BUCKS STUDENTS' UNION

Making life better for students at Bucks

VOLUNTEERING HANDBOOK

December 2026

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WELCOME

Here at Bucks, we pride ourselves in broadening participation levels both in and around the community. We offer a range of opportunities to our members and even allow them to take the lead on some.

Our Union is passionate about volunteering our time towards our community, a passion that you can share with us while gaining some invaluable experience.

"Volunteering is an amazing experience that I have been a part of since I started studying here at BNU. The experience of volunteering has taught me so many different skills that are very valuable and transferable to my future careers.

Due to me volunteering I have grown in confidence in speaking to new people and have made friends with new people while volunteering, Bucks Students Union has a large range of volunteering opportunities that students can get involved in from one can trust, spooktacular, beach cleans, litter picks, Smile campaign and many other opportunities, both big and small opportunities to get involved with the community and within the SU.

By getting involved in volunteering I was able to find my calling and find the volunteering opportunities I enjoy the most."

Lauren Milne
Volunteer of the year 2024–25

"When people look at my schedule, they often ask, How do you manage to balance it all and still find the time to do all you do?

The truth is, they're asking the wrong question. The real question is how I could possibly manage without volunteering.

For me, volunteering is how I live out my values and stay grounded, no matter what life throws my way. There is a unique kind of magic in being able to bring happiness to others – something deeply rooted in human nature that we often forget in the rush of everyday life.

Seeing a smile appear because of a small act of kindness is a reward no pay cheque could ever match. Volunteering also gives me the chance to involve my children, helping to shape the next generation to be kinder, more caring, and more compassionate.

After all, kindness is just human nature – and it really is the best medicine there is.

It's my way of saying to the world: no matter what I'm going through, I can still make a positive difference. And if I can do it, you can too. At Bucks Students' Union, there are so many ways to get involved, and volunteering truly can be as little or as much as you're able to give. Pay it forward."

Donna-Marie Langston
Volunteer of the year 2025–26

Hi! My name is Akhil and I've been elected by students at BNU to be your Vice President Achievement and Belonging 2026-27!

My role focuses on the co-curricular aspect of the Students' Union. I get to work with the Student Activities team in everything from sports clubs to societies as well as the charitable fundraising events and volunteering. I'm here to provide you with the opportunity to take part in activities you may never have done before. I also work with our training and development team to support you in developing new skills, gaining new qualifications, and boosting your employability so you can smash all of your career goals and ace your interviews. As well as all this, my role as a, Elected Officer means I also sit on the Union's Trustee Board to ensure that we're sticking to our principles and making life better for students at Bucks.

Akhil Charles Dhanarashi
Vice President Achievement and Belonging
Bucks Students' Union



WHAT WE DO

Every year our students volunteer their time in the local community, internationally and within our institution. Students are engaged with a variety of community organisations and charities including; Rye view manor, Citizens advice, Wycombe youth action and One Can Trust. Students have got stuck in with projects including; litter picks, conversation roles, teaching and organising fundraising events. Many students organise these events themselves and are able to give back to the community and gain valuable experience.

Within the Students' Union our members volunteer by writing for the Bucks Student newspaper and taking part in our sustainability efforts, by being a society/club committee member and taking part in our annual Fairtrade Smile campaign.

We work hard to find voluntary positions to suit individual courses, so if you have any ideas then please send them over on: **volunteering@bnu.ac.uk.**





OPPORTUNITIES

Long Term Volunteering

Long term volunteering is committing to a regular role on a weekly or monthly basis. This could be with an external organisation, working with the Events team or writing for the Bucks Student Newspaper. Long term volunteering is an excellent addition to your CV as it typically involves working in a specific role that will help you in your chosen career.

Check out the long term placements on our website at **bucksstudentsunion.org/volunteering.**

Committee Positions

Sports clubs and societies within Bucks Students' Union are run democratically and are student led. Consequently, each year student members can put themselves forward for committee positions and are voted in by their peers. Alongside the fundamental roles of each position, you will help to sculpt and develop your society or club and raise money to generate income for projects and events.

Short Term Volunteering

Short term volunteering comes in the form of one day projects. These one day projects happen on a weekly basis on various days and include conservation work, working with the elderly, fundraising and much more! Short term volunteering is great to put on your CV, it's quick and easy to do and there is a wide variety of activities. If you are trying to gain specific skills or want to see what skills a project can give you, have a look at our opportunity profiles online.

Micro Projects

Throughout the year there will be a number of micro-volunteering events planned on campus. These events are drop-in and non-commitment. Previous activities include; planting vegetables, dog toy making and litter picking.



HOW DO I REGISTER?

Registering to be a volunteer with the Students' Union is quick and easy. All you have to do is register online at **bucksstudentsunion.org/volunteeringportal.**

Once you've made yourself a profile, you can sign up to one off and long term volunteering opportunities, as well as log all your hours.

If you can't find what you're looking for, you can start your own project!

If you can't find a project that suits you, why not start your own project? Whether it be organising regular trips to an elderly residence, or getting a group of your mates together to tackle green issues, we're here to help and may even be able to give you a start-up fund! Just pop into the Students' Union office and have a chat with the Activities Coordinator (Volunteering and Charity Fundraising).



Transferable skills

You will pick up transferable skills during the course of being a Bucks volunteer that can be applied to many different situations throughout your career. Being aware of the skills you have gained and how you can talk about them during interviews may be key to getting you a job.

Volunteering on a conservation project

Community Awareness

By volunteering on a conservation project you will be learning about the wider community and will be having a positive impact on it.

Team Work

One day projects are always undertaken by a group of students; you must work together to achieve your end goal. You will learn to communicate effectively with your team and listen with an open mind to solutions that are put forward.

Physical Fitness

Conservation projects are opportunities to get your hands dirty and learn how to use different tools to create something. This lets potential employers know that you are not afraid to roll your sleeves up and pitch in when required.

Volunteering to collect money for RAG

Citizenship

Collecting money for charities will allow you to learn how to become an active and engaged citizen, and be aware of issues such as ethics, politics, human rights and equality.

Verbal Communication

In order to collect money, you will have to approach many different people. This opportunity will develop your verbal communication skills on a variety of levels, and will give you practice in addressing people in a suitable way.

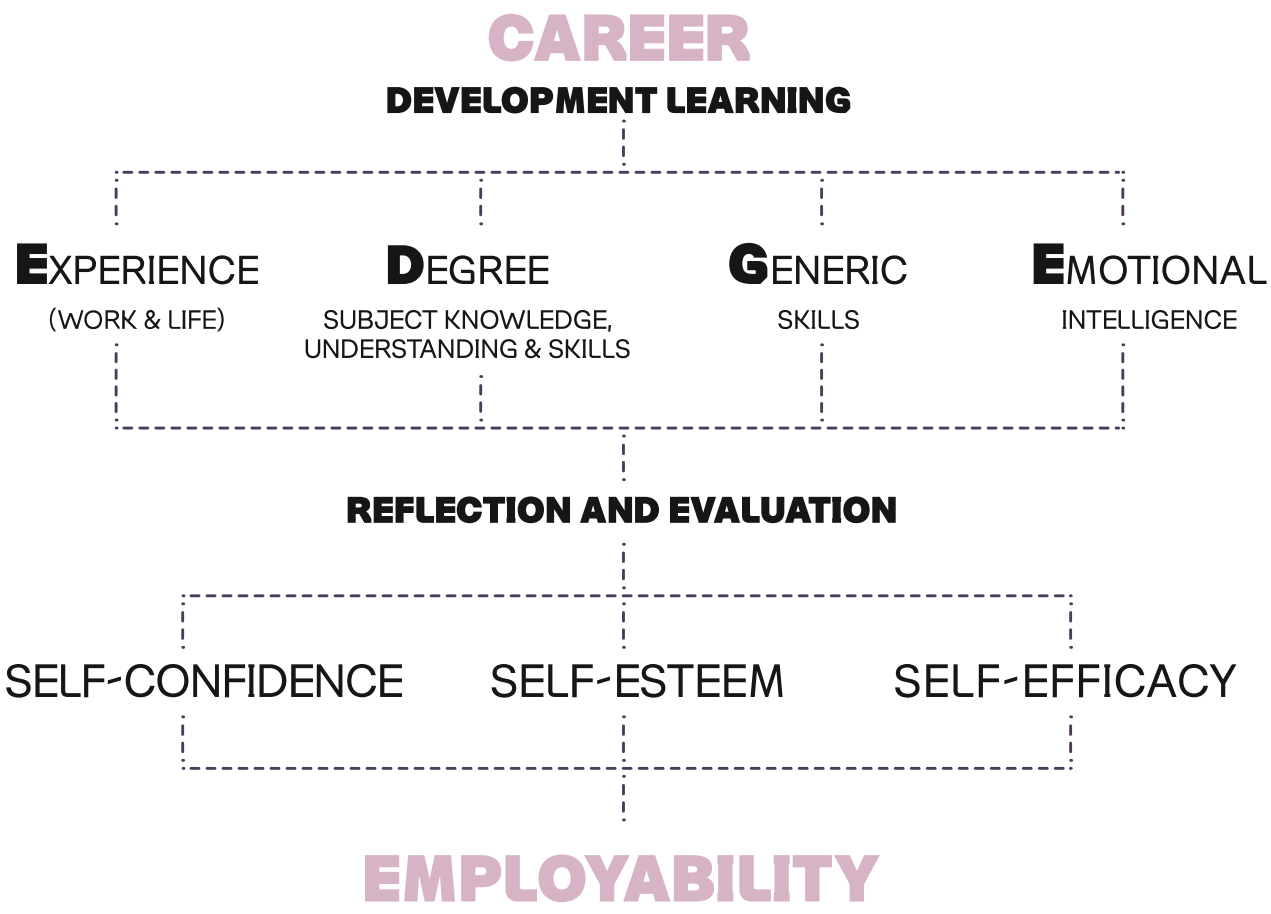
Cultural Awareness

This opportunity will bring you into contact with many different groups of people, so you can develop a greater understanding of a number of cultures.



Employability

Volunteering allows you to develop skills which will help you in kick-starting your career. It is important when writing applications and attending interviews that you understand what skills you have acquired through your work and volunteering.



Career **EDGE** - The Key to Employability

A framework of employability for Bucks students

This simple model illustrates the different components of employability that you should focus on throughout your time at university. This is not just about getting a job, this is about developing a successful career in whichever field you decide to enter after graduating.

Within your own subject area, consider which component may be more important than others, talk to your tutors and people working in your sector to see which they believe to be most important and then identify ways in which you can develop and gain experience in them.

Volunteering provides you with an exciting opportunity to address a number of these areas and the Students' Union own 'transferable skills scheme' makes it clear what specific skills they have gained.

SUPPORT

Find a project that appeals to you

When making an enquiry into volunteering you will be asked to attend a meeting with the Activities Coordinator (Volunteering and Charity Fundraising). This meeting will enable us to ensure the opportunities you have shown interest are perfect for you.

When committing to a volunteer project, we expect you to treat the position as you would a job. As volunteers, you are invaluable to the people you are helping. Please make sure that you turn up on time, or inform someone if you can no longer attend. Please read emails carefully, and listen to instructions so you know what to expect and are aware of any health and safety regulations.

Logging your volunteer hours

When volunteering, it's important that you log your hours so you can keep track of all the work you have done. It's easy to do and that way you can have an accurate account of the volunteering you've done.

You can receive four certificates:

Bronze: 50 hours voluntary work

Silver: 150 hours voluntary work

Gold: 300 hours voluntary work

Platinum: 500 hours voluntary work

Diamond: 1,000 hours voluntary work

Students who reach the platinum and diamond award will be invited to our prestigious annual Union Awards evening, here you will be presented with your award.

Logging volunteering hours couldn't be easier, if unsure how to log your hours please come in and speak to the Activities Coordinator (Volunteering and Charitable Fundraiser). Remember any activity where you are giving up your time not for profit can be counted as volunteering. Students on compulsory placements modules can not log their activities as volunteering due to it supporting your course. Or, you can watch our handy video to explain the process **bucksstudentsunion.org/volunteeringportal**

Volunteer Recognition and Rewards

We want to recognise and celebrate the valuable contribution students make through volunteering across the university, local community and within student committees.

To reward students for their commitment, we are offering recognition awards at each volunteering level.

Bronze Award – 50 hours
100 rewards available

Silver Award – 150 hours:
60 rewards available

Gold Award – 300 hours:
30 rewards available

Platinum Award – 500 hours
15 rewards available

Additional Rewards

To further recognise outstanding commitment, we will also be offering special prizes to the 25th, 50th, 75th and 100th students to reach their volunteering milestone.

This is an opportunity to have your contribution recognised, celebrate the positive impact you are making, and be rewarded for your dedication to volunteering.

Volunteer Support

We support volunteers through offering appointments with the Volunteer Coordinator at the Students' Union. These meetings will be arranged at a convenient time that suits you and can be booked in via email. By doing this volunteers will be able to access necessary support to make the most of the opportunities we offer and improving their graduate prospects.

Get in touch by emailing:
volunteering@bnu.ac.uk.

POLICIES AND GUIDANCE NOTES

Executive summary

This policy will highlight the importance of volunteers to our organisation, the opportunities available and the rights you have as a volunteer. It can be used as a form of guidance for both students and staff, in their capacity as volunteers, when taking part in, or leading, voluntary activity. This largely covers information for student volunteers. External volunteers, in the shape of trustees, are largely covered in the Constitution.

Policy

Central to our mission is the importance of being student led and having a positive impact for our members. We provide a range of services such as student activities, advice, events, representation and volunteering. We believe that fostering a culture of volunteerism is vital to securing those aims. Student volunteers enhance their graduate prospects through their involvement with us and the Students' Union itself is enhanced as a result of the credible voices that student volunteers provide for our Union and our objectives.

In addition to the benefits outlined, as students, you can also:

- Meet new people
- Network with local organisations
- Relieve stress
- Develop personal skills
- Improve relations with the community.

At Bucks Students' Union there are a number of voluntary roles. These include (but are not limited to);

- Community Volunteers
- Events (Ents) Volunteers
- Newsgroup
- Athletic Union
- Society
- Union Council
- Union Council Chairs
- Sports and Societies Committee Members
- Trustees



POLICIES AND GUIDANCE NOTES

Staff

The Activities Coordinator (Volunteering and Charity Fundraising) will provide information and guidance on all volunteer roles, maintain records of volunteers and projects and deliver over-arching administrative support for volunteers and staff. In addition to the Activities Coordinator (Volunteering and Charity Fundraising) a range of other Union staff are responsible for managing and overseeing the volunteers working in their own departments. These staff members are available to support students and attend to any concerns or problems that volunteers may experience.

We make volunteering opportunities available to students through a range of different channels, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to find an activity that suits their interests, course and availability.

Students can discover volunteering opportunities through posters and flyers across campus, the Bucks Students' Union What's On page, and the volunteering portal, where they can explore current opportunities and find out how to get involved.

We also work closely with academic staff and Course Representatives to promote volunteering opportunities directly to students. Lecturers and Course Representatives are regularly briefed on opportunities, including course-specific volunteering that can complement students' studies, develop their skills and provide valuable experience.

The Students' Union rarely limits the number of volunteers it recruits for any one opportunity. In this instance the selection criteria will be made clear in advance and all unsuccessful candidates will be entitled to feedback in order to aid their personal development.

Equality and diversity

Our aim is to create an environment that is welcoming and ensures no student, current or potential employee is disadvantaged because of:

- Age
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Gender reassignment
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity.

Under the Equality Act (2010) these are known as 'protected characteristics'. No individual will be discriminated against due to association with another person who has a protected characteristic, or based on a perception that they have a protected characteristic when in fact they do not.

We recognise that people may suffer from the following discrimination: age; ability or disability; ethnic origin; caring or parental responsibilities; gender or gender identity; HIV status; marital status; nationality; opinions or beliefs on matters such as religion or politics; physical appearance; race; sexual orientation; spent criminal convictions; trade union affiliation; employment status; socio- economic background; medical condition; full or part time student status, mental health status; any other distinction.

POLICIES AND GUIDANCE NOTES

Expenses

Travel - You can claim travel expenses for any journeys that are incurred as a result of your volunteering. For example, travel to and from the place you volunteer and any travel that is for the purpose of attending meetings or training with the Students' Union Volunteering team or the placement agency.

Please note that our funding is for projects and activities within our local area. Therefore, in most cases, we can only pay expenses for local travel within a 15 mile radius of the BNU campuses. If this causes a problem please contact the Activities Coordinator (Volunteering and Charity Fundraising) before committing to a project.

Public Transport - you must produce a receipt for the outbound and return journeys on public transport.

Taxis - Wheelchair users can claim for travel by taxi. Non-wheelchair users will be reimbursed for taxi fares when it is the only option of transport e.g. the volunteer is travelling alone late at night or no public transport is available. Taxi's must be booked in advance using the Students' Union account. If this is not possible, a receipt must be produced.

Private car - At the discretion of the students activities team, students may be allowed to claim back there millage on their own cars paid back at 40p per mile. Distances will be calculated using Google maps.

Transport - Subject to availability the Students' Union minibuses can be used for volunteering activities. A minibus request form should be completed at least two weeks prior to the date of travel although we recommend you complete your form as soon as possible. The Students' Union will allocate buses on the basis of greatest need. Please be aware that on Wednesdays minibuses are in highest demand.

9 Seater - These tests can be arranged at any time as long as it is organised well in advance of when you require them. This is a competency test with a member of SU Staff who will take you for a short drive. In order to complete this, you must:

- be 18 or over
- hold a UK or EU driving licence for a minimum of 1 year

There is no charge for this.

Parking - The Union will pay all reasonable parking charges but not fines. You need to produce a receipt for the expenses you claim and fill in an Expenses Claim form. These are available from the Students Union Offices.



POLICIES AND GUIDANCE NOTES

Community Volunteering

Here at Bucks Students' Union, we offer both community volunteering opportunities and fundraising opportunities. These can be long or short term. Long term is usually a weekly position that the volunteer is expected to attend regularly and short term takes the form of a one day project with another organisation or with the Students' Union.

Examples of activities that can be undertaken:

- Short term - conservation work, regeneration project
- Long term - social media designer, mentoring, admin asst.
- Fundraising - collections, sports events, cake sales.

When working with an external organisation or the Student' Union, Volunteers have the right to;

- a safe environment
- receive proper induction from the organisation they are working with
- be covered by appropriate insurance
- have what is expected of them clearly explained
- know who they are working with and who is 'in charge' of their role, and to receive support and supervision from that person
- confidentiality
- be treated with respect
- have problems and difficulties listened to and have action taken
- say 'no' if they feel they have been asked to do something that isn't part of their role or that they feel is unacceptable for other reasons.

Review procedure

Guideline

- Irregular attendance
- Failure to respect the Union or the organisation in which you are placed
- Breach of health and safety regulations
- Misuse of equipment
- Discrimination
- Language that could be deemed offensive

There may also be instances where the above examples are severe enough, without repetition, to trigger our formal disciplinary policy.

Process

The Union will initiate a three stage process when dealing with behavioural problems. The problem should be reported to the Activities Co-ordinator (Volunteering and Charity Fundraising) in the first instance.

The Activities Co-ordinator (Volunteering and Charity Fundraising), or lead staff member, will then speak with the volunteer about the problem. This will allow the volunteer to rectify the issue and return to their voluntary position having corrected the problem. It could also allow the volunteer to admit if they are not enjoying the voluntary position and wish to leave.

The Activities Co-ordinator (Volunteering and Charity Fundraising) will review progress after 10 working days, or following the volunteers next scheduled activity, to assess whether the issue has been resolved. Should these timescales not prove sufficient the voluntary organisation and Activities Co-ordinator (Volunteering and Charity Fundraising) may agree an alternative review period, but the volunteer must be informed. If the issue is severe then the volunteer may be taken out of the placement immediately. If the placement is happy to continue with the volunteer then we will proceed to Stage 2.

Following the unsuccessful completion of Stage 1 the volunteer will meet with the Activities Co-ordinator (Volunteering and Charity Fundraising) and go through the volunteer role in detail. There will be three interventions throughout the academic year. There will be a formal review of any issues at the first meeting. The Activities Coordinator (Volunteering and Charity Fundraising) will then take the volunteer through the handbook and relevant policies to demonstrate why the behaviour or practice is unacceptable.

For the second meeting, Activities Co-ordinator (Volunteering and Charity Fundraising) will work with the volunteer to develop an action plan, addressing the issue so it can be reviewed at the last meeting. If at this point the issue has not been resolved the process moves to Stage 3.

At Stage 3 the volunteer's behaviour, despite structured interventions, will clearly be incompatible with the volunteer opportunity. At this stage the Union will ask the volunteer to step down from the placement, and depending on the nature of the issue we may enact formal proceedings. From this point on the volunteer should refer to the relevant sections of our governing documents. The Union respects at all times the right of our partner organisations to suspend a volunteer from their projects if their behaviour, approach or practice is deemed to be unsatisfactory

Complaints procedure

The Students' Union take any complaint, whether large or small, very seriously and have a complaints procedure in place. To find out more about this go to **bucksstudentsunion.org/constitution**.

If you would like to make a complaint you can find the complaints form at the bottom of the page.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Further information

In addition to this Volunteer Policy the Union has a number of other policies that are relevant for volunteers. The summary below highlights these policies and where they can be found:

Safeguarding Policy

Bucks Students' Union is committed to promoting the well-being of children, young people and vulnerable adults. This is detailed in our Safeguarding policy available on the Students' Union website **bucksstudentsunion.org/union/policiesandresources/**

Health and Safety

The safety of our students is very important to us. This is detailed in our Health and Safety policy, available on the Students' Union website.

Feedback

Bucks Students' Union strives for continuous improvement throughout all of its service departments, including volunteering. Volunteers will be encouraged to provide feedback at the end of every volunteer opportunity .

Confidentiality

In supporting volunteers, we need to collect personal data so that we can contact them throughout the year. The access to this data is restricted to the Volunteering Department and senior managers of Bucks Students' Union, who will not pass on personal details without the volunteer's express consent.

Risk Assessments

A risk Assessment is written for every community event or project organised by us. This enables the team to assess any hazards that could put the student at risk. Risk Assessments can be requested by email.

References

Whilst volunteering with Bucks Students' Union, we encourage the volunteers to recognise and develop their transferable skills, in order to assist them when writing applications and going through an interview process. Volunteers are encouraged to discuss career options with staff from the Students' Union and through organised reflection sessions with the University Careers Service.

Please contact our employability team **sujobs@bnu.ac.uk** for a reference.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) have merged into the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). CRB checks are now called DBS checks. If you are taking part in an activity that involves working with children and young people you will be expected to have a DBS. The DBS check searches your details against criminal records and other sources including the Police National Computer. The Union and its partners will make volunteer recruitment decisions on a case by case basis and in line with relevant policies and procedures.

When the project is external, the charity or organisation will be responsible for providing the application and covering the cost. These applications can take between ten days and four weeks to go through. When working with the Students' Union or the University, the Human Resources Department (HR) will provide the application and the department you are volunteering with will provide the payment.

For more information or details of other policies, please email **volunteering@bnu.ac.uk.**

RAG (RAISE AND GIVE)

What is RAG?

RAG stands for Raise and Give, and is the part of the Students' Union that helps students raise as much money as possible for charity while they're at university.

We focus on a local charity each year and our members pick them. Last year saw us raise over £8,000 for RSASS - Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Service. Although we concentrate on the elected RAG charity we also raise money for other local, national and international charities. Last year Bucks Raised over £24,000 overall for charities.

RAG cannot succeed without the commitment of its volunteers and a team of students is needed every year to manage out fundraising events. These events allow students to raise money whilst having fun.

Upcoming RAG events include:

- **RAG Week 1:**
  Monday 19 October - Friday 23 October 2026
- **RAG Week 2:**
  Monday 18 January - Friday 22 January 2027

If you have an event you would like to run to raise money for another charity please email **volunteering@bnu.ac.uk** or pop into the Students' Union and speak with a member of the student activities team. We will support you through the preparation, organisation, recruitment and marketing of the event.



THE EVIDENCE BEHIND VOLUNTEERING

Why volunteering matters for student development and employability

Volunteering is more than giving back. It provides students with opportunities to develop skills, gain experience and demonstrate their capabilities to future employers.

THE NUMBERS

9.1%

more likely to be in paid employment

Young people aged **16–25 who volunteered** were estimated to be **9.1% more likely to be in paid employment.** For those volunteering at least weekly, this increased to **17.1%.**

Source: UK Government, Estimating the Economic & Social Value of Volunteering

84%

developed communication and relationship skills

84% of volunteers reported that volunteering helped develop their **communication, influencing and relationship skills.**

Source: UCAS / Education & Employers

94%

gained a greater understanding of society

94% of volunteers reported gaining a better understanding of **society and social issues** through volunteering.

Source: UCAS / Education & Employers

22%

volunteer with careers or qualifications in mind

Among **18–24-year-olds, 22%** reported that career or gaining qualifications was a motivation for volunteering.

Source: NCVO, Time Well Spent

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH TELL US?

Volunteering can help students develop:

SKILL	HOW VOLUNTEERING DEVELOPS IT
Communication	Speaking to new people, working with community organisations and engaging audiences
Teamwork	Working collaboratively towards a shared goal
Leadership	Taking responsibility and coordinating activities
Organisation	Planning activities, managing time and meeting commitments
Problem-solving	Responding to challenges and finding practical solutions
Resilience	Building confidence and adapting to new situations
Social responsibility	Understanding communities and contributing to positive change

Sources and further reading

UK Government - Estimating the Economic and Social Value of Volunteering

UCAS / Education & Employers - Research on volunteering and employability skills

NCVO - Time Well Spent: A National Survey on the Volunteer Experience

CONTACT DETAILS



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Making life better
for students at Bucks

BUCKS
STUDENTS'
UNION

Bucks Students' Union

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Bucks Students' Union is a registered charity – no. 1144820