



# What SA Kids Have Told Us About Volunteering

Commissioner for  
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There are many children and young people who want to volunteer, but just don't know how, or who to ask. Their main motivation to volunteer is to help others, especially to help others who are more vulnerable. Helping others, doing something positive and being an active member in their community rates in the top ten things children want to do.

“ *Seeing what positive results your work brings, a sense of purpose, learning skills that help you give back better and meeting like-minded people.*”

Young people also see volunteering as a way to develop life skills that prepare them for adulthood and make them 'work ready'. They want to be equipped with skills they need to become active and informed citizens.

However, there are challenges that make it difficult for young people to start or to continue volunteering. This is what children and young people have said would make it easier for them to volunteer.

## Designing accessible information that is child and young people friendly

Many children and young people find it hard to access information about available and suitable volunteering opportunities, let alone how to feel confident and informed enough to get involved.

“ *I am someone who would love to volunteer and try to make a difference except I don't have the courage or knowledge to*

“ *they [young people] don't know where to go or what to do*”

Children and young people want to know 'where to go' and 'what to do'. They talk about having a place they can visit – either offline or online – to learn about volunteering options and opportunities relevant to them.

“ *Have a government website with collated info about places to volunteer, maybe with filters like location, interests of the volunteer and skills of the volunteer*”

It is important that this information is targeted, relevant, easy to find and easy to understand. Young people have highlighted the usefulness of being able to filter information to find options that are relevant and suitable for them and their interests rather than information that is too general and vague.



## Highlighting the benefits of volunteering

Efforts to promote volunteering to children and young people should highlight the multiple short-term and long-term, personal and community benefits of volunteering.

Designing volunteering programs with children and young people to match their interests and needs

Organisations should seek to engage and empower children and young people as key stakeholders. This will lead to a better understanding of young people's motivations and experiences of volunteering and help them develop programs that suit children and young people's needs, as well as the organisations.

*'Design volunteering programs in a way that suits the needs of volunteers rather than just the needs of the organisation.'*

Children and young people want opportunities to be creative, to lead and to 'have fun'. But also want to know that organisations will provide them with support. This can include from other young people, young leaders and role models.

“ *Show them the benefits of it - what they can get out of it and what those they help get out of it*”

Any promotion should also emphasise the link between individual interests and volunteering opportunities, as well as where volunteering opportunities might lead, including the link to paid employment.

“ *Other benefits like positive job references and training opportunities also help.*”

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## Cost of volunteering

For many children and young people, the financial cost of volunteering and the prospect of a loss of income is a barrier to participation. Issues with transport, including access to and the cost of getting to and from volunteering opportunities, are also significant.

“ ‘Wanting to work to save for a car or to move out’

These issues highlight the need for flexibility and clarity around time commitments and role expectations, meaning and boundaries. If the barriers of cost and access in relation to time, money and transport are not understood and adequately addressed, these challenges can fuel misconceptions and age-based discrimination, which further impact the participation and wellbeing of children and young people.

## Recognising skills

Children and young people are often defined by their age rather than their diverse identities: their interests and roles as leaders, creatives and makers, athletes and coaches, friends, family members and/or carers.

“ ‘a lot of places or people only accept people who are 18 or older, and it needs to have time to mix in with school life and not be too much.’

Age restrictions, a lack of experience and stigma about being ‘too young’ lead some young people to fear that some volunteer-involving organisations would not welcome them or that their efforts would be rejected or unappreciated.

“ ‘Age restrictions, legalities, people just generally not trusting in our abilities’

## Valuing young people

Some young people describe volunteering as something that is not only done without any form of payment but is also done ‘without any form of acknowledgement’. Not receiving financial compensation is one thing, but not receiving recognition is another. The success of efforts to promote or sustain volunteering will be inadequate without real actions that support young volunteers to feel valued.

“ ‘Place more value on the role of volunteers. Acknowledge volunteer work within activist circles’

Programs should acknowledge and celebrate the positive contributions of volunteers. Valuing the contributions of the young people who already spend a significant amount of time volunteering will not only sustain their engagement but will also make volunteering more appealing to those not yet involved.

## Barriers for young people

The barriers to volunteering impact different groups of young people in different and unequal ways. I have heard from children and young people living with a disability, those living in regional SA, from migrant and refugee backgrounds, and those who are not engaged in education or employment. They highlight that the barriers are even greater for these groups of children.

“ ‘Coming from regional SA, we don’t have very much exposure to bigger, better opportunities and we have to travel at least 7 hours to get to the next major city which costs a lot of money so I think we should have more government help to fund learning opportunities etc, or just in general.’

“ ‘There needs to be parent information sessions in schools to explain the value of volunteering for getting jobs. Newly arrived parents don’t always understand this and ask why you are working without getting paid.’

Many young people have emphasised the need for schools to provide information about volunteering as currently it is not happening in a consistent or widespread manner.

“ ‘have it as a lesson at schools where u can learn about it, do the volunteering courses even, and the teacher can help get us into places to volunteer.’

For children who are disengaged with schools the information should come through other organisations that work with children and young people.