Good Practice Insights

featuring Niamh



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At the last YouthVIP Panel session, we sat down with one of our fabulous YouthVIP Panel members - Niamh - to discuss her experiences and get perspective on what good practice when engaging young volunteers looks like.

Below are snapshots of her experience being part of the respectme youth action group when she was in high school, alongside some practical examples of the lessons organisations can take from her journey.

What did respectme do in practice that made your experience with them so positive?

They [respectme] were really good for being quite flexible. So, as I took part in that opportunity during high school, they were very good for moving meetings about, and having both in person and online meetings to just make sure that we were all able to attend.

We were all able to give our full focus to it as well, especially with high school being quite a stressful time. They were very understanding if we had too much on and we had to step away from something - it was very much that we could commit to as much or as little as we wanted to which was really good.

It took a lot of the stress off of me, especially when I was doing exams and was run off of my feet with coursework.

It just kind of made me feel a bit more calm and happy instead of being really stressed out and thinking I've got so much to do and I'm not going to get it all done.



What can organisations can take away from your experience when looking at their own practices?

I think being able to be flexible around what that young person is doing, being able to let them live their own life and make sure that they're not feeling that they need to give up maybe a snack time at school, or time at work to be able to take part.

The whole point of volunteering is that you're choosing to do something that you enjoy to help other people, and it shouldn't feel like a burden. It should be something that you're looking forward to going to rather than something you're feeling stressed and upset about.



So [my advice] is just ensuring that you can be flexible and offer different online or in-person commitments and then also being able to be there for the young person and make sure they know that they can commit to as much or as little as they'd like, and they're not having to act like a paid member of staff.