

Citizenship learning activities

A helping hand? Citizenship and charities

Post-16 Citizenship Support Programme



A helping hand?

Citizenship and charities

Introduction for staff

Developing young people's community spirit so that they want to make a difference to their own lives and the lives of others is an integral part of active citizenship.

Young people's activities can, however, take many different forms. For example, they might choose to get involved in making changes within their own organisation, through a learners' council, student forum or other representative body for learners; they could research an international issue of relevance to them and develop suggestions for actions; they could organise a local community event; or they could volunteer to work with an established community group or charity.

There are many charities in this country, some local, some national or international, almost all of which are keen to work with educational organisations. Many have websites which provide teaching materials and suggest ideas for educational projects and volunteering opportunities. There are also a number of organisations that specifically promote volunteering, among them Community Service Volunteers, Volunteering England, and Vinspired.

So is it enough for young people to volunteer in their community? Or does active citizenship require more? In a paragraph that is still strikingly relevant today Sir Bernard Crick wrote¹:

"We firmly believe that volunteering and community involvement are necessary conditions of civil society and democracy... This is especially important at a time when government is attempting a shift of emphasis between, on the one hand, state welfare provision and responsibility and, on the other, community and individual responsibility. We say only that while volunteering and voluntary service are necessary conditions for full citizenship in a democracy, they are not sufficient conditions. Local communities are, indeed, not isolated from state and public policy.

"In other words, young people also need an understanding of how community groups and charities work and why there is a need for them. They should be encouraged to ask questions about who provides public services and how these are funded; and they should come to their own opinion on which services should be an entitlement for all."

Citizenship learning opportunities

In this supplement, we cover some of the important issues of the day: What is the role of a charity? Why volunteer and how can you decide in which organisations to volunteer? What is the Big Society? What is its relationship with active citizenship? Can community involvement and charities provide adequate cover for the needs of all communities, including the most deprived?

Young people should be aware of the current debates on welfare spending, cuts to services and the tensions between rights and responsibilities. The activities in this resource are aimed at Level 2 and above and can be adapted for learners at other levels. They will provide a stimulus for discussion of questions on the role of the individual and the state in making provision for members of society. You could also use newspaper articles and television debates to deepen the understanding of your learners and carry out investigations in the local area. Suggestions are provided for young people to be involved in social action from an informed standpoint.

Suggestions for using the materials

- **What is a charity?** (pages 4–5) describes what charities do and how they are monitored. It also raises the possibility of young people becoming trustees of charities. There is a move to recruit more young people onto the boards of trustees at present. There is also a questionnaire provided for young people who might wish to start a charity of their own.
- **Do charities always do good?** (page 6) asks learners to think about the pitfalls for charitable work, which is usually done with the best of intentions. An example from a topical disaster area, Haiti, provides some stimulus for a debate on whether charities might sometimes do more harm than good.
- **Why volunteer?** (page 7) encourages an examination of the benefits from volunteering. You could give out a copy of the page or cut the cards up and give a set to each pair of learners. They should discuss which are the three most important benefits and then sort the cards into two piles: those which provide benefits to the volunteer and those which provide benefits to others. The vinspired.com website is aimed specifically at young people and provides a very wide range of volunteering opportunities.
- **Investigating charities and community groups** (page 8–9) provides some questions about a charity or community group that young people might want to investigate before deciding to volunteer. A case study of one example of volunteering asks learners to think about how committed they might need to be for some of the opportunities available.
- **Big Society** (page 10) outlines the thinking behind the Big Society initiative and directs learners to a very useful short film on the Big Society Network website². This explains very well what the government has in mind. Because there is considerable debate about the idea, a few comments are provided to spark discussion about whether the Big Society is new or necessary.
- **Active citizens engaged in social action** (pages 11–12) links the ideas behind the Big Society to existing citizenship activity. It uses the structure of the proposed National Citizen Service to engage learners in a role play in which they have to pitch for funding for a social action project. Put the learners into four roughly equal-sized groups and allow them about 20 minutes to prepare for the presentations. Give each group a copy of the criteria. The criteria have been invented for this activity since actual criteria are not available. However, one of the criteria – *How will the project bring about long-term change?* – is meant to uncover the extent to which each project is real active citizenship.

¹ *Education for citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools*, 1998, para 2.5

² Big Society Network is a not-for-profit group which aims to help organisations deliver the practical benefits of civic engagement. It is not involved in the design or delivery of Government policies on the Big Society; the relevant Government department should be contacted for specific information on these.

What is a charity?

Charities exist to help people in some kind of need, to 'promote a public good', such as education, and to raise funds for 'good causes'. There are over 180,000 registered charities in England and Wales, but there are strict laws to control which organisations can call themselves charities and how they should be run, because people need to be sure that the money they collect for charities is put to good use. Charities have to publish a report saying how money is spent, and they are overseen by the Charity Commission (www.charity-commission.gov.uk).

Charitable purposes include:

- Amateur sport
- Arts and culture
- Animal welfare
- Citizenship
- Community development
- Education
- Environmental protection
- Health
- Human rights
- Poverty
- Religion

Millions of pounds are raised each year for charities. In 2009, the BBC's Children in Need raised £39 million and Comic Relief raised £83.2 million. These activities have become national institutions which involve hundreds of thousands of people and feature on prime-time television. Help for Heroes (H4H) is set to raise £100 million by next June.



Find out what others in the group have done to support one of these charities.

Become a young trustee

All charities are run by a board of trustees. Charity trustees are the people legally responsible for the overall management and decision-making in a charity (they might be called something else – a member of the management or executive committee, a governor, a director, etc). They are usually volunteers and they are responsible for the direction and performance of their charity. If a charity has few or no staff, they may be directly involved in the day-to-day running of the charity. If it is a larger charity, staff will usually carry out the work of the charity and the trustees will be responsible for monitoring and controlling their activities.

Only two per cent of registered charities have a trustee aged between 18 and 24, and less than one per cent of trustees are under 25. The Charity Commission is keen to encourage young people to be represented on the board of charities by working as trustees. Young people aged 16 plus can also act as advisers to boards of trustees or serve as the representatives of local young people to inform local charities. You can investigate opportunities through registering on these websites:

Trusteebank – www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/trusteebank – is a free service to advertise or view trustee vacancies.

Trusteefinder – www.trusteenet.org.uk/jobs-search – offers a free service from Charity Trustee Networks which can help organisations reach potential new trustees.

If you are already volunteering for a local charity, then find out if they have any vacancies on their board of trustees. Register your interest in case a vacancy comes up. Ask if they have seen the report by the Charity Commission, *A Breath of Fresh Air: young people as charity trustees*. Available at www.charity-commission.gov.uk/Publications/rs23.aspx

Your own charity

There are over 80,000 small charities that have an income of less than £5,000. It is quite feasible for a group of young people in a youth club or college to set up their own charity. In your group decide on a charity that you would like to set up and talk to someone from a local charity about it. Discuss the following questions and write your agreed responses in the boxes provided.

1. What is the purpose of the charity? (Remember charities must be for the benefit of the public.)

2. Who are the people who will benefit from the work of the charity? (These are called the beneficiaries.)

3. Are there other charities with the same purpose and beneficiaries in your area? (Use the internet and Yellow Pages to find out this out.)

4. What work will the charity carry out for the beneficiaries? What are the costs in doing this work? How will you attract volunteers to carry out the work?

5. How much income does the charity need to carry out this work? (It must be below £5,000) **How will this money be raised?** (Sponsorship and other fund-raising ideas.)

6. How many trustees will you have? How will the board of trustees make decisions, e.g. by a simple majority? (You can find a model constitution by entering 'Small Charities Constitution' in the search facility at www.charity-commission.gov.uk)

Do charities always do good?

There are over 180,000 registered charities in this country alone and 1.2 million in the USA. Whenever there is a serious catastrophe somewhere in the world, charities from many countries immediately become involved. People are desperate to help others in need and often rush to the area with donations, supplies and goodwill.

However, providing aid after a disaster has to be carefully planned. Here are just a few of the factors to be taken into account:

- What supplies are most needed – for example food, clothing, shelter, medicines, fresh water, cleaning agents, portable toilets, tools, building materials or educational materials?
- Where are the worst shortages – in towns, villages or remote areas?
- What cultural influences are there – types of food, types of clothing, language, traditional and religious factors?
- Who is best placed to provide and co-ordinate aid – local councils, the national government, large multinational charities, or small charities?

Here is an example:

The Haitian earthquake

On 12 January 2010 a catastrophic earthquake hit Haiti. An estimated three million people were affected by the quake; the Haitian government reported that about 230,000 people had died, 300,000 had been injured and 1,000,000 made homeless.

Since that time, more than 9,000 organisations have rushed to Haiti to try to help. Many claim that the government is incompetent and corrupt and so they collect money in their own countries and carry out work themselves. Some of the smaller groups, however well-intentioned, have spent many thousands of donated dollars on projects that could have been done more cheaply if these had been locally co-ordinated. One volunteer said, gleefully, as he arrived, “I’m just here for the ride. I’m not sure what we’re going to do. Build a wall, I think, move some concrete”.



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Research, discuss and debate this motion:

‘This House believes that sometimes charities do more harm than good.’

Why volunteer?

There are lots of reasons for people deciding to volunteer with a local group. As well as helping other people, you can also gain important benefits such as new skills and new friends.

- Work in small groups and decide on the three most important benefits of volunteering.
- Then decide ‘what’s in it for me?’ and ‘what’s in it for others?’
- Now log on to vinspired.com and look at all of the volunteering opportunities for young people. Work with a partner and discuss which opportunities you might enjoy. Choose one opportunity to research further.



You can have fun	You can gain valuable work experience
You can do something different and worthwhile in your free time	You can develop your self-esteem and self-confidence by helping others
You can gain experience of new situations that you may face at work	You can make new friends among fellow volunteers and the people you are helping
You can learn about people who may come from different communities to your own	You can make a real difference to people in need
You can develop a positive attitude in the face of new challenges which can help you in the future	You can develop leadership, team-building and problem-solving skills
You can use your volunteering experience to collect evidence for your portfolio and add to your CV	You can make your community a better place for everyone
You can help struggling charities who would otherwise have to employ people to do what volunteers do	You can become part of a new community
You can act as a role model and earn the respect of other people	[Write your own]

Investigating charities and community groups

Before you finally choose your volunteering opportunity, try to find answers to some of these questions:

Aims: What are the main aims of the charity?

Campaigns:
What are the campaigns that the charity is running?

Money: Where does its money come from? How is money collected?

Spending: What proportion of the money is actually spent for the benefit of the people, animals, buildings or environment it aims to help?

Government: Does the charity get any money from Government? If so, what is the money for?

Work conditions: What was the experience of volunteering like for young people who have recently worked for the charity?

Diversity: How does the charity encourage a diverse range of people to volunteer?

Competition: Is it the only charity with these aims? If not, what are the 'rival' charities?

Marketing:
How does the charity market itself?

Consultation: Does the charity ask people who benefit from its work what they want?

Decision making:
How are decisions made?
Do volunteers have a say in decisions?

Case study

Rishi, a ChildLine counsellor



After I had made the decision to volunteer and was accepted, I attended 10 weeks of specialised training along with 17 other new volunteers. I was taught the skills necessary for counselling children and young people. We explored some of the issues that children would be calling us about such as abortion, sexual abuse, bullying and gang-related worries.

We were all from very diverse backgrounds so it was really interesting to hear about other people's experiences and opinions about certain issues. It was also fun – the other volunteers were really sociable which made learning an enjoyable experience.

Being a counsellor isn't really hard but is far from easy. Obviously calls from children who have suicidal feelings are extremely challenging, as are ones where you hear shouting in the background and the line suddenly goes dead. Not knowing what will happen to them or feeling that I haven't had the chance to help them as much as I could have done worries me.

Maybe it will get easier as I become more experienced, but in some ways I'm not sure if I want it to – caring about children and wanting to do the best for them is why people volunteer for ChildLine. It's understandable to feel concerned and although I know I can't fix everything, I can make some things at least a little easier.

Would this opportunity suit you? Why or why not?

What did Rishi gain from this work?

(Case study from vinspired.com website)

Big Society

The Coalition Government has said that it wants to build a Big Society, where people feel they belong and are supported by others in their communities. At the moment, says the Government, “only 4 out of 10 of us believe that we can influence local decisions. Only 1 in 33 of us attends public meetings. We feel anger and frustration at the recent behaviour of both the City and Westminster and relatively powerless to change them”.³

Big Society is based on three principles:

- **Empowering individuals and communities:**
giving power directly to communities, neighbourhoods and individuals
- **Encouraging social responsibility:**
encouraging organisations and individuals to get involved in social action, for example hosting a ‘Big Lunch’, running a pensioners’ club or saving the local post office
- **Creating an enabling and accountable state:**
providing Government support for social enterprise and cooperatives, for example through the Big Society Bank.

Have a look at the short film (‘4 Minute Film’) on the Big Society website. It provides examples of projects that people have set up and describes the benefits gained.

<http://thebigsociety.co.uk/what-is-big-society>

Here are some of the things people have said about the idea of the Big Society. Which of these statements do you agree with? Have a debate on whether the Big Society initiative is new and necessary, or not.

“At present we are often anonymous tax-payers without a real sense of how our money gets spent. Most of us try to be reasonably good citizens but our influence seems very small.”

“The Big Society is not new. People have always volunteered and helped out in their communities, although this work is often not recognised.”

“The Big Society is a powerful vision to change things, creating a nation of empowered citizens and communities.”

“The government wants us all to volunteer to fill the gaps in services that will follow the cuts – that’s what the Big Society is really about.”

³ <http://thebigsociety.co.uk/what-is-big-society>

Active citizens engaged in social action

One important way of building a Big Society is the proposed National Citizen Service (NCS). This will form an eight-week programme for 16 year-olds to be run during the summer holidays after the end of compulsory schooling. It will consist of two separate residential weeks followed by a social action project to be run by participants in their own communities.

Although NCS will be voluntary, it is hoped that, over time, all 16 year-olds will take part as a rite of passage. Programmes have been trialled, and there will be opportunities for about 10,000 young people to take part in pilot programmes around the country in the summer of 2011.

The social action project must have tangible benefits for the local community. It will be delivered by young people working in teams, take up about 50 hours of part-time and weekend work and may be agreed in a 'Dragon's Den' style of interview where the 'Dragons' can award some funding to help the project, if it meets certain criteria.

Find out more about the NCS from www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/news/national-citizen-service-introduced

Activity

Work in small groups to prepare for presentations. Three of the groups will be teams pitching for funding and one of the groups will be the Dragons. Dragons have to judge each pitch against the criteria provided (invented for this activity). Groups A, B and C should spend time preparing for the pitch, having looked at the criteria. Group D should plan the questions it will ask each group at the end of the pitch.

Group A – Social action project: older people's entertainment

Group B – Social action project: sport for kids

Group C – Social action project: teenagers' café

Group D – Dragons

Criteria for project funding

- Will the project have some real impact on the people being helped?
How could this be measured?
- Will the project help the team develop new skills? Which skills?
- Will the project help the team gain new knowledge? What?
- How will the project bring about long-term change?
- Is the project plan feasible? What obstacles will have to be overcome?
- Have the team consulted all relevant groups in the community?
- What funding is being requested? (Dragons can award no more than £100 per project.)

Group A: Old people's entertainment

Your team has decided to plan and run a day of entertainment for some old people who live in a local residential home. One of the team has a grandmother who lives in the home and has noticed that the old people are often bored. You think that the residents would enjoy some regular entertainment.

You would like to put on one event every week for a month. Each of the four events will be themed, but will include some refreshments, games and performances. Team members will bake cakes and make sandwiches, run some games, put on a play, do some dancing and organise singing.

You have costed the project and would need £25 per event (£100 in total) to cover the food, and transport for some of the team. You have spoken to the person in charge of the home, who thinks it is a good idea.

Group B: Sport for kids

Your team is keen on sport and members of the team regularly take part in four different activities – football, swimming, athletics and tennis. You think that younger children don't take part in enough sport and that this is bad for their health.

You would like to help run some training in these activities for children at a local primary school. You propose to contact a school that several of you attended when you were younger and offer your services as after-school coaches in the activities you are good at. The training would take place twice a week for one month.

You have discussed the costs and have decided that you need £50 to cover transport to the playing fields.

Group C: Teenagers' café

Your team is aware that groups of young people in the local area are often seen as a problem by other residents. Because they have nowhere to go, young people hang around outside cafés and on estates talking and laughing.

You have heard through the local youth club that the youth service has gained the use of an empty café in the town centre. It could be used by young people, but is in a very bad state. Your team would like to take part in the renovation, which is being co-ordinated by youth workers. However, you think it would be a good idea to find out first of all what facilities local young people would like in the café and how they would like it decorated.

You plan to organise and carry out a consultation conference with young people and then be part of the renovation team, working at weekends.

You will need some funding for photocopying questionnaires and to provide refreshments when you run your conference at the youth centre. Your estimate is £100.

Resources

Thirdsector is a website that provides information and articles about working in charities and the voluntary sector. www.thirdsector.co.uk

Teachernet provides an extensive list of the major British charities. www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/resourcemat/charities

teachers.tv has a 14-minute video on Comic Relief. Made in 2007, it discusses the role of schools in promoting charity work, and also what school students learn from this. www.teachers.tv/videos/comic-relief-for-heads-secondary

Big Society is explained and discussed on the Big Society Network webpage, and a four-minute film can be accessed via <http://thebigsociety.co.uk>

The Coalition Government's plans to implement the Big Society through, for example the National Citizens Service and the Big Society Bank can be seen at www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/content/big-society-overview

The Guardian has an article on the downside of charitable volunteering: 'Why has so much international goodwill achieved so little in Haiti? Blame the aid tourists.' G2, *Guardian*, 16 November 2010.

Post-16 Citizenship Support Programme

The programme has many resources and materials to enable you to use active learning to support citizenship, including:

More than volunteering: active citizenship through youth volunteering, QIA, 2007

A book of activities that encourage discussion of volunteering and citizenship.

Getting the show on the road: skills for planning and running citizenship events, QIA, 2006

A book of activities that develop young people's organisational and interpersonal skills.

For the sake of argument: discussion and debating skills in citizenship, LSIS, 2009

A book of activities designed to improve young people's discussion and debating skills.

A case for action? Skills for active citizenship research, QIA, 2007

A book of activities that help young people identify, develop and practice action research skills.

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The Learning and Skills Improvement Service's aim is to accelerate the drive for excellence in the learning and skills sector, building the sector's own capacity to design, commission and deliver improvement and strategic change. LSIS's vision is that every learner acquires the skills, knowledge and appetite for learning, living and working and every provider is valued by their community and employers for their contribution to sustainable social and economic priorities.

Disability equality policy

LSIS is committed to promoting equality for disabled people and we strive to ensure that all our communication and learning materials are available in various formats including large font, audio or braille.

Please contact us at enquiries@lsis.org.uk or 0870 162 0632 quoting the document reference number to request an alternative format.

Post-16 Citizenship Support Programme

The Post-16 Citizenship Support Programme aims to disseminate and support best practice in citizenship across all areas of 16–19 education and training and improve coherence and progression from key stage 4 citizenship to the post-16 phase.

www.excellencegateway.org.uk/citizenship