

Volunteer Centre Manchester

Student Volunteering Research Tool Kit



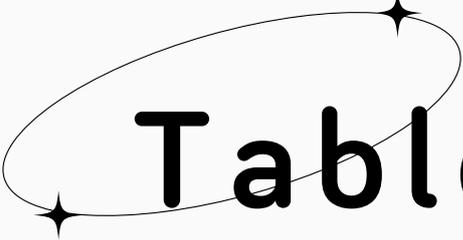
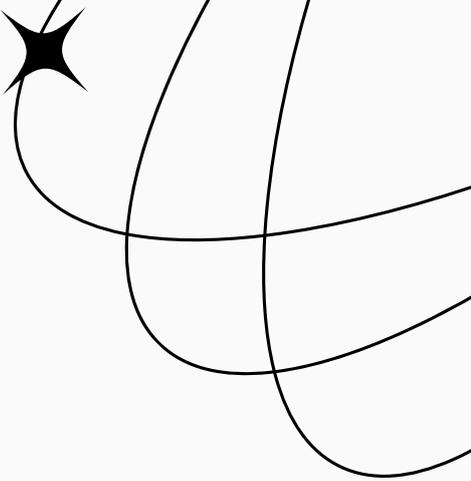


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Research Overview

Rationale

Student volunteering (18+) has been a topic of conversation with a lot of diverse views and experiences. Amongst conversations both prior to Anushka's work at Macc and working in the Volunteer Centre Manchester, there seemed to be a strong appetite about student volunteering but a lot of clouded information

Objectives

1. What are students' and organisations' experiences with student volunteering, if any?
2. What are the challenges and barriers to student volunteering?
3. What is missing in support, resources and opportunities for students and organisations?

Methodology

1. Mixed methods of both qualitative and quantitative primary research
 - 1a. Survey- closed question, multiple choice (quantitative)
 - 1b. Focus Groups- open questions, semi-structured (qualitative)
 - 1c. Interviews- open questions, semi-structured (qualitative)
2. Secondary research conducted by desktop research

Key Qualitative Findings

Some organisations adopted a mindset of, "what's the point" when recruiting students and "do not want to put money in training [students]" due to their transience, this is likely due to the lack of funding within the VCSE sector.

student population becomes an "untapped resource"

Organisations found they had a lack of communication with the local universities in GM, making engaging with universities difficult and expressing that they "do not need student volunteers, please make it easy for us".

apathy is closely connected with students not feeling "empowered", and unaware of "what they can offer" to organisations and GM local communities.

volunteering that "meets [the] students where they are", reduces the time commitment to finding opportunities.

Although the survey found that 94% of students would recommend volunteering to fellow students, nearly half of the students (47%) felt more supported by the organisation through academic commitments than their university (38%) and more than a 1/4 (27%) of students did not feel supported by their university

Organisations would like volunteers to "want to be there" rather than "needing to be there".

"students are not taken seriously"

88% of the organisations participating had recruited student volunteers and 66% of the organisations found this a positive and valuable experience for their organisation

Key Qualitative Findings

Being a student "by nature is a very transient thing", this reputation they feel has been driven by the view that students are "not here to contribute anything to the city and are here to get what they can and leave", resulting in students to "feel out of place".

students feeling "disconnected from the city of Manchester" and feeling a level of "detachment" and "isolation" due to multiple academic deadlines and "lack of money" students have.

Throughout the UK, but specifically the student population, 65% of students are cutting back on food and essentials due to the cost of living crisis (Swain, 2023).

Positively, only 5% of students in the survey expressed that they had a lack of specific interest in volunteering

A charity shared that they were asked to pay £1200 to the university to attend one of the 'Fresher Fairs' to engage with students in volunteering. Not only is this placing a substantial financial barrier but is damaging relationships the universities could obtain with the VCSE sector.

"more successful on an ad hoc" basis or through "short-term roles"

Key Quantitative Findings

Why don't you volunteer?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 35

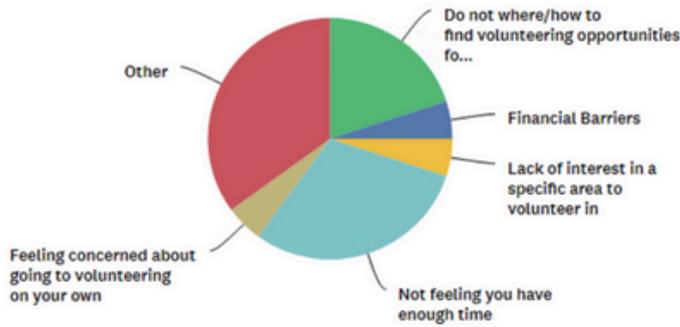
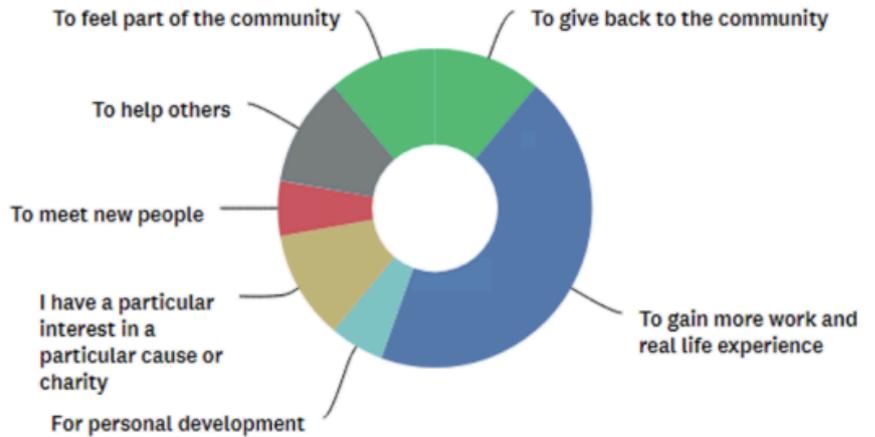


Figure 2: A pie chart displaying survey data: why students do not volunteer

Why did you decide to volunteer while you are/were studying?

Answered: 18 Skipped: 37



If yes, why do you engage with student volunteering?

Answered: 15 Skipped: 40

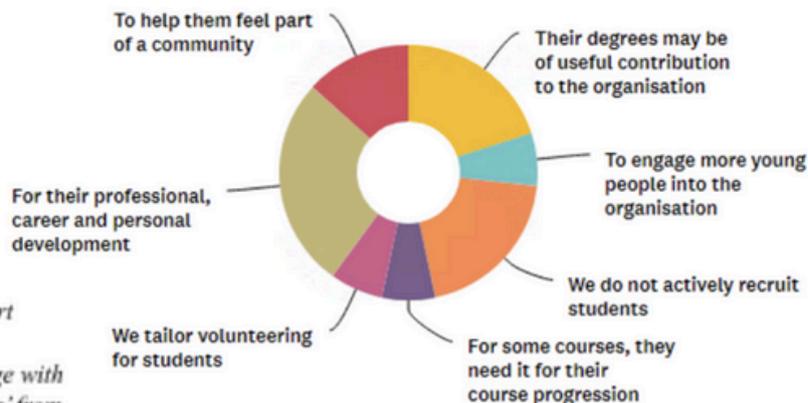


Figure 4: A pie chart displaying 'Why organisations engage with student volunteering' from survey data

Key Quantitative Findings

What are the limitations of recruiting student volunteers?

Answered: 15 Skipped: 40

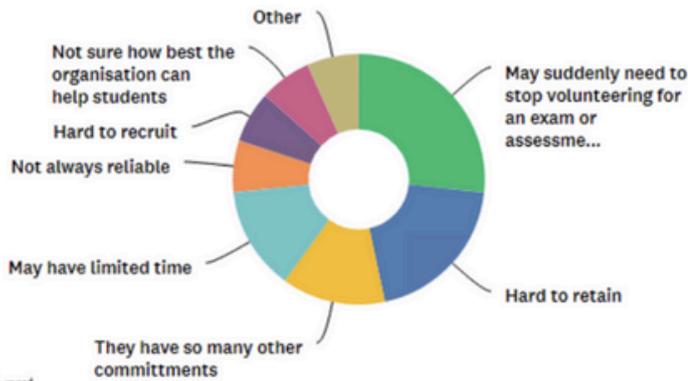


Figure 5: A pie chart displaying 'the limitations of recruiting student volunteering' from survey data

What would help your organisation recruit student volunteers?

Answered: 15 Skipped: 40

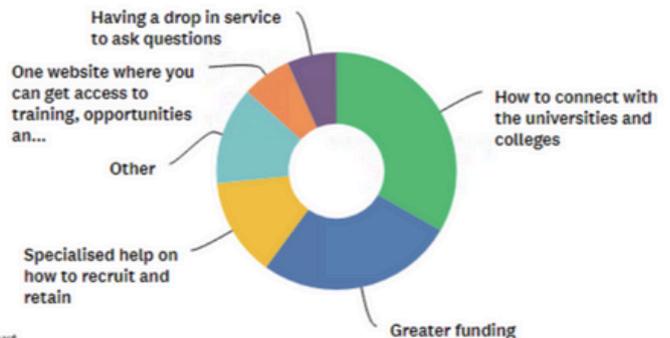


Figure 6: A pie chart displaying 'What would help organisations to recruit student volunteers' from survey data

What infrastructure/initatives would help your university/college to develop student volunteering in Greater Manchester?

Answered: 5 Skipped: 50

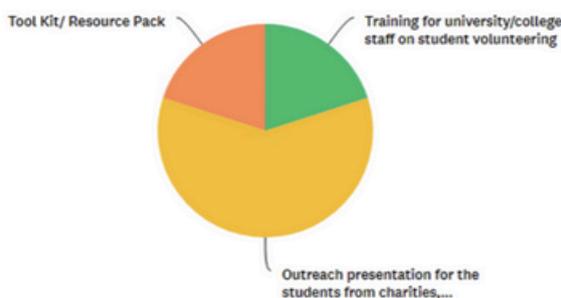


Figure 7: A pie chart displaying 'What Initiatives would help universities/colleges to develop student volunteering in GM' from survey data

Barriers students face to volunteer

Apathy

Difficulty in Finding Opportunities

Lack of Time

Benefits of Volunteering (Students)

Develop your skills

Personal and Professional development

Growing your Knowledge

Investing in your passion

Give back to your community

Sharing Lived Experience

Put your academic learning into practice

part of positive social change

Benefits of Volunteering (Organisations)

Utilise specialist degree skills

Fresh and Unique Insight and Perspective

Growing your Knowledge

Investing in a student's dream and passion

Supporting the student community

Learning from Lived Experience

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



Manchester Community Central

- **Create a Student Volunteering Microsite:** on our Volunteer Centre website, this would take a similar approach to our [Trusteeship and Governance microsite](#). This would be coupled with a tick box stating, 'Is this volunteer opportunity suitable for students' to ensure organisations think about their volunteer opportunities whilst streamlining a place to see student volunteer opportunities. This microsite would also include links to all the universities and colleges' volunteering hubs, contacts for volunteering teams and other volunteer centres in GM.
- **Embed Student Volunteering within Macc's Training:** this could include having a section within our Recruit and Retain training that specifically discusses recruiting differing volunteering populations. This would include how to diversify volunteering opportunities and support organisations through flexibility.
- **Student Volunteering Tool Kit:** this tool kit would include information about timetables and typical times that students may have exam seasons, key findings from this research and links to all volunteering platforms and all the universities and colleges in GM. This would be a resource to share with organisations simplifying their engagement with student volunteering.
- **Launch a VCSE Collaborative Student Volunteering Project:** This would be in collaboration with multiple other local infrastructure organisations to share case studies and contacts with their local universities to allow for student volunteering to be inclusive all over GM not just in the one borough of Manchester. This can be kickstarted with an event presenting this research to organisations and local infrastructure to develop this conversation widely in the VCSE sector.
- **Discuss these findings with Universities and Colleges' Volunteering Teams:** the aim of this recommendation would be to bridge the gap in communication between the VCSE sector and the universities in GM by discussing barriers and solutions. This could result in Macc going to universities and colleges to deliver presentations about our volunteering service.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



VCSE Organisations

- **Diversify Volunteer Opportunities:** this would include having short-term volunteer opportunities within term time as well as weekly long-term volunteer opportunities. This would demonstrate to the student population and to all volunteers that there is a variety of roles that the organisation can offer them.
- **Flexibility:** Specifically student lifestyles, as with all volunteers, can be extremely busy and overwhelming; it is imperative that organisations understand this when they recruit a student volunteer.
- **Recognition and Appreciation:** this is an important element for all volunteer retention and recruitment however, it is critical for students to feel part of the organisation's team and community. This could manifest as food vouchers, lunch provided or even a volunteer team photo.



Universities

- **Volunteering Education:** To address students feeling disempowered and apathetic towards student volunteering, students wanted to hear from other students who volunteer about the benefits to allow students to relate to them. This could also be delivered by organisations, volunteer centres and university and SU volunteering teams within contact hours across GM. This will likely be able to promote skills-based volunteering.
- **Volunteer Grant:** to enable volunteering for all students, and to reduce the financial barriers of volunteering, students suggested a volunteer grant that could include food vouchers, and travel expenses directly to the students if they are struggling to decide between paid work and volunteering. In addition, students suggested this could also be offered to smaller charities to help charities with recruiting regular student volunteers.
- **Revise Volunteer Hubs:** Students suggested having skills-based opportunities that could be linked to degrees, time commitment and location. This would have to be filled out by the organisation's recruiting but would allow for a quicker and more accessible experience for the student.

HOW TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN STUDENTS

RECRUIT

Social Media

Volunteer Hubs

Short Term/Ad Hoc

RETAIN

Flexibility

Food/ Socials

Development
Opportunity

CHECKLIST

- ✓ Flexible Opportunities
- ✓ One-one support
- ✓ Understanding student timetables
- ✓ Meet the students where they are i.e Oxford Road, Fallowfield
- ✓ Career & self Development Opportunities

STUDENT VOLUNTEER ADVERT FRAMEWORK

Who we are:

What are your core values?

What is your mission as an organisation?

Where are you based?

What are you looking for:

What qualities or skills are you looking for?

Is there a specific degree you are looking for in a student?

What would you be doing as a volunteer?

What is their role?

Will they be working in a team?

What is the time commitment?

Volunteer Recruitment Top Tips



Flexibility

Make sure you let the students know how flexible you can be, in advance of potential difficulties students may face during exam or deadline period.

Benefits

In the recruitment phase, be sure to let the students know how beneficial they are to the organisation and what amazing skills and experiences they can gain from the volunteering. Foster that two-way relationship

Support

Open and consistent dialogue about what the student wants to gain and give whilst reminding them it is ok to skip a week or two if capacity gets tighter due to the stresses of exam periods.

Success Story: Action Tutoring

Action Tutoring partners with schools to provide cost-effective, evidence-based tutoring that supports pupils facing disadvantage to unlock their full potential. Their volunteers are trained to deliver targeted support, helping schools meet their academic goals.

Recruitment

- **Placements offered** to education students or students studying teaching, flexible at 1 hour or more per week.
- A **broad range of degrees** is drawn on when recruiting.
- Encourage **student volunteers to host stalls** at fairs, particularly volunteering fairs, at their university. This encourages other students to sign up and can count towards logged volunteering hours.
- Ask **students to flyer or poster drop**. Take materials to frequented places such as a cafe; gym; bookshop; student union etc.
- **Student Volunteering Week** activities are useful. Hold webinars about Placements or talk in lectures. Use pictures or videos of individual student volunteers as case studies for social media.

400-700
students
recruited per
year

1/3 of all
volunteers were
undergrads in the
last two years

A note on Placements:

Placement students are much more likely to be engaged and involved because it will be on their degree certificate. The success of the placement depends on good quality communication, personalised placements, centring what they want, and what can you offer each other. There is a real positive impact from having undergraduates

Onboarding

1. Nationally there are 50–60 universities and Volunteer Centres involved, who all play a part in getting back to applications.
2. An automated notification gets sent to the engagement team who go on to place the students.
3. Then, a ready-made email template gets sent to the placement student volunteer, congratulating them and explaining we are excited to have them onboard. This is the time to make them feel *valued*.
4. There is an immediate check-in with student volunteers to discuss opportunities and next steps. We will ask about deadlines they face and timings they can commit to, especially if it is a placement role.
5. The programme coordinator they are matched with will hold a tutor briefing, providing a pre-programme pack, giving volunteers resources, tips and tricks and time to plan.
6. New volunteers are invited for in-person safeguarding tutor training for 1hr 30 mins. Options for various dates and times to allow for flexibility (sometimes even 2–3 times the week in busy periods), then there is further short training to do in their own time.
7. Training is also available by request – such as 360 learning, tutoring dyslexic children or supporting autistic children.
8. There are regular catch-ups with the volunteers, and help is always proactively offered.
9. The key is meeting student volunteers at their availability. However, if they have booked and not turned up 3 times, communication is stopped.

Top Tip!



Before onboarding new student volunteers, ask previous ones for one thing they enjoyed and something to watch out for.

Old student volunteers could speak directly to new, opening up a discussion.

Support

- When a new student volunteer joins us we send them a welcome email encouraging them to book a call.
- In that call, we try to find out as much as we can about what they want from volunteering, or the conditions of their Placement.
- They are encouraged to keep in touch: with a link to a coordinator's Calendly to book a call anytime, plus their email address and mobile number.
- If they won't meet their placement hours by the deadline, volunteers get advice on what to do (contact their tutor/ uni) and help with phrasing an email. Sometimes coordinators write emails themselves to back them up.

KEY POINTS to engage student volunteers:



Students do not read emails! Send text messages for updates



Social media is a great tool – use it!



Ask students what *they would need* to get involved



Use Volunteer Centres and fairs to make yourself known



Make good connections in volunteering departments of universities and student unions



Remember – you do not always have to reinvent the wheel, there are plenty of unused tools out there to engage students!

Success Story: Pankhurst Trust

Pankhurst Trust incorporating Manchester Women's Aid is a leading provider of domestic abuse services in Greater Manchester and the custodian of 62 Nelson Street, the historic birthplace of the suffragette movement.

Top Tips

- We don't see students as different to other volunteers.
- We get to know the individual their interests and skills, what skills they'd like to develop, sharing available opportunities.
- Give choice and signposting when roles unsuitable
- Create a team and sense of belonging by organising- 4 thank you socials per year.
- We're flexible, open test and learn approach connecting with lots of organisations: University of Manchester, Pinc College, MMU, Edge Hill etc
- Connecting volunteer team members to gain employment/ professional advice.

18% of
Manchester
residents are
aged 16-25!



'Volunteering means having the lovely opportunity to give back to women in our community and provide support to those that need it.'



Contact List of Volunteering Teams in Manchester Universities

University of Manchester

Email: volunteers@manchester.ac.uk

Phone: 0161 275 2851



Manchester Metropolitan University

Email: volunteering@mmu.ac.uk



University of Salford

Email: ussu-volunteering@salford.ac.uk



University of Bolton

Email: info@boltonsu.com

Website:

<https://www.boltonsu.com/volunteering>



How Macc Can Support You?

Website where you can recruit volunteers

Weekly Drop-Ins to offer volunteering support

Spaces to meet other volunteer co-ordinators

Trainings in volunteering good practice

Meetings with the team to discuss your needs

contact us!



★★ **Student Volunteering** ★★
Microsite

**COMING
SOON**

Macc Contacts

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