



FUTURE PROOF
PARKS



Including young people

AN INTRODUCTION



Including Young People in Your Organisation: A How-To Guide



About Future Proof Parks

Future Proof Parks is a programme run in a partnership between **Groundwork**, **Fields in Trust** and **National Youth Agency**. This National Lottery Heritage Funded programme – part of the £10m 'Kick the Dust' initiative – aims to get more young people interested and involved in preserving their local park and greenspace heritage.

As a result of the programme young people across the UK will learn more about their local historic park heritage and be encouraged to join their local 'friends of' park groups and volunteer to preserve the local spaces that matter to the communities they live in.

The project is also working with 'friends of' park groups to give them the tools, encouragement, and support to get more local young people involved in their work and to see the benefits of cross-generational working.

Including Young People in Your Organisation: How-To Guide

Unlocking Inclusion

Inclusivity refers to the extent to which an organisation comprises and welcomes a broad range of backgrounds and interests, which should, ideally, be representative of the community it serves, and embedded in the design of its services.

Including new people in your organisation can bring new experiences and approaches to running your organisation. Utilising the skills and enthusiasm of young people can lead to all kinds of community benefits, such as gaining access to more members through their social networks and new skills and knowledge.

We are all passionate about making the environment more representative and accessible. Our experience tells us that this starts with identifying issues people are interested in and then identifying mutual interests, over time. Gaining skills for employment, managing health issues or addressing community cohesion may be higher on the agenda for some more than others, but these can all be linked to local environments and community spaces.

Start by getting to know the interests of young people and assess how these match with your organisation, to determine the actions you need to take and support you may need to provide to engage young people. As you discover more about how young people want to have a positive impact in their communities, you can start to develop roles in your organisation to suit young people.

This guide provides insight, tips and tools you can use to: Understand what young people are concerned about today; Develop and plan your approach to inclusion of young people; Consult with young people and develop an offer for them within your organisation.

More information about the Future Proof Parks programme and further downloadable resources are available online www.fieldsintrust.org/future-proof-parks

What are young people concerned about today?

Young people are more socially engaged with activism and volunteering than ever before and recognise the double benefit this has for themselves and society.ⁱ Having a job they love is most important to young people (who will be coming of age in the next decade) - this generation sees itself as hard-working and creative.ⁱⁱ

Of course, this generation comprises people of diverse backgrounds and motivations will vary – young people will volunteer if it helps them to gain skills for employability, if their friends are doing it, and if it will directly benefit people their age.ⁱⁱⁱ There are also barriers to volunteering we have identified with young people: self-esteem; mental health issues; fragmented timetables; lack of money and control over resources; lack of personal incentives; mobility (lack of it or living in multiple locations); negative perception of youth culture.

It is important to bear in mind both motivations and potential barriers when developing a volunteering offer for young people and your approach to inclusion.

In terms of specific issues, improving the NHS and making Britain's economy work after Brexit have been identified as important for all generations.^{iv} There are some differences in opinion to be aware of:

- The younger generation is hungry for equality and tackling prejudice around LGBTQ+, gender and race.
- Young people are more open to freedom of movement. This may be significant in terms of inclusivity towards different groups in the community.
- Young people are aware of the challenges they face but are more optimistic about the future than older generations think they should be.
- Older generations thought social media and having a phone was most important to the younger generation, when actually 44% of young people said their family and education was more important to them.
- Contrary to common perception, young people spend most of their time out in their neighbourhood, in the networks of green and open spaces that serve as hangouts, meeting places and kickabout areas.
- Young people have strong views on green spaces and their neighbourhoods. 81% of 15–16-year-olds in the UK are dissatisfied with the quality of outdoor play activities - higher than any other European country.^v

Each generation brings its own perspective, skills, and learning that can benefit the community, if properly harnessed. Young people have told us they can offer flexible time, lateral thinking as well as optimism, up to date subject knowledge and digital skills. Community groups can offer knowledge of local decision-making structures, specialised skills, mentoring and a connection to the community.

We can take these snapshots of research and experiences of young people to deepen your understanding of what this might mean to your local young people. First, use this knowledge to reflect upon the needs of your organisation and skills you have to offer young people.

What we need	What we can offer
Example: Help with social media online presence	Example: A work-experience & CV opportunity combined with supportive mentoring.

Including Young People Step-by-Step:

1. Assess your organisations current approach to inclusivity and youth participation (see *Organisational Self-Assessment* exercise below)
2. Decide how far you intend to develop your engagement with young people - transparent and genuine efforts tend to work best.
3. Communicate your plan and your commitment to inclusivity and young people, internally and externally.
4. Gain access to young people via other youth-facing organisations – more productive, less time consuming. See our document '*Working with Youth-Facing Organisations*' for details.
5. Implement a well-prepared consultation with young people and/or work with a partner who can facilitate for you (see suggested session plan below).
6. Develop various, flexible roles for young people and one-off activities based on your learning so far.
7. Work with other youth-facing organisations and through your own communications channels to recruit and engage young people for the project you have in mind. See our '*Recruiting and Engaging Young Volunteers*' for details.
8. Keep working with partners and developing your skills as your go, improving and sustaining your engagement with young volunteers. See our '*Empowering Young Volunteers*' for details.



Organisational Self-Assessment

This self-assessment tool for inclusivity will help you address both organisational and practical elements to engaging young people.

Essential Practise to Discuss	Tick if Done	What is the evidence for this?
<p>What has your organisation done to encourage inclusion in the past? What worked? What wasn't very successful?</p>		
<p>Principles of community development are central to the organisation, which should and will be extended to young people.</p> <p>See for example principles from the Federation of Community Development Learning or Step Up to Serve <u>six quality principles</u> to encouraging youth social action.</p>		
<p>Capacity and expertise are mapped for building the participation of young people. Are there skills amongst staff/volunteers covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer Management • Training and development • Social media • Local decision-making structures • Event organisation • Fundraising 		
<p>There is someone currently dedicated to, or capable of, leading on inclusivity for the organisation, including for example, new members, volunteers, and young people.</p>		
<p>Key leaders in the organisation are willing to act as champions for the active involvement of young people.</p>		
<p>Links with relevant partner organisations are established to ensure the inclusion of young people.</p>		
<p>Policies are in place to make sure young people's participation is safe, sound and effective, covering consent, safety, complaints, and safeguarding.</p>		
<p>The organisations' commitments to young people are made visible and accessible to members, young people and their careers, for example, via a mission statement.</p>		
<p>There is capacity building for all members of the organisation to gain skills for the safe, sound and effective participation of young people i.e., safeguarding.</p>		

Practical Considerations	Tick if Done	What is the evidence for this?
Current organisational structures include are reflective of the wider community, for example across ages, genders and ethnicities.		
Current meeting structures offer an equal opportunity for all members to contribute i.e., taking into account the ability of different members, for example, those with disabilities or with English as a second language.		
Meeting times take into account the timetables and responsibilities of young people.		
Meetings are held in a suitable location, within walking distance, good public transport links, or drop-off/pick-up facilities; family-friendly; clear, welcoming signage; personal greeter.		
Meetings and facilities meet disability access requirements and cater to complex individual requirements e.g., having unisex toilets.		
A range of communications channels used by the organisation appropriate to different audiences e.g., newsletters; secure email lists; social media channels.		
<p>Reflection - Given your assessment so far, and considering the steps that need to be taken next, where does your organisation see itself in the next 12 months in terms of engaging young people?</p> <p>Overall, is there enough willing, capacity, and resource to go ahead with engaging young people?</p>		

Advanced Planning – as you start to engage with young people, discuss if and how you will implement the following actions to build upon your initial assessment.

Action	Tick if Done	Who is responsible? When will it be implemented?
A plan for the engagement and participation of young people has been developed, with clearly identified individual responsibilities and aims.		
Young people are consulted on and help review structures and plans for their active involvement, on their own terms and in ways they feel comfortable with.		
A range of approaches are in place, both formal and non-formal, that encourage and enable the participation of young people in the organisation, for example: one-off volunteering opportunities; regular volunteering; voluntary work placements; mentoring.		
There is capacity building for young people to develop skills and knowledge to make change happen, including training in leadership, communications and finance.		
Young people take part in reviewing and agreeing the shared values, strategies and policies for the active involvement of children and young people.		
Systems are in place for recording, reporting and rewarding young people's active involvement, for example, one-to-one reviews, attendance registers, and recognition / celebration events.		
Young people are joint partners in relevant projects, are represented effectively at various levels in the organisation, and progress into paid or senior positions.		
The organisation adopts shared values and methods for the active involvement of children and young people. See for example, Hear by Right Shared Values or Step Up To Serve six quality principles of quality youth social action.		
Shared values are agreed with partner organisations and other community groups and strategies to engage young people develop links between local and regional or national initiatives for young people.		

Consultation

Consult with young people on what your organisation has to offer them, to check you are on the right track and to gauge initial interest from young people in the area. It is best to use organisations who already work with young people to access some participants. Consultation can be pitched as one-off activity that will have significant impact in shaping projects and initiatives for young people.

The direct benefit for participants will be that they can meet like-minded people; they can gain confidence in sharing their opinions in groups; they can shape a service for themselves and other young people; they have the opportunity to get involved in project before others. To reach young people who may harder to engage, you may wish to integrate practical skills into the session before consultation takes place and consider whether you will provide refreshments and cover expenses for participants.

Do not be discouraged if consultation does not go to plan – building trust with young people takes time, so you can always try the session again and they will respect you for your patience and persistence.

Remember, many young people feel comfortable agreeing with their peers, and natural leaders will come forward. If someone is dominating the discussion, be sure to praise their contribution but retain control over the session and bring other voices into the discussion. If you are working through a youth-facing organisation they will already know the young people well, so do ask for their help in managing people.

Even a consultation needs planning and rehearsal to ensure it goes smoothly - see the Consultation Session Plan on the next page for a basic structure to a session.

Case Study – Sam’s Story



I’ve really enjoyed being a part of the project. Working on a natural heritage project has given me the opportunity to learn new skills, such as identifying butterflies, using hand tools and planting trees.

I have been doing conservation work and taking part in wildlife surveys. Working alongside the Friends Group I feel more confident about meeting new people. I have really enjoyed the volunteering and being outdoors, which I love.

I feel so much more connected to be my local park and now understand how it is managed both for wildlife and people.

I’m now at college, but I have arranged to continue volunteering, on placement as part of my course. I have become a member of the Friends group and involved with arranging events for next – I can’t wait!

Consultation Session Plan

Timing	Activity	Learning Outcomes
5 min	Introduction to your organisation and aims of the session – demonstrate what services you have/already provide for young people and be open about how you want to improve your approach and engage more young people.	Participants learn about the organisation, your impact and your commitment to young people.
10 min	Icebreakers – there are plenty out there to encourage communication and teamwork. Example: Talent charades Go round in a circle and ask participants to mine out one of their talents and for others to guess.	Participants get to know each other and the facilitators.
15 min	An activity that gathers opinion and builds skills of the group around certain topic. Pick a topic or problem that your organisation would like to solve – it might not be the most pressing but fun for young people to engage with. Example: Future Proof Parks. Ask groups to map out the services they know of and would like to see in their local area in the future, focussing on the park and, if time allows, linking up between parks and surrounding areas. Be imaginary as possible! Difficulty: ask groups to label the facilities and services they drawn with a cost to buy or run (even if it's a guess).	Participants build team working skills, get to know each other, express themselves creatively. Participants get to know more about the organisation and start contributing to improving and critiquing an existing service. Participants get to learn more about the activities the organisation does and how it might help them with new skills. Participants share their vision and learn about how much (roughly) different service cost – you'll need to research possible cost beforehand.
15 min	Provide further details on what the organisation is trying to achieve in involving young people and provide the suggested structures and adverts, for groups to work on / write their critique on. Depending on ability, perhaps read out the offer in parts, and ask for instant feedback or ask participants to develop an advert from scratch.	Participants discuss their opinions in pairs and gain confidence in feeding back to the group.
10 min	Thank participants for their time in feeding back on the things they want to change and what your organisation proposing. Outline that you will be developing their ideas into projects and launching the volunteering opportunities. Ask whether they would be interested in you returning for another session with them?	Contribution of participants if recognised, any rewards are distributed or further link established,

References

Demos, Service Nation 2020 (2015)

BBC Newsbeat, Generation Z Ipsos Mori Poll (2017)

Groundwork UK, Neighbourhood Field Work, YouGov Survey (2016)

Heritage Lottery Fund, Public Opinions Survey Ipsos Mori Poll (2014)

Notes

ⁱ The National Youth Social Action Survey - Executive Summary (2017)

ⁱⁱ BBC Newsbeat, Generation Z Ipsos Mori Poll (2017)

ⁱⁱⁱ Groundwork UK, Neighbourhood Field Work, YouGov Survey (2016)

^{iv} BBC Newsbeat, Generation Z Ipsos Mori Poll (2017)

^v Heritage Lottery Fund, Public Opinions Survey Ipsos Mori Poll (2014)

FUTURE PROOF PARKS



Engaging young people through
volunteering to preserve and celebrate
their local heritage parks and green spaces

OTHER RESOURCES IN THIS SERIES

[Working with young people](#)
[Working with local youth-facing organisations](#)
[Recruiting young volunteers](#)
[Empowering young volunteers](#)
[Safeguarding young people](#)
[Crowdfunding Toolkit](#)

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