

Tales from the TSI Network

Supporting Volunteering For All

All across Scotland

increasing youth volunteering – Voluntary Action Orkney



Get Ready to Volunteer is a course designed by Voluntary Action Orkney to meet the needs of young people looking to volunteer. Youth Development Worker, Laura Leonard, works in partnership with Kirkwall Grammar School to deliver the course to pupils aged 15 to 18 within Curriculum Support and, due to the high demand from pupils as young as 12, another course was devised specifically for this younger audience. The courses are an ideal starting point for Laura get to know the young people, help determine their needs and carefully tailor volunteering opportunities accordingly.

While a large percentage of young people seek volunteering opportunities in Mainland Orkney, this creates its own challenges in finding suitable placements in what is a relatively small island community.

How Voluntary Action Orkney has helped

Voluntary Action Orkney has forged a strong partnership with Kirkwall Grammar, where the school identifies pupils for the eight-week Get Ready to Volunteer Curriculum Support course. Weekly sessions, which delve into volunteering and how to get involved, are kept flexible - between one to three hours depending on the level of support required – with the optimum being five pupils for both support groups. This allows Laura to look more closely at individual abilities and identify boundaries, with one to one support for those who don't respond so well in a group. As they all learn in different ways, a range of methods ensures each can engage – crafts for the creative, PowerPoint for those who like direct instruction, team games for pupils needing support when working with others, as well as practical volunteering sessions. Using their own skills and hobbies, pupils are encouraged to plan, design and deliver activity sessions to their peers, helping them build confidence in their own abilities.



increasing youth volunteering – Voluntary Action Orkney

Each time Laura delivers the course it evolves depending on the group and their needs. Yet the focus is always on the individual to help overcome barriers and let everyone gain from the best possible experience. Achieving the right volunteering fit is crucial, not solely because there are fewer opportunities in Orkney, but also to ensure they never feel uncomfortable in their placement. While Laura has to be a little creative about each pupil's wishes - volunteering with animals might be a placement in the local cat protection shop - the young people still enjoy the experience. They feel they are doing something really worthwhile, whether its fundraising activities, work at the local foodbank, intergenerational befriending or *bag the bruck* – the annual beach cleaning event on Orkney.

The relationship between Voluntary Action Orkney and Kirkwall Grammar School has helped Laura build trust and engage positively with the pupils, who benefit enormously from seeing more of what goes on outside of school. Some move on to Voluntary Action Orkney's Connect Project where they are offered continued learning after school across a wide range of activities. A real boost for pupils on both courses is gaining Saltire Challenge Awards and being rewarded with their certificates.

Laura gets enormous pleasure from seeing the young people form friendships and grow into more confident young adults. Their volunteering journey with her from transition to positive destination, results in many great success stories. The work of Voluntary Action Orkney and its Get Ready to Volunteer courses is certainly filtering out through this island



Voluntary Action Orkney is the place for volunteering in Orkney
vaorkney.org.uk

Voluntary Action Orkney is on
Facebook

Find out more about Volunteer's Week
volunteersweek.org



Voluntary Action Scotland is the national network of Third Sector Interfaces
www.vascotland.org