



**A GUIDE
TO RECRUITING YOUNG VOLUNTEERS**



WHY YOUNG VOLUNTEERS?

Volunteering is something that young people can no longer ignore and neither is the need for RDA Groups to engage with this enthusiastic new generation of volunteers.

Young people are often the dynamic and dedicated kind of volunteers willing to learn and take on tasks as they are presented to them. Not only can they enhance the experience of riders and drivers, and help you do more in different ways, they bring a new vitality and insight into the work that you do.

Importantly, involving young volunteers is an investment in the future of your group. Ensuring that young people learn the skills to deliver RDA sessions is vital to the sustainability and expansion of RDA, as it seeks to offer even more opportunities for disabled people to ride and drive both now and in the future.

Whilst taking on young volunteers can seem daunting, particularly in terms of training and support, the rewards are huge both for RDA Groups and for the volunteers themselves. This short guide is designed to provide an introduction to recruiting young volunteers in RDA.

Involving Young Volunteers – The Basics

You must get parental permission for all volunteers under the age of 18 years old. This is included on the RDA volunteer application form.

1 in 5 RDA volunteers is under 25 years old.



LOOKING IN THE RIGHT PLACES

It may sound obvious but if your group is looking to recruit young volunteers it's important make sure you focus your recruitment efforts in the places where young people are.

Schools and Colleges

By working with schools and colleges you are certain to attract the attention of young people. Why not ask if you can take part in an assembly or speak to smaller groups of young people in their classes about RDA and what they can gain by becoming a volunteer.

Universities

Many universities have active equestrian clubs which may be keen in getting involved. The university should be able to put you in touch with the president of the equestrian society. Whilst they may not be year round volunteers, students often have a flexible timetable and may be able to help with projects or events.

Local Youth Groups

Organisations such as the Scouts, Guides and Duke of Edinburgh's Award Groups are often interested in learning about what is going on in their community and may be interested in getting involved as volunteers.

Pony Clubs and Riding Clubs

Think about making links with a local Pony Club or Riding Club if you are looking for volunteers with equestrian knowledge.



GET CONNECTED

It is hard to deny that digital communications are a vital part of how the world now works, especially for young people.

It is important to have a variety of methods of communication and having an email contact for your group is an important first step.

For many young volunteers the first point of call will be the RDA website, so make sure you have an up to date email address on our group finder and consider adding a group description to provide an introduction to your group.

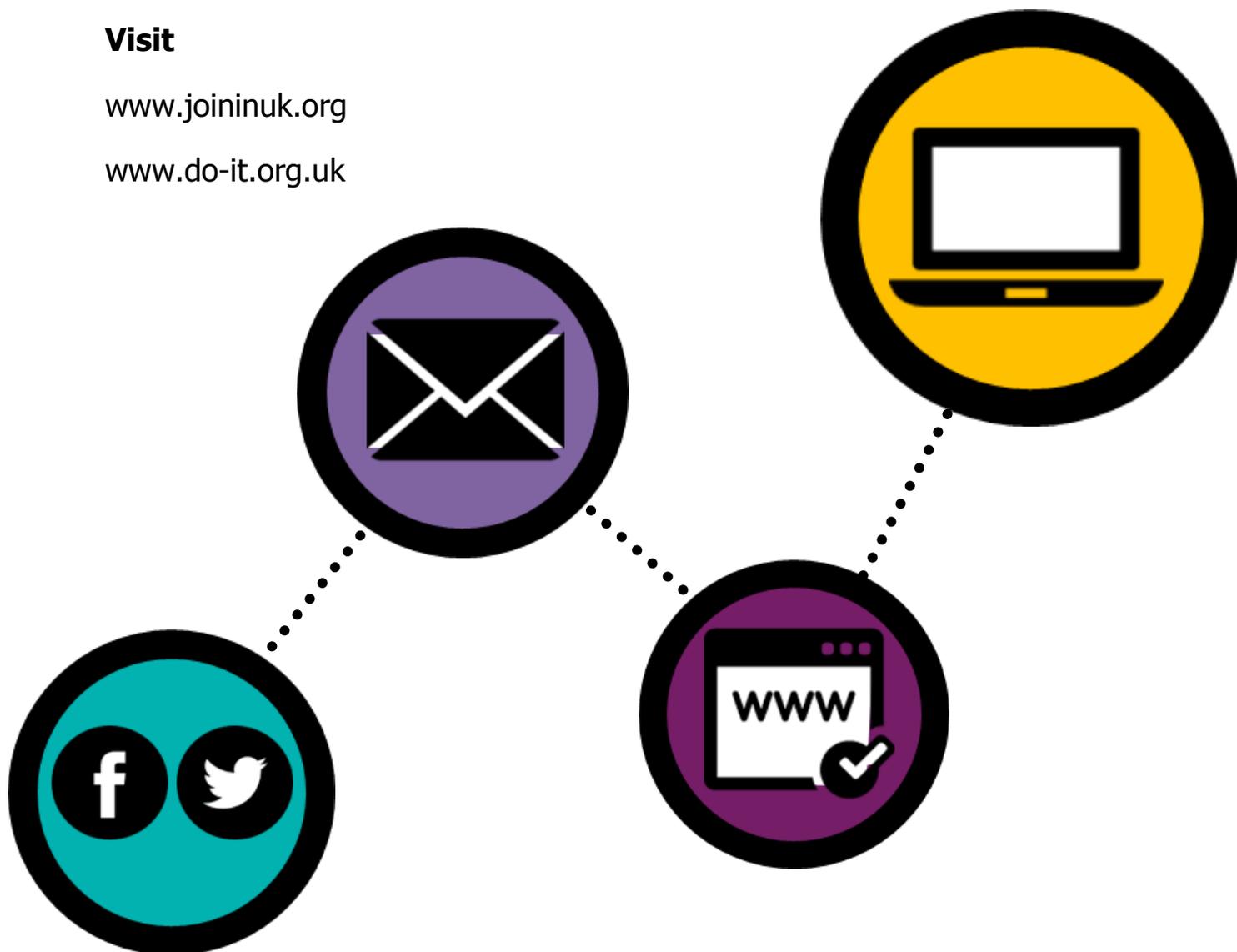
Getting a website for your group can help raise your profile online and is a great way to promote volunteering opportunities. Setting up a website can seem daunting but the benefits are huge.

Many young people are looking for volunteer opportunities and may not think of RDA straight away. Getting your opportunity posted on a volunteer recruitment website can help you match your opportunities to people who are looking to volunteer. Two great websites for this are Join In and Do-it.org which are being used successfully by many RDA groups.

Visit

www.joininuk.org

www.do-it.org.uk



GET SOCIAL

Social Media is also a powerful tool for reaching young volunteers with the most popular sites being Facebook and Twitter.

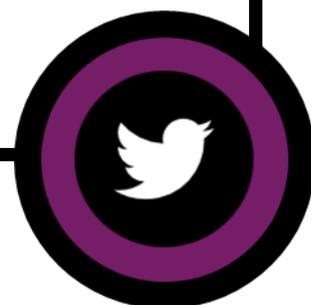
Facebook

Facebook has over 31 million users and 2.5 of these are aged between 13 and 17. The best way to get a presence on Facebook is to create a page for your group. Once you have a page you can post updates, share photographs and promote those all-important opportunities for volunteering – need an extra pair of hands for your Tuesday ride? Get it on Facebook and see who responds!



Twitter

Twitter is all about sharing news and stories with the world in bite sized messages of up to 140 characters. Many RDA groups are already on board and tweeting about your group is a great way to raise your profile as well as send out those all-important volunteer recruitment messages.



PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS & RECOGNITION

Being able to demonstrate skills gained through volunteering is an increasingly important aspect of the experience for many young people and it is this area in particular which will keep young volunteers coming back; to learn more, to do more next week and in the long run to have more responsibility.

Green Card Certificates

Once a volunteer has completed their basic volunteer training you can send their green card off to National Office to obtain a certificate. This is a great piece of evidence of volunteering and a way to formally recognise when a volunteer has completed their training.

The RDA Coaching Pathway

Some young volunteers may specifically be interested in coaching. Working towards qualifications can be a great way of engaging and retaining young volunteers interested in getting involved in this aspect of RDA.

The Young Equestrian Leaders Award (YELA)

YELA is a volunteering award scheme designed to recognise and reward young volunteers in equestrianism and provides a structured programme for young volunteers aged 13-25.

Duke of Edinburgh's Award

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme is a popular programme for young people aged 13-25 and is recognised by many as a significant addition to a C.V. The award is comprised of four sections and one of these is volunteering. RDA is an approved activity provider for the volunteering section of the award meaning opportunities at our groups are approved as a quality experience for DofE participants.

Pony Club RDA Volunteering Badge

For younger volunteers who are also involved in the Pony Club the RDA Volunteering Badge is a great introduction to the world of RDA and also to the world of volunteering.



FLEXIBLE VOLUNTEERING

It's important that all new volunteers feel welcome so it is a good idea to start by spending some time getting to know what young volunteers are interested in. Find out what attracted them to the role in the first place and what they want to get out of their time spent volunteering. Having this conversation will help you find a role that will be both interesting and rewarding.

You may find that young volunteers are looking for experience and responsibility they may not be able to get elsewhere; for example experience of stable work, coaching, IT work, fundraising or event management. Others may be looking for a taste of everything or even a role with very little responsibility.

Get Creative

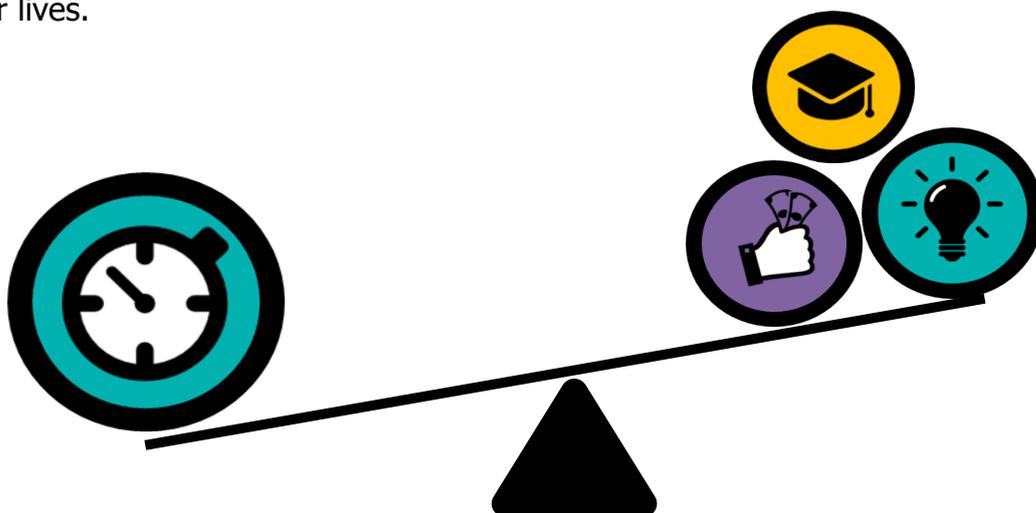
Need someone to design those posters for your next fundraiser or perhaps get you set up on social media? It is worth spending some time thinking about ways young volunteers might be able to get involved in your group that may not be considered as traditional volunteering tasks.

Adapt Roles

Adapting roles helps keep young people interested and involved. Why not think about giving young people a taste of lots of different roles within the group, or perhaps get a team of young people involved in their own project over a fixed period of time? This gives young volunteers the varied experience they may be looking for.

Investment in the Future

The reality is that many younger volunteers will stay a short time before moving on either to other interests or through relocation such as university or having found a job. Remember that if young volunteers have a good experience whilst volunteering it is highly likely they will return to RDA in the future – perhaps volunteering at a different group, making a donation or returning to your group at a later stage in their lives.



FURTHER SUPPORT

If you have any questions about anything you've read or want to find out more then don't hesitate to contact us at RDA National Office.

RDA National Office
Phone: 01926 492915
Email: info@rda.org.uk

RDA Volunteer Coordinator

For support on matters relating to volunteering

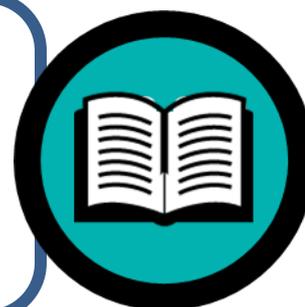
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RDA Youth Coordinator

For support on the Young Equestrian Leaders Award

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RDA Website – www.rda.org.uk

The RDA website lists all important news updates as well as all of our resources for Groups in the Running Your Group section.



RDA Facebook and Twitter

We use social media to share good news and important updates. To subscribe to this information you can like our page on Facebook Riding for the Disabled Association or Follow us on twitter [@rdanational](https://twitter.com/rdanational)

