



Saltire Awards and Curriculum for Excellence Profiling in North Lanarkshire

1. About the Saltire Awards

The Saltire Awards is the Scottish Government's youth volunteer awards which celebrate and reward the commitment and contribution of young volunteers in Scotland, aged between 12 and 25 for their achievements. The Saltire Awards offers a number of milestones from 10 hours up to 500 hours of volunteering, including a team challenge. Participants gain nationally recognised certificates and record achievements, skills and their volunteering journey in a personal online journal. This has the potential to inform the learners' reflections and the learning conversations that happen as part of the profiling process.

The Saltire Awards provides a simple framework by which young people can develop and shape their involvement in volunteering. The step by step process provides a structure which youth workers and young people can easily follow and use together to start, develop and capture the volunteering interests and roles of the young person. It encourages young people to take ownership of and 'self-manage' their volunteering and volunteering journey. This creates opportunities for learning conversations and to support the learners in understanding their own learning and skill development.

The Saltire Awards are delivered in each local authority area by the Third Sector Interface (TSI)¹. Young people can gain the Saltire Award through an organisation (e.g. their school, youth club or volunteer involving organisation) or by themselves by registering online at www.saltireawards.org.uk or contacting their local TSI.

2. Volunteering and Curriculum for Excellence

Like work experience, volunteering offers the opportunity for young people to gain a number of employability skills such as time management, team work and responsibility. Volunteering also enables young people to demonstrate that they are Effective Contributors and Responsible Citizens by giving something back to their communities. The Saltire Awards, as a mechanism to develop and recognise youth volunteering, therefore offers a way for young people to support their Curriculum for Excellence entitlements in a non-simulated and real-life environment. This can help the learners in recognising the skills, attributes and capabilities that they are gaining out with the school environment.

The awards offer opportunities with personalisation and choice; challenge and enjoyment; breadth; depth; coherence and relevance of experience. As well as this, they offer direct opportunities for young people to develop the four capacities: successful learners; confident individuals; responsible citizens and effective contributors.² In particular the capabilities described in Curriculum for Excellence which

¹ www.vascotland.org/tsis

² The four capacities encapsulate the purpose of developing the curriculum and can be found in greater detail in Building the Curriculum 3 page 22

are developed through becoming an Effective Contributor are especially well met through Saltire Award. They include:

- communicating in different ways in different settings (out-with the classroom and in a real setting)
- working in partnership and in teams (especially through *the Saltire Challenge*)
- taking the initiative and lead (when volunteering in an individual placement)
- applying critical thinking in new contexts (ensuring the specific context is genuine, not imitated)
- creating, developing and solving problems (in a real-life context out-with the classroom)

These opportunities can help the learner to develop these capabilities and then deepen their understanding of their own learning through reflection and learning conversations as part of the profiling process.

3. Saltire Awards and Profiling in North Lanarkshire

3.1 Volunteering (and subsequently the Saltire Awards) has been an entitlement for every young person in North Lanarkshire since 2008 as part of Learning and Leisure Services overarching educational policy Raising Achievement for All. *‘Every Learner will have opportunities to volunteer within family, community and workplace settings.’* (RAFA 3). In North Lanarkshire 1072 young people gained a Saltire Award last year alone; this saw an increase from the previous year of 453 young people.

To ensure a personalised, coherent and progressive approach the Saltire Awards is delivered in a number of ways in North Lanarkshire, for example:

Delivery in individual schools focusing on developing the skills of the young people, enhancing their relationships with the local community, and building their awareness of current affairs which impact on them and their communities.

In Brannock School as part of the curriculum, the ‘Make a Difference’ group, made up of around twelve S5 young people have set up and volunteer weekly within a food co-op. This benefits a number of people within the wider community by encouraging healthy eating in the most cost effective way and supports a local business by buying fresh fruit and vegetables for them.

Being involved with the Food Co-op has definitely helped me develop my social skills, I gained experience handling money and using a cash register. It’s been good to get positive feedback from residents who valued the service so we know we are making a difference. I now volunteer at the British Heart Foundation shop in Motherwell every Sunday. (Pupil comment)

10 out of 10 for service

(Resident comment)

The fruit and veg are very good and it’s a good service

(Resident comment)

The schools in North Lanarkshire recognise volunteering opportunities like these, not as an ‘add-on’, but as an integral part of every young person’s curriculum. This means that young people have access to a greater range of opportunities to develop their skills and experiences and have a greater understanding of the value of contributing in this way through the Saltire Awards.

Within North Lanarkshire, volunteering is an entitlement for each of our young people. Across all of our schools, there is increasing recognition that learning which takes place outside the classroom is as important as that which takes place within. Volunteering assists in equipping our young people with the skills they will need to succeed in life beyond school and at the same time improves ethos and builds community capacity. Isabelle Boyd, Head of Service, Standards and Inclusion

It is important that learners develop and build on the skills and attributes gained from their volunteering activities. Profiling processes play a key role in helping young people recognise their achievements and in motivating them to make further progress.

3.2 Realising impact and benefits through Profiling

Whilst we know that young people are very aware of the skills they are developing through taking part, it is imperative that they are supported to get the best possible benefits from their volunteering experience: Helping them to transfer this knowledge and awareness into job applications or into accessing further education or into other career development and training opportunities; and raising their understanding and awareness of the valuable contribution they make to build their own self-esteem.

Examples of this include young people gaining vocational skills through volunteering with people with additional support needs, for others it is about their own self confidence and sense of self-worth:

Volunteering with the pupils from the additional support needs schools was very challenging but I really enjoyed the experience. Throughout the week at Loch Eil friendships were formed and we worked well as a team. My leadership skills improved and I gained confidence and learned a lot about myself and other people especially those with additional support needs. S6 pupil Kilsyth Academy

Strong partnership between the Schools, local Third Sector Interface and Volunteer Organisations in North Lanarkshire mean that the Saltire Awards and volunteering is at the forefront of the minds of school staff when they are discussing progress and profiling with young people. In regular learning conversations, staff always prompt young people to talk about their volunteering, Saltire Award achievements and to reflect on the transferable skills which they have used or developed and help them to capture this in their personal profiles. These links are made consistently and from as early as S1 with the intention that young people become more adept at doing so with less facilitation as they progress.

Schools and education staff are committed to continuing to ensure that young people in North Lanarkshire can link their volunteering experiences and Saltire Award achievements to their personal development and are capturing this through the personal profiling process.

*Jacqui Melville, Volunteer Development Services Manager
Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire, June 2014*