



Cardiff Students' Union
Undeb Myfyrwyr Caerdydd

Just Keep Swimming



Supporting Struggling and Thriving Volunteering
Projects Post-Covid



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Welcome



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What are we going to cover?

- What Cardiff Volunteering looked like pre pandemic.
- One of Cardiff Volunteering's most successful projects.
- Positives and negatives that come with a successful project.
- What Cardiff Volunteering looks like now.
- How can we improve?



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What we had before

- Cardiff Volunteering was a registered charity.
- 1 Head of Department, 3 Volunteering coordinators.
- 38 student led volunteering projects.
- 770 signed up volunteers. (March 2020)
- 12 annual events, such as Jailbreak and Sleepout.
- Processed over 150 DBS checks a year.
- ~90 external opportunities registered with Cardiff Volunteering.



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Make a Smile

We believe that all children deserve a childhood and understand that illness or disability can make this very difficult for some children.

Our goal is to help these children to enjoy their childhood. We endeavour to be professional, forward-thinking and well trained but hold at the forefront of our practice that fun is the number one priority for both children and volunteers.

There are three different volunteer roles available for this project:

- Character**- attending events, playing games and interacting with the children as a character

- Magic Maker**- attending events, playing games and interacting with the children out of character. Often act as supporting staff. (good jumping pad to becoming a character)

- Imagineer**- an underrated role; not attending events but helping with the general running of the project, organising events and helping with costumes etc. (great for anyone short on time or not wanting to attend events)

MAKE
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SMILE



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Make a Smile

Make a Smile was setup in 2016 as a student-led project, and has grown from strength to strength, building year on year. We have an increasing number of volunteers, fantastic partners and every year we visit more and more children. We currently have over 100 volunteers and have visited over 3000 children throughout over 1500 volunteering hours.

Make a Smile registered as a charity in January 2022.

Make a smile have:

25 chapters in England, Scotland and Wales

6 Chapters in Australia

2 Chapters in Canada

2 Chapters in France

2 Chapters in Germany

They are currently in the middle of setting up a chapter in Northern Ireland

MAKE
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SMILE



Positives

Since Make a Smile has become a charity it has led to some positives not just for the students and service user of the project, but also us as a Students' Union. The project is something we are extremely proud of and are on the lookout for the next Make a Smile success story.

- 1. More students volunteering due to wider reach of the project:** As the project is now an international charity the possibilities for more students across the world to get involved has increased vs when it was just at Cardiff.
 - 2. Better outcomes for service users:** With more chapters across the world more service users will benefit from the work the project does.
 - 3. Showcase what is possible for a Student-led project to achieve:** We at Cardiff can use the success of Make a Smile to promote volunteering with us at Cardiff.
- 1. The Project gives us a story to tell the local community of what good the student community is doing for the local community:** Tensions between the local community and students can sometimes not be at its best, so having projects as successful as Make a Smile to show the good that students bring can often help remind everyone of the benefits the students community brings to the local community.

Negatives

Since Make a Smile has become a registered charity this has added some complications to the way the project runs because while they are still very much an important part of Cardiff Volunteering and we still consider them a student-led project, they are also an external charity now and we must tread a fine line between managing and collaborating with them.

- 1. Use a lot of staff time:** Since the project has become so large it requires more and more staff time to support due to the amount of events and students involved.
 - 2. Expensive:** The project, due to its size and popularity, incurs large costs for outfits and activities it wants to run throughout the year to accommodate all the students that want to get involved.
 - 3. Blurred lines between national charity work and student led project work:** Due to charity law preventing the Students Union providing any support to another charity we have to make sure any funding for example is only going to the student-led project and is not going to the registered charity.
- 1. Volunteers signing up via the national charity not the student-led project:** Due to the size of the charity many of our students will sign up via the national charity and not the student-led project, particularly returning students, which add even more issues around funding and support.
 - 2. Unable to meet 100 DBS check minimum:** Due to the minimum number of DBS required to be processed a year in order to be a processor the Students Union can no longer provide this service to students as Make a Smile also need to meet this requirement so encourage their volunteers to use them as a processor. The Students Union now pays an external provider to offer this service for our students, so it remains free for students.

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What We Have Now

- We still offer the same Lead Volunteer training (It is delivered online instead of in person now, but this is to coincide with how all core training is delivered across the Activities department).
- Lead Volunteers now have access to the wider soft skills training provided to all student groups.
- It is easier for Societies and Sports Clubs to work with Volunteering projects due to all the staff team being in the same department.
- There has been a bigger push for students to do fundraising since the two departments were merged. We have seen a significant increase in student led fundraising since the pandemic.
- Funding to support Lead-Volunteer projects has been protected in the wider Students' Union budget.



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What We Have Now

- Cardiff Volunteering is no longer a registered charity
- Volunteering department absorbed into Activities department with 2 Societies and Volunteering Coordinators and an Activities Intern
- 17 student led volunteering projects (Down 21)
- 244 signed up volunteers (Down 526)
- 3 annual events, such as Skydive and Battle of the Bands (Down 9)
- Do not process DBS checks
- 42 external opportunities registered with Cardiff Volunteering (Down 48)



Cardiff Projects

- We have other 2 projects that are working well: Global Gardens and RAG.
- Global Gardens has had a keen team of consistent volunteers throughout the years.
- RAG has gotten off the ground this year and had 27 students get involved, 5 now run it themselves.
- A rise in sessions for Clean Up Cardiff in conjunction with Welsh Varsity and Athletic Union clubs.



What's Not Going So Well

- We can't run projects without a lead volunteer at the helm.
- The department has changed so there isn't as much staff time to nurture projects until a lead volunteer comes forward.
- We lost our DBS body status.
- Lingering effects of COVID are still present with students' desire to volunteer with the Students' Union.
- Volunteering can't get the same attention as societies, we have over 210 societies to look after as well as 27 volunteering projects.
- The website is outdated so it's hard to navigate.



Trends We've Seen

- Students are willing to volunteer but not in traditional volunteering, society and athletic union committee members, student reps all have bounced back.
- Projects are getting attention, but no one is willing to run them.
- Volunteering tends to get less attention from students at Freshers' Fair and on Social Media.
- Students are more likely to volunteer if they get something tangible – RAG fundraising because they get to skydive or complete the three peaks challenge.



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Area of Volunteering?

Volunteer Relationships?

Skills?

Demographics of Volunteers?

Marketing?

Budget?

Rewards?

Brokerage?

Popularity?



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Questions?

Thanks for attending

