

VOLUNTEERING  
WITH THE MIX

Helpline Digital  
Connector



Essential support for young people





## About The Mix

Life is tough. It throws a lot your way and it can be hard to know what to do with it all.

The Mix is here to sift through the embarrassing problems, weird questions, and “please-don’t-make-me-say-it-out-loud thoughts” that you have. We don’t have all the answers, and we can’t (and won’t) tell you what to do, but we will support in any way we can.

The Mix believes in young people so we’ll do everything in our power to inform, encourage, and motivate you so you can make the best choices for yourselves.

We’re a multi-channel digital service. Whether it’s by digesting our articles and videos, talking with others going through similar situations on forums and group chats, or seeking support with trained volunteers and counsellors, you can seek information and support in the way you want it.

The Mix doesn’t just want to reach out to you, we want to work with you too. We strongly believe in peer-to-peer support and offer a variety of volunteering opportunities to strengthen your skills and get you involved, as well as making sure that we’re as well-informed and understanding as we can be of your feelings and issues.

We want to be the first place you turn to get support. Sometimes what you’re told at school or at home just doesn’t cut it. We’re here whenever you need us, wherever you are. Life is tough, but support doesn’t have to be.

## Organisation Details:

Charity Registration Number: 1048995

Company Registration Number: 3031098 (England and Wales)

Registered Office: 209-211 City Road, London, EC1V 1JN

VAT Registration Number: 766 1469 03

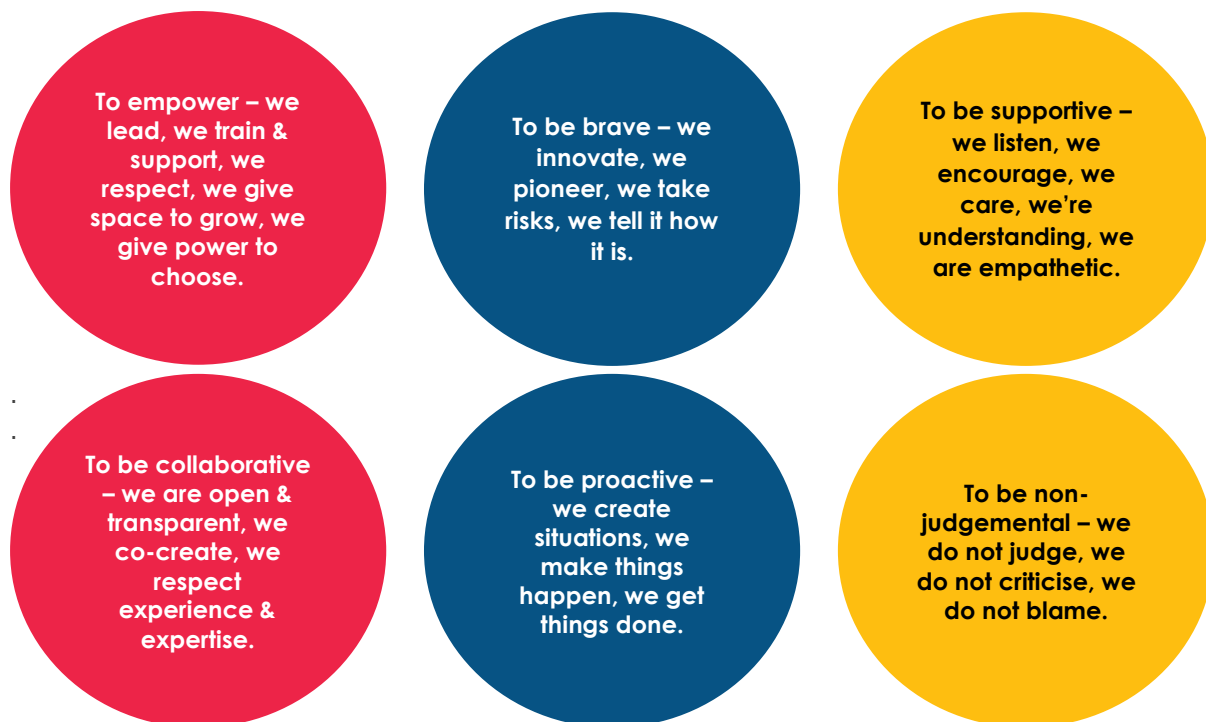
Inland Revenue Number (Gift Aid): XR10652



## Volunteering with The Mix

Our volunteers are the lifeblood of The Mix because without them, we simply wouldn't be able to provide the support we do.

Here you can make a direct difference to the lives of young people in a variety of different way through volunteering on our Counselling service, Helpline and Online Community. Each role holds different kinds of tasks and responsibilities, but at the core of them all is our organisation's core values:



For those who are 13 to 25 and looking for one off or short-term opportunities, you can take part in our Youth Voice program, where we use your ideas to help us develop news tools and services to ensure they are accessible.

For more information, please email [youthvoice@themix.org.uk](mailto:youthvoice@themix.org.uk) and someone from the team will be in touch.

### Contact Details:

If you want to get in contact about any of our roles, there are different ways to get in touch.

Email:	Phone:
<p><a href="mailto:volunteering@themix.org.uk">volunteering@themix.org.uk</a> (For general volunteering enquiries and helpline opportunities)</p> <p><a href="mailto:counsellingvolunteersupport@themix.org.uk">counsellingvolunteersupport@themix.org.uk</a> (For counselling related placements and volunteering opportunities)</p> <p><a href="mailto:community@themix.org.uk">community@themix.org.uk</a> (For community related placements and volunteering opportunities)</p>	<p>Our mainline is open from 9am to 5pm every weekday. You can call us on <b>0207 009 2500</b>.</p>



## What are the benefits of volunteering at The Mix?

As well as that warm fuzzy feeling you get from providing lifesaving support to a person in need, we also aim to provide all volunteers with training and upskilling opportunities to aid with your own personal and professional development. So, if you're trying to collect clinical hours for your counselling degree, or want to gain transferrable skills for your CV, we've pretty much got you covered!

As a volunteer at The Mix, you also get:

- Full training and an induction period to ensure you are well equipped for, and feel confident in, your role.
- Additional emotional support from staff and feeling part of a community of likeminded individuals.
- Access to upskilling trainings. Previous trainings have included Substance Abuse training from The Amy Winehouse Foundation and Hearing Voices training from Voice Collective.
- Opportunities to take part and shape our campaigns – with an active and engaging social media presence, we've been able to meet millions of people and provide expert support.

## How do I become a volunteer?

Every volunteer role has its own application process and throughout the year, we open applications to onboard more volunteers to join our service to provide support for young people across the UK. For certain roles, such as Online Volunteer Counsellor, applications open every two months as we aim to provide training every two months. Other roles, such as the Helpline Call Taker, open when we are low on volunteers or can accommodate more volunteers per shift.

If you wanted to know keep up to date with volunteering opportunities, you can do so on [our website](#) and across our social media platforms.



## Helpline Digital Connector



To be considered for the helpline digital connector role, applicants must:

- Be aged 18 or over.
- Be able to commit to a **3-hour shift at least once a week between 3.45pm to 11pm from Mondays to Friday**.
- Live in the UK or residing in the UK during your placement.
- Be comfortable volunteering online and using a different range of online tools and platforms to respond to messages from young people.
- Have access to a laptop or desktop for the training and helpline shifts – **please note that mobile phones, tablets, or iPads cannot be used when accessing our platform where chats are received**.
- Be highly proficient in written English as you will support young people through chat messages.
- Be able to empathise with young people and provide non-judgemental emotional support without advising or directing them.
- Commit to **6 weeks of training** from **7pm to 10pm**, and **10 shifts within the induction**.
- Commit to 6 to 12 months of active volunteering.

What are the benefits of volunteering as helpline digital connector at The Mix?

- **25 hours worth of training and a 10-week induction period** provided to ensure you are equipped to take calls, receive support, guidance and feedback.
- Debriefs from our helpline team request, who can **provide emotional support and practical support with challenging calls**.
- Support with your development with **additional training opportunities**, as well as **being updated about any other opportunities at The Mix**.
- You're provided with a named person who will **manage and work collaboratively with you, communicating regularly to discuss your work, volunteering experience and any successes or issues**.
- **Direct feedback from young people you've supported** – it's always positive and you're able to see the impact you've had on someone's life!
- We'll provide you with a **reference after the completion of 24 shifts**.

Being a Digital Connector at The Mix can be a really great opportunity, so if you meet the above requirements, you can apply directly on our [website](#).



## What does the application process look like?



You'll be asked to complete an application via the website.



The team will review your application.



If successful, you'll be invited to an information session a week before training.



You'll attend the information session and learn more about the role and expectations.



Afterwards, you'll be sent your official acceptance offer and be onboarded for 6 evening training sessions.



**Below are some common questions about what helpline call taking at The Mix looks like that might be beneficial for you as you consider joining our team:**

### **What will I be expected to do as a digital connector?**

You will respond to chats from young people aged 13 to 25, providing them with emotional support and signposting. You'll provide emotional support, which you'll learn from our training, and be the vital missing link between their issues and the help they need.

### **Do I need to be a certain age?**

We ask that you're 18 or over. We have no age restriction other than that.

### **Do I need experience?**

No experience is needed as we will train you in everything you need to be able to complete this role.

### **What training is provided?**

We provide a full 6-week training course for our volunteers to ensure that they feel comfortable, capable, and confident taking chats on our helpline. The training will be held online via Microsoft Teams.

### **What does the training include?**

Each week, you will be taught relevant skills and information to allow you to be able to fulfil your volunteering role. For example, you'll learn about The Mix's safeguarding and child protection policies and how they are applied to ensure everyone is kept safe.

We want our training to be as enriching as possible, so we combine different teaching methods and resources to support you on your journey. There will be 9 e-learning modules to complete alongside the training sessions.

### **How long is training?**

Each training session is 3 hours long and it's important you attend all sessions to be able to complete the training program.

Historically, our training has been held from **7pm to 10pm on a Tuesday or Wednesday**, however, all days and times for the training will be confirmed in advance to ensure you have plenty of time to make yourself available.

### **What if I miss a training session?**

It's really important that you attend all training sessions each week because we're unable to provide any additional training sessions outside of these days. If you miss a week, you will be removed from this round of recruitment and be asked to attend the next scheduled training.

### **Is there an induction?**

There is! Our induction is 10 shifts and assuming that you complete a shift a week, this is 10 weeks.

In this induction, you'll have a space where you are able to have more tailored support to develop your skills on the helpline. You will be assigned a 1:1 support person who will be available throughout each shift to answer any questions and support you with your chats.



### **Do I need to do the same shift per week?**

This depends on your availability and the helpline digital connector rota.

As we only need three call taker per shift – which means 9 an evening – there might be days that are less popular with current volunteers and would benefit from someone committing each week. If you can commit to the same shift per week, we recommend booking it in advance to ensure that no one else books it.

Don't worry, though, if you're not in a position to offer the same shift per week. You can be added to our reserves list if there's a day you can do but is currently fully booked. Likewise, if you see a vacant shift that you want to do that week, you can book yourself in for that too!

### **When can I volunteer?**

Our helpline is open from 4pm to 11pm every Monday to Friday. To ensure that we can safely support as many young people as possible, we split our helpline rota into 3 shifts. These shifts last 3 hours:

- Shift A: 3:45pm to 6:15pm
- Shift B: 6pm to 8:45pm
- Shift C: 8:30pm to 11pm

### **What if I can't make a shift?**

We get it – sometimes things come up, you've got other arrangements, or you're unwell, so it won't always be possible to attend a shift.

If you can't attend your shift, you need to let the helpline team know as soon as possible to allow us to contact those on the reserves list to fill your shift. You can also log into the volunteer portal to cancel your shift.

If you can't attend your shift, but you can see another shift that you can do, you are more than welcome to swap – that way you won't miss a week, especially if you are trying to collect volunteering hours or experience.

### **How far in advance can I cancel a shift?**

We'd need 2 days notice when cancelling a shift. This allows us to see if we can find anyone else to fill this vacant shift or if a member of staff will need to take chats during that shift.

### **Am I allowed to take holidays or breaks?**

Of course! We always encourage you to actively apply self-care into your life and if that happens to be a holiday, even better! All you need to do is cancel your shifts for those dates and let the helpline team know. You should ideally give us a month's notice when going on holiday or taking a break.

Likewise, if you needed a break to focus on other commitments, like your studies, exams, or family, that can be arranged to. In these circumstances, you'd need to contact your assigned helpline contact to let them know what's going on to allow you both to collaborate on a plan to ensure you can prioritise your needs at that moment and set a timeline for when we check in to have you back to volunteering.

### **How quick do I need to type?**

Don't worry, you're not expected to type quickly. Even though it feels like everything is fast paced, it's okay to take a moment to gather your thoughts and read what has been typed.





There are things in place that will aid you in being able to respond to messages quickly, however, such as quick texts. Training will also provide support with example questions.

We also have something called the 'shape of contact', which demonstrates how conversations are structured, which will also give you confidence in how quickly you respond. This will be taught in your training.

### **What if I get stuck and don't know what to type?**

You'll have your shift leader on hand to support you. They are there to help you with questions and next steps based on how the conversation is going. At any point you feel stuck, or like you're going in circles, you can raise a flag within the chat, which immediately flags to the shift leader.

### **Can I transfer a chat?**

Whilst this is possible, we don't actively encourage this because it can be very distressing for the young person as it could lead to feelings of rejection.

### **Do you provide advice?**

We do not provide any advice, instead, we provide support and act as the essential connection between their issues and the help they require at that moment. We aim to empower them with the support and information they need.

For some young people, this can be exploring their thoughts and feelings, while asking them open questions to help them understand and reflect on their own situation in more depth. However, we won't directly share opinions, tips, or advice as to what they can do.

### **Are you a crisis service?**

No, The Mix is not a crisis service. However, if we believe a young person, or someone else, is a risk, we will act accordingly in line with our safeguarding policy.

Some young people who are in crisis do reach out to use our webchat service because they feel as if there is nowhere else. In any instance when you are chatting to a young person in crisis, your shift leader will support you during the chat, who are trained to handle these types of conversations.

### **But how do you support someone without talking? Do you use lose that human connection?**

Human connection is much broader than in-person support or talking over the telephone, and here at The Mix, we believe that young people deserve to access support in a way that suits their needs and lifestyle. For some, talking over the phone can feel too much, or there might be physical barriers to using a telephone, such as having a hearing impairment. We, therefore, want to make sure that we've remove barriers to young people accessing our service.

Our Digital Connection service successfully provides youth led holistic support, which allows our digital connectors to hold the space, explore and reflect back to the young person before moving into signposting space.

### **Do people ever get angry on the helpline?**

People use our helpline for many different reasons and chances are we're not the first helpline or service they've accessed. It can be emotionally draining and frustrating for a person to re-tell their story and these feelings can be misdirected towards us.



It can feel really upsetting or disheartening when someone you're trying to help lashes out, so should this ever happen, please know it isn't personal or a reflection on you. Your shift leader and designated member of staff supporting you during your volunteering will be able to arrange a debrief with you after the chat, or end of the shift, to ensure that you've had a chance to explore how this exchange has left you feeling and what can be done to help you take care of yourself.

### **Can I use an iPad or tablet?**

No, the platform is only accessible via a laptop or desktop, therefore you would need to have access to one to be able to complete the training and shifts.

### **What kind of support is available to me?**

We want to ensure that volunteers are well supported throughout their time with us, which is why we provide such a robust and detailed training program to allow you to complete your role safely.

As well as the training, we will:

- Provide debriefs after your shift and on request should you find yourself struggling with a particular call or contact with a designated shift leader.
- Provide all volunteers with regular quality assurances to ensure that you continue to grow and progress within your role.
- Provide a collaborative space with your designated shift leader for upskilling and continued development.
- Supply you with access to a support space via our platform, which volunteers can access at any time.

We also understand that every person who volunteers at The Mix will come with their own lived experience. Therefore, should you ever find yourself responding to a call that has triggered any thoughts and feelings that you have experienced or still processing, we want you to be assured that the team are on hand to support you in that moment and after the call.

### **What happens if a call re-trigger any unpleasant memories or feelings?**

We will never knowingly put you in a position that may cause you distress or harm. As we take calls from any and every young person across the UK, there may be times when a young person is talking to someone who mentions something that may bring up memories and feelings from your own experience.

Should this happen, your shift leader or assigned staff member will be able to provide you with a debrief to support you with your needs after the call and what self-care practices need to be put into place to ensure you feel safe. They will also collaborate with you to make a care plan to ensure that something is in place should something like this happen again.

**You are never required to disclose any information about your experiences with us and only what you feel is important for us to know at that time.**

### **Will I be expected to answer emails too?**

We do have opportunities for digital connectors to answer emails and we do have online training to allow you to be able to answer emails confidently. It's not something you would be expected to do immediately, and it isn't expected to take priority over answering chats, however, if it's particularly quiet that evening or there's a high volume of emails, it would be something that would need to be completed.



### **How does safeguarding and confidentiality work at The Mix?**

This is covered in more detail in the training, although you can read about it on our [website](#). It's important to highlight that in circumstances where we believe that we cannot keep someone safe, you would not be the one to contact the emergency services as we do this on your behalf.

Here at The Mix, we have a commitment to keeping everyone safe, and that includes you too. Everyone has a responsibility to adhere to our safeguarding and confidentiality policies, but when it comes to deciding whether we need to contact the emergency services or having to contact them, it is never yours or any volunteer's responsibility. This is what our safeguarding and on-call team are for.

### **What should I do if a young person asks me personal questions?**

You do not have to share or disclose any personal information about yourself if a young person asks for this during that chat. Your anonymity is your right, and we often encourage volunteers to use our pseudonym 'Sam' when chatting to young people should they want to know your name.

### **What happens if I don't know what their slang means?**

That's okay! Language has evolved so much that it's really normal not to know what certain words or phrases mean. This isn't even just applicable to slang, there are some parts of the UK that use phrases or terms that aren't common elsewhere. All you would need to do is ask them to explain what that means to ensure that you've heard and understood them correctly. You've also got the advantage of using Google or asking someone in the Microsoft Teams chat that day who might be able to assist you.

We want these young people to feel heard and validated in a safe way, so we ask that you be polite and respectful throughout.

### **Do you provide references?**

We do – anyone who has provided 6 months of active volunteering will receive a reference. We will personalise it too. If you haven't provided 6 months, we may not be able to provide a reference or may only be able to confirm your volunteering dates.

### **Does The Mix open on bank holidays and over Christmas?**

As we are open on Monday to Friday, we will operate our helplines on bank holidays and over the Christmas period. However, volunteers can take time off during these times, as well as any other time of the year. You would just need to inform the team and cancel shifts on the volunteer platform.



## What do current volunteers think about the experience?

“The team are incredible and volunteering for The Mix is my highlight of the week.”

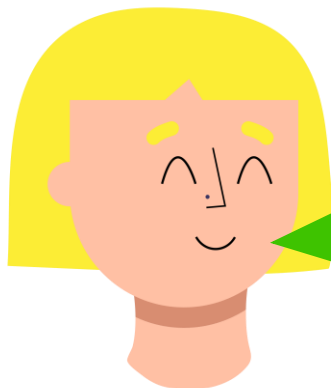
“The initial training 100% helped!! I would not be in the position I am without it. I think each training session was extremely useful and well organised and has made me the confident volunteer I am today.”

“The volunteer team at The Mix are some of the kindest, caring and most committed people I’ve had the pleasure of meeting. It is both a privilege and joy to be part of a team so devoted to helping young people.”

“It really solidified how important helping people in this way is to me and, in a way, I felt most like myself when I was volunteering with The Mix. I really appreciated this opportunity.”

“I have loved my time at The Mix so far. I’ve really noticed a difference in my communication skills outside of shifts too, which has been so rewarding to see. I feel as though the skills I’ve learnt are going to prove so valuable to me as I progress through life, and I am especially excited to showcase them with my next year of university coming up!!”

## What do young people think about our helpline digital connector service?



It helped with the negative thoughts. For the first time I felt a lot lighter rather than regretting opening up to someone.