



STAYING SAFE WHEN VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering should always be fun, rewarding and safe, so make sure you take time to prepare well before you begin, and celebrate your achievements afterwards!

Wellbeing

Volunteering can be a great way to boost your wellbeing, but it can be easy to take on too much. It's important to think about yourself and your limitations as well as thinking of ways that you can make a difference or give back. Volunteering is a great way to challenge yourself, but it's okay to take time off, take time for yourself or even change your plans. Don't be afraid to take time to reflect on your experiences, especially if you are volunteering in difficult environments and talk to someone you trust.

Volunteering with The Union

As an MMU Union volunteer you might be on the committee of a society or club, a course rep, a campaigns volunteer, a community projects volunteer or a volunteer ambassador! We make sure to provide appropriate and sufficient induction and training for all Union volunteers to be able to carry out their roles effectively. We ensure roles do not ask too much of your time and understand that your studies come first. We have an extensive Volunteering Policy available

[here](#), to ensure that you get the most out of your volunteering experience.

What first?

A popular way of volunteering among our students is outside of university in your local community and it is important to consider your safety during these activities. Firstly, we advise you use our two [Volunteering Portals](#) found on our website. To ensure that they will keep you safe whilst volunteering, we have vetted all of the volunteer roles on our portals. If our portals don't offer what you want, we're here to support you in finding another role that will be suitable and safe!

Once you've registered to be a volunteer and made it to your charity or project there are a few things you should expect from the organisation to ensure you're kept safe.

1. Training and induction; you should receive relevant and sufficient induction and training to prepare you for your role. This is the case if you are volunteering for one day or for 6 months! You should have expectations set with you to ensure the hours and tasks of your volunteering are reasonable and achievable.
2. You should be given a key contact at the organisation; this contact should support you in all aspects of your volunteering. You are more than entitled to ask this person for any accessibility adjustments you require to fulfil the role.

3. You should be given a clear understanding of the organisation's health and safety procedures. You should be informed of the risks posed to you whilst volunteering, though these are often small and unlikely – it always helps to be aware!
4. You should always feel supported, respected and protected whilst volunteering; you should raise your concerns where you feel this isn't the case.

Volunteering with children, young people and vulnerable adults

Volunteering with vulnerable people can be incredibly impactful and rewarding as a student, however it is one of the more challenging forms of volunteering. If you decide to volunteer with vulnerable people, you should expect the organisation you are volunteering with to provide you with extensive training in order to keep yourself and those you are working with safe. You should play close attention to this training and familiarise yourself with the general guidance we give here.

1. Maintain professional boundaries; avoid direct contact e.g. hugging the people you are supporting. A good rule is to act as a mentor or "buddy"
2. Make sure you know who to report safeguarding concerns to; make sure you don't say you can keep secrets for the people you are supporting, especially when it may put them at risk.



3. Keep information on a need to know basis; it's fine to share your experiences with your family and friends however make sure not to talk about sensitive information or use identifiable information e.g. names and always avoid disclosing personal information about yourself to those you volunteer with.
4. Familiarise yourself with the organisation's social media policy; don't post pictures of people without their or their parent's/guardian's permission, it may put them at risk!
5. Do not work alone (unless necessary to the role); Lone working should only happen where you have been told this is the case and if you have been adequately trained in this. Otherwise, ensure that you always have a fellow volunteer or staff member with you or close by while volunteering.

If you want to know more about safeguarding, you can find more resources [here](#).

DBS checks

For certain volunteer roles you will need a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check conducted which will be completed by the organisation you wish to volunteer for. A DBS check is a process for gathering information about an applicant's criminal history and is an important part in safeguarding as it prevents unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups. Having a criminal record does not mean you can't volunteer, but depending on the offence, there may be some roles which are

unavailable to you. If you're unsure, you can always talk to us in the Volunteer Team and we can help.

Further Support

Remember that if you encounter any hurdles in your volunteering journey, there are lots of places to seek advice! If you feel unsafe or uncomfortable for any reason, then talk to the organisation you are volunteering with and see if there's any ways they can change or support this. There's also us, The Union Volunteering Team who are here to support you and ensure your safety. But if you don't feel up to speaking to either of those, there's [Manchester Community Central](#), Manchester's central volunteering service who will be able to help.

For more info check [this](#) out.

We hope this has guidance has aided your understanding in how to stay safe when volunteering.

If you have any more questions come in to chat to the volunteering team at Your Opportunities in The Union or drop us an email at volunteering@mmu.ac.uk