

I am a fourth year music student at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester and have been volunteering with my local Brownies unit throughout my time at university. I had only been volunteering at home for around 6 months before starting my first year, however I knew it was something that I wanted to continue after I moved to Manchester. Volunteering as a student has been a great way to do something away from my studies, and has allowed me to meet a different group of people.

I started volunteering in Manchester at the beginning of November in my first year, about 6 weeks after the start of term. This gave me time to settle in and get my bearings, as well as working out what my commitments at university were. I would definitely recommend this, especially if you have moved a long way from home! My course sometimes involves evening classes and rehearsals, however I have been able to volunteer on a more flexible basis when needed.

Finding a new unit to volunteer with can seem daunting, however there are so many leaders who will welcome you. There are several ways that you can find a new unit:

~ I uploaded a post on the Facebook group for Leaders in Manchester, and by the end of the day I had been put in touch with a unit near to where I was living.

~ You can request to be put in touch with a new unit on GO if you have been volunteering previously.

~ There is a group on Facebook called "Girlguiding Movers" that is designed to help volunteers find a new unit.

~ Girlguiding North West England also have a form on their website for people moving to, or away from the Region, and someone will support you as you find a new unit to volunteer with.

<https://www.girlguidingnwe.org.uk/leader-resources/volunteers-on-the-move>

Aside from being great fun and extremely rewarding, volunteering with Girlguiding also allows you to develop skills for your CV. Some of the skills that Girlguiding can help you develop include:

~ Leadership - The leadership skills you develop can range from leading activities during unit meetings, to taking on another role, such as being a Commissioner.

~ Teamwork - Running unit meetings as part of a leadership team demonstrates your ability to work effectively with other people.

~ Organisation - Planning and delivering weekly unit meetings, trips or residential trips demonstrates a high level of organisational skills.

~ Dedication - Completing qualifications or awards including your Leadership Qualification, Going Away With or Queen's Guide Award show a huge amount of motivation and commitment.

~ Communication - This can be between you and your unit, parents, other volunteers or anyone you come across through Girlguiding.

~ Budgeting - If you are responsible for your unit's accounts or planning the budget for an event, then this is a valuable skill in many different career areas.

~ Working with Children/Young People - If you are hoping to work with children or young people in the future, then volunteering gives you great experience!

As a student and member of Girlguiding, you can also get involved with the Student Scout and Guide Organisation (SSAGO). Many of the universities in North West England have a SSAGO club associated with them, which run regular social activities for their members. You would also have the opportunity to attend national SSAGO events and meet student Scouts and Guides from across the UK.

To find out more about volunteering as a student, you can visit the Girlguiding website!

<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/get-involved/become-a-volunteer/>