

## CONTACTING POTENTIAL COMMUNITY PARTNERS / SCHOOLS

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Before you get in touch with anyone in the community or within UCL you must speak to your Volunteering Service Supervisor - there may be something important to explain to you about that contact. For example, another student group may be working with them already.

In developing your project plan and discussions with your Volunteering Service Supervisor you will have established your aims and objectives and who you want to deliver your project to - for example older people at a community centre or children in a primary school.

Potential partners include:

- Community groups - e.g. the local playgroup
- Voluntary organisations - e.g. a homeless shelter
- Council departments - e.g. Camden Youth Service
- Health service - e.g. local doctors surgery
- Schools

You may also need other contacts within UCL - for example:

- A club or society
- A particular department (for example, if your project will be of particular interest to art students, it might be worthwhile getting in touch with the Slade).
- Ucl Volunteering Society may also be able to help.

Do some research in advance of the formal first contact to find out who is the correct person to liaise within the organisation.

If you don't know who exactly within an organisation you need to liaise with, you should phone and ask. Also, ask them for the email address for that person and what time of day it's best to contact them to speak to them. When contacting schools you are most likely to be able to meet or speak to a teacher at the end of the school day around 4pm.

Be clear and polite in all of your communications. Ensure that you sound persuasive and reassuring, without making extravagant claims. You need to be professional without being stilted.

Compose your email to the person you've found out is the best link for you in the organisation/school and feel free to send a draft first to your Volunteering Service Supervisor as they will be happy to go through it.

Send the email giving it a clear heading too. Copy in your Volunteering Service Supervisor. Then, if you have not heard back within 3 working days, phone the person you have emailed. Persistence at this point is vital if you want to get your

project off the ground. The person you want to contact will be very busy with other things. Not getting a response from them does not necessarily mean they are not interested in your project but that they are immersed in lots of work. So follow your email up! Be prepared to leave a message for them with the receptionist or administrator and ask them if you should forward the email to them too so that they can remind the person themselves.

If after your follow-up work the person still has not contacted you then let your Volunteering Service Supervisor know. Similarly, if they do not wish to work with you, let the Volunteering Service know and we'll be able to suggest other people you can approach.

Once you've agreed your project with the community partner, it's a good idea to record this in writing – see the Partnership Agreement Form at <http://studentsunionucl.org/services/volunteering-at-ucl/student-led-projects/project-leader-resources>

### **Remember – when contacting community organisations you should be**

- Professional
- Polite
- Patient
- Persistent

### **Sample email to a school**

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Dear Mr Leominster

My name is Anna Smith and I'm co-project leader of a student-led volunteering initiative called Art Sparks, run with the help of the Volunteering Services Unit at University College London. I'm emailing you to see if your school would be interested in our project.

Our group works within primary schools with children aged between 7 and 11 years. We provide exciting art activities for children, in small groups led by our enthusiastic student volunteers. I've attached some of our sample lesson plans from last year.

The project has been running successfully for two years, during which we've received very positive feedback from the school we've worked with, St. Bernard's School in Islington and Grove Road school in Camden. We are now aiming to expand the project to a third school, as we've had a lot of interest from student volunteers.

At St. Bernard's, we came to the school every Wednesday afternoon during the Spring term and worked with the Year 5 class. At Grove Road School we ran a week of activities across the school in late May. If you were interested in working with us, we could use either approach, or discuss how we might try something different to meet the needs of your school.

As I've mentioned above, we are supported by the Volunteering Services Unit at UCL. They will arrange CRB checks and collect references for our volunteers and are an

additional point of reference for you. I have copied my supervisor at the Volunteering Service, John Braime, into this email.

I really hope that your school will be interested in the above sessions. If possible, I would like to arrange to meet up with you to discuss this further. You can contact me by email at [anna.smith.11@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:anna.smith.11@ucl.ac.uk) or phone me on 08567 345811.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Anna Smith, UCL Art Sparks Co-Leader 2018-19

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