards.
- Recruiting members and other volunteers.
- Working in a charity shop and other fundraising activities.
- Administration and reception work.
- Taking part in committees that make decisions, represent others and/or assess funding applications.
- Speaking to groups to publicise the organisation or one of the services it provides.

3. What age are you?


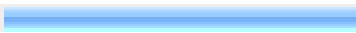
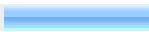

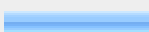
Under 14	14-15	16-17	18-20	21-25	Over25
4.6%	9.1%	22.7%	27.3%	36.4%	0%

The majority of respondents were 16 or over with 36.4% of them over the age of 20.

4. How old were you when you started volunteering:

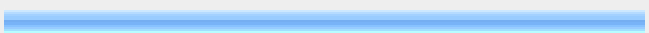

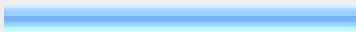
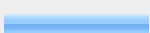

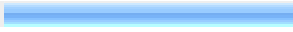
The youngest volunteer started when they were 10 years old. The Oldest started at 20 years old. 54.6% were under 16 and 81.8% were under 18

5. How much time do you spend volunteering in a week?

1-3 hours		54.6%
4-6 hours		22.7%
7-10 hours		9.1%
11-15 hours		4.6%
16 or more hours		0.0%
Not Every week? How often?		9.1%

For those who did not volunteer every week one was around 12 hours per month and the other was around 6 hours per week during a 10 week program.

6. How did you first start volunteering?

I was taking part in the group and then started helping out as a volunteer		40.9%
I Contacted the group through the Volunteer Centre		0.0%
I was doing an award scheme (e.g. Duke of Edinburgh or Youth Achievement Awards)		4.6%
I did it as part of a college/work placement and decided I wanted to stay		0.0%
I Got involved through a friend or family member		22.7%
I Saw a a leaflet or advert for the group and decided to volunteer for them		9.1%
Someone asked me to come and help out		4.6%
Other		18.2%

Of those who responded **other**, one was taking part in a group and became a volunteer, one heard through a youth organisation and the others were looking to volunteer or gain work experience.

7. Why do you volunteer?

The respondents had a wide range of answers to this but the three recurring reasons where:

- They enjoy it
- They want to help people
- It's rewarding because they feel like they are making a difference and it is fun.

Other reasons include, gaining work experience or an award, improving self confidence, the variety of activities and meeting new people.

8. Being a volunteer can benefit a person in many different ways. Below are some of the things volunteering can affect. How much do you feel volunteering has increased or decreased these things for you?

	Increased a lot	Increased	Still the Same	Decreased	Decreased a lot	Not Relevant
Confidence	45.5%	50.0%	4.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Self Esteem	36.4%	54.5%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Feeling Useful	36.4%	59.1%	4.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Communication	27.3%	59.1%	13.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Team work	36.4%	59.1%	4.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Job related skills	36.4%	63.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Health and fitness	4.5%	36.4%	54.5%	0.0%	0.0%	4.5%

The respondents indicated that volunteering had significantly improved all of the attributes mentioned. The exception was Health & Fitness where 36.4% indicated an increase. This smaller figure may be indicative of the type of volunteering being carried out. The increases in Confidence, Self Esteem, Feeling Useful, Communication, Team Work, & Job Related Skills are all positive in terms of the impact of volunteering on the volunteer themselves.

9. People also find that volunteering can improve their social life. How much do you think volunteering has increased or decreased these aspects of your social life?

	Increased a lot	Increased	Still the same	Decreased	Decreased a lot	Not relevant
Number of Friends	22.7%	59.1%	18.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Understanding of other people	13.6%	81.8%	4.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Number of places I can get information	22.7%	50.0%	27.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
My trust in other people	4.5%	68.2%	27.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Feeling included	13.6%	68.2%	18.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Feeling Safe	18.2%	27.3%	54.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Feeling part of the community	22.7%	50.0%	27.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Interest in doing more Volunteering	22.7%	54.5%	22.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Awareness of what's happening in the world	18.2%	36.4%	45.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Feeling like I have a say	22.7%	54.5%	18.2%	0.0%	0.0%	4.5%

Again, the majority of volunteers felt they had increased their social life and related attributes. The most significant increase rating was on Understanding of Other People and only Feeling Safe and Awareness of What's Happening in the World had mainly stayed the same.

10. Any young person who volunteers (aged 16-25) is entitled to a free nationally recognised award for their volunteering. There are awards for 50, 100 and 200 hours of volunteering. Have you heard of MV Awards before?

Yes 54.6%
 No 36.4%
 Not Sure 9.1%

11. Would you be interested in receiving MV Awards for your volunteering?

Already registered for MV 36.4%
 Yes I would like more information 54.6%
 No thanks 9.1%

90% of the young people were interested in receiving MV or were registered already.

12. What would make your experience of volunteering better?

Many of the volunteers were happy with their volunteering. There were however some ideas for improvement.

- More recognition, appreciation and respect for young volunteers. This is both from within the organisations as well as externally.
- More flexible opportunities.
- More opportunities to volunteer and a clear way of finding out about them.
- Easy way to record volunteering with different organisations for MV.
- Clients assume that the volunteer knows everything. Having access to more information to help the client would help.
- More resources for the volunteering program.

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this survey seem to support the findings from previous research.

- More than half of the volunteers surveyed volunteer for less than 3 hours per week of the others many volunteered for less than 6 hours and some were involved in seasonal and short term volunteering.
- Both surveys show a wide range of different activities that Dundee's young volunteers are involved in. They are often working with their peer group or younger children but they also work with a wide range of clients and the general public.
- The majority of respondents got in to volunteering through a group they were taking part in or through a friend or family member. Both of these are examples of word of mouth. None of the young people surveyed came through the Volunteer Centre, but we already know that most volunteers do not come through Volunteer Centres.
- The young people in this survey clearly show some of the personal and social benefits they receive from volunteering. Almost all of the young people have noticed an improvement in their feelings of usefulness, confidence, self esteem and team working as well as an increased understanding of other people. All of the young people felt that volunteering improved their Employability (job based skills).
- A lot of the young people said they volunteer to help other people. Most of these also went on to say this was because they enjoyed helping people and it made them feel good. The other reasons for volunteering that were mentioned concentrated on the personal benefits of volunteering.

- When asked what would make their volunteering better several volunteers said they wanted more recognition and appreciation for the volunteering they do. Over 90% of respondents were either registered for MV Awards or interested in receiving them.
- The majority of organisations surveyed had a minimum age of 16 or 18 there were however a few that involved young people under 16. Our experience tells us that young people that are already involved with a group can be a volunteer from a young age, but it is difficult for someone under 16 to go straight in as a volunteer. The number of respondents who were under 16 when they started volunteering and the number who started volunteering through a group they were involved with seems to support this.

Overall it can be said that young volunteers in Dundee are involved in a lot of different activities throughout the city. They can see the difference that their work makes and they see the positive impact that volunteering has on them.

Future Development:

This was a small, short term piece of work and we know this was just a glimpse of youth volunteering in Dundee. The next step would be a longer term and more in depth study into youth volunteering in Dundee to find out more about where young people volunteer and then speak to them directly.