

Jump On Board

TOOLKIT

DESIGNED TO ENCOURAGE, EQUIP AND
EMPOWER YOUNG PEOPLE TO BECOME
INVOLVED IN A YOUTH FORUM



VOLUNTEER **NOW**
connect · build · change

Aim of this toolkit is to encourage, equip and empower young people to become involved in a youth forum; to develop their skills, confidence and ability to participate and lead within the forum.



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Introduction to a Youth Forum

This toolkit can be used within any organisation that wants to include young people to set up a youth forum. Jump On Board Junior is designed to give young people a basic understanding of a youth forum and the range of activities which may be involved.

In 2005 the Volunteer Development Agency and Down District Volunteer Centre (VDA and DDVC merged with eight organisations to form Volunteer Now in 2010) developed Jump on Board with the aim of providing organisations with a resource to support young people in management committees. Jump On Board Junior has been created from the original to support under 18's in youth forums.

Aim of the toolkit: To encourage, equip and empower young people to become involved in a youth forum; to develop their skills, confidence and ability to participate and lead within the forum.

Audience: Young people under the age of eighteen.

What is a Youth Forum?

A youth forum brings together a group of young people for a common purpose within an organisation. The purpose could be to make sure that the organisation is including the voice of young people and consulting them on decisions that impact them. It could be that they are able to consult the work that the organisation is doing on behalf of young people.

What can a Youth Forum do?

Depending on the organisation, a youth forum can be involved in a lot of different activities and campaigns. Some things they could do include:

- **Raise awareness of issues that impact young people and their community**
- **Work on a specific project for the youth team in the organisation**
- **Consult on how the organisation work with young people**
- **Create youth specific campaigns for the work the organisation does**
- **Provides young people with a voice and the ability to develop their own ideas**

Ice-Breakers

Games and Icebreakers:

Doing some games and icebreakers will help the group get to know one another and feel more comfortable with each other. Use games and icebreakers that you already know, look online for some that you can use, play board games or contact us at youth@volunteernow.co.uk for some ideas.

Group Contract:

Respect

Participation

Empathy

Before the group puts the contract together, focus on the three words in red. Start the conversations with open ended questions to see their understanding of each word. Once the group feels ready, move onto the next word until all three are discussed. The group contract can be created, based off the words in red. To give you an example of what could be included:

- **Confidentiality amongst the group**
- **Teamwork**
- **Everyone has a voice**

Once the contract has been created, everyone should sign it (including the youth worker).

TEAMWORK

RESPECT

EMPATHY

PARTICIPATION

Governance

According to the revised Code of Good Governance, an effective board will provide good governance and leadership with four principles. Each principle can be applied to a youth forum:

Principle One: Behaving with integrity. Be open and accountable.

The youth forum will be open and accountable, acting always with integrity, in the interest of the organisation. The forum should:

- **Be transparent in everything**
- **Be fair and honest in decision making**
- **Identify, understand and manage conflicts of interest within the group**
- **Listen to the views of others to reflect and grow**
- **Work confidentially**

Principle Two: Working well both as individuals and as a team.

Each member of a youth forum will have a range of knowledge, attitudes and behaviors that can be brought into the group. The forum should continually grow and develop and should:

- **Recruit new members whenever new skills or experience is needed**
- **Provide opportunities for training and development**
- **Complete self-assessments and review performance**

Principle Three: Understanding roles and responsibilities.

Members of the youth forum should know the clear role they have within the organisation that they are part of. Their responsibilities should be set out and made clear from the very beginning to give them direction when they are together.

Principle Four: Ensuring delivery of organisational purpose.

The group should have a vision to work towards, provided by the organisation with the committee being consulted and included. Once they have this it is important that they continually review their work to make sure the purpose of the organisation is delivered.

Why Involve Young People?

Young people have the power to make an impact within an organisation, their community and more. Providing an opportunity for young people to be in a youth forum allows them to make a change in your organisation by bringing in new ideas and giving your organisation a youth voice.

It's important to reflect on why young people want to be involved and why an organisation want them involved. The list below can be used as an activity and broken up into three categories:

Very Important

Quite Important

Not Important

It's great for organisations to include young people and here are some reasons why:

- **Your organisation will have a youth voice**
- **A young person will be empowered**
- **They can consult and plan new or existing youth services**
- **Young people will feel valued**
- **Young people will have a sense of ownership**
- **They may gain some qualifications**
- **Skills and experience gained for future career**
- **To find out what young people think and want**
- **Young people will listen to their peers**
- **Breaking down barriers for young people**
- **They will bring new ideas to the organisation**
- **They will bring new energy to the organisation**
- **Young people get an opportunity to learn about different projects**
- **Young people might be given an opportunity to take part in new activities**
- **Young people will get to meet new people**
- **Young people get to make decisions that matter and effect the organisation**

The group can also include their own reasons, as well as the youth worker and organisation. During this activity and discussion, the forum can consider the different viewpoints from young people and from an organisation. It's important to consider why a youth forum is good for a young person, as well as why it is good for the organisation and this discussion this activity will allow that to happen.

Roles and Responsibilities

To allow a youth forum to be effective, roles and responsibilities should be clear for the young people. The following outlines guidance for effective forums:

- **Clear Roles: There should be role descriptions so that each young person understands what the committee is there for as well as the roles within the group.**
- **Know when to ask questions, seek help and ask for advice.**
- **Diverse skills and experience: Every young person is different and they bring their own unique voice and perspective.**
- **Training, development and support will allow each young person to be equipped and empowered.**

Roles

The following roles are some examples that young people could be involved in. Depending on the formality of the forum, they can vary:

Chairperson

The Chairperson provides leadership and direction within the committee. They support other members to carry out their role effectively.

Vice Chairperson

The Vice Chairperson supports the chair and supports the committee if the chairperson is absent.

Secretary

The secretary keeps the group's paperwork in order, ensuring members know when and where meetings are going to be held. They can keep notes for every meeting and decision made.

Treasurer

The treasurer is responsible for managing any finances brought in from fundraisers and more. They can let other members know how much the group has and find out information about other opportunities.

Social Media Manager

The committee can use social media to raise awareness of their projects, but the social media manager can monitor the activity. They can use social media to link in with and make connections with other organisations.

What Makes an Effective Board?

Leadership

Leadership is one of the key roles of any youth forum. Leadership is not about the loudest voice or the one that talks the most, but the one that is able to direct and guide the group to work towards the mission of the forum and organisation.

Group Participation

To ensure that the group can make informed decisions and be fully involved, they should be aware of your organisation's vision, mission and strategic direction. This should be done in the initial stages and should be continually reviewed and consulted.

Aims and Objectives

Once the group has been made aware of the vision, mission and strategic direction they will be able to create aims and objectives for their committee that will give them focus in their work. An exercise to help the group focus on setting aims and objectives: You will need two buckets and scraps of paper. Split the participants into two teams. Place the bucket for each team on a chair some distance away from a line or a marker on the floor. Ensure that the bucket is far enough away so that teams will not be able to achieve their goals.

Teams are required to make balls out of paper and get 20 balls into the bin within 60 seconds and every team member must participate:

- **After 60 seconds explain to the teams that they can choose to change the goal posts and move the bin wherever they would like but they still have 60 seconds to complete the challenge of getting 20 balls into the bin.**
- **After 1 minute get the group to count the paper balls and the winner gets a prize.**
- **Goals need to be motivating, but if they're too far away or too easy then it's easy to become demotivated or lose interest, it's also important that everyone has a role to play.**

It is important for the forum to assess and review their goals regularly to know what they are doing and what they are working towards.

Managing Conflict

Whenever conflict arises, it is important that the forum acknowledge it and deal with it directly before moving forward. It is essential that they listen to one another and find a way to work with each other. Resolving the conflict is important and good communication is key to doing so.

The following outlines some information that will equip young people to help maintain an effective forum:

- **Role descriptions should be provided**
- **Each meeting should be prepared for in advance**
- **Seek information and advice whenever it is needed**
- **Diverse skills and experience provided by the group**
- **Training, development and support for an informed forum.**

Skills and Values

Every member will bring unique skills and values. There is a set of key skills and values which each youth forum should have:

Skills

- **Communication Skills:** Effective communication skills will allow the group to work together more efficiently. If the group have good communication skills, their message and goal will be clear and easier to work towards. When the group meets for the first time, it would be useful for each member to carry out a reflection on their own communication skills to know their strengths and weaknesses when working together. This can be reviewed and reflected on regularly to help the group to work together. It is important to keep eye contact, speak clearly and be clear and concise.
- **Delegation Skills:** For every young person to feel empowered, it is important that all tasks are handed out equally and fairly giving the group an opportunity to work together. Each member will be given a voice and will have an active role in the youth forum.
- **Problem Solving Skills:** The youth forum will be faced with different decisions and will need to have good problem-solving skills to make sure they consider their decisions carefully. Problem solving skills will also allow the forum to analyse and identify different opportunities and create solutions to these.
- **Team-Work Skills:** For a youth forum to work well, they need to be able to work as a team. There will be different people and personalities within the group, but they should be motivated by a common goal or mission.

Values

- **Honesty:** The forum needs to be open, honest and transparent to give them credibility but also for them to work well with one another. They can keep records of meetings and any finances to show honesty. However, they should also be open and honest with one another.
- **Respect:** A youth forum will not work well together if they do not respect one another. Therefore, it is important that they have an induction or settling in period so that they can get to know each other and understand each person and their background.
- **Confidentiality:** This is important because the group might be discussing sensitive topics and for everyone to trust one another, they need to know that what they share will not be spoken about outside of the group. This will help to build trust.
- **Trustworthy:** A youth forum need to be able to trust one another. Trusting each other creates a safe environment and allows the committee to be more open with one another. If they trust each other, they are more likely to work more effectively together and be able to share their thoughts and ideas without feeling embarrassed or uncomfortable.

Conclusion

Aim of the toolkit: To encourage, equip and empower young people to become involved in a youth forum; to develop their skills, confidence and ability to participate and lead within the forum.

We hope this toolkit has provided you with some insight and guidance regarding a youth forum. Young people have the capability and power to make a positive impact within an organisation which is why it is important that they are involved. Creating and maintaining a youth forum gives a voice to young people who can share their story and experience. By coming together for a common purpose, a youth forum can be consulted in decision making, provide new ideas and help an organisation make a positive difference.

For more information or support, please contact youth@volunteernow.co.uk and the Youth Team will assist you.



Volunteer Now works to promote, enhance and support volunteering across Northern Ireland. Volunteer Now is about connecting with individuals and organisations to build healthy communities and create positive change. We provide training, information, guidance and support to volunteer-involving organisations on issues of good practice and policy regarding volunteering, volunteer management, safeguarding and governance.

For further information on Jump On Board and support for young volunteering contact the Volunteer Now youth team: 02890232020 or youth@volunteernow.co.uk

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