

Wimbledon Park Watersports Centre **Volunteer into Work Scheme**

Developed from school pupils wanting to use the centre for their work experience or Duke of Edinburgh Award service section, with some further training these pupils could become valued members of staff. This has developed into our Volunteer into Work Scheme where anybody aged 15 or above who provide the centre with 4 or more weeks of volunteering will be given in return the opportunity to attend the Assistant Instructor Course after their 16th birthday.

Should they be successful at passing the course they could be offered some paid work as an Assistant Instructor.

During this volunteering period in house training is provided in both land and water based activities. Each volunteer should bring with them their own skills in either kayaking or sailing, however some have been successful bringing no previous skills with them, just determination and hard work.

We now offer over 30 volunteer spaces each year.

All participants need to bring suitable, comfortable clothes for the weather and activities, including waterproofs and at least one spare change of clothes so you can go home dry.

The development of new instructors offers the business an opportunity to expand the Merton Active Plus Scheme, benefitting the public through more varied Children's Schemes, the individual through training and employment and Merton Council with increased opportunities for all.

Previous participants of Wimbledon Park Watersports Centre Volunteer into Work Scheme

Christella Burke

Christella took part in a Multi Water Sports course as a child of 14.

At 15 she did her work experience with the centre for 2 weeks and after impressing the staff, was invited to work the following summer and hasn't looked back since.

Over the last 13 seasons, she has progressed to hold qualifications from both the Royal Yacht Association and the British Canoe Union. Her experience and managerial skills from her Adventure Education BA

Hons degree have helped her rise to the position of Lead coordinator of Multi Water Sports summer course.

During her time in charge the course has never been more popular, having seen a large rise in participant numbers.

She is now a well-respected member of the senior staff.



"I've had a fantastic 13 seasons at Wimbledon Park and I wouldn't change anything about my job. I get to spend my time outdoors and have fun with children; it really doesn't feel like work at all. Over the years the Centre has gone from strength to strength and I'm proud to have been part of that development. I hope that I can continue to be influential in years to come."



Tom Anthony

Tom was given an opportunity to volunteer at the Centre having had no previous watersports experience. He now holds both canoe and sailing instructor's qualifications and is also trained to safely operate on the Centre-climbing wall. Since his introduction to paddle sport, he has been on several river trips and joined a canoe club, which specialised in sprint paddling (winning a few national competitions along the way). During a previous London Youth Games, he was asked to manage and organise the paddling participants.

Tom is a shining example of our volunteering programme.

Having had no experience in watersports as a volunteer, he is now regarded as one of the most valued members of staff.

"It is really the best job to have! Its the perfect time of year to work being outside term time, but I wouldn't call it work. I have fun with people all day. Get involved, I'd recommend it! #awesome"

Paulus Graham

Like Tom, Paulus came to the centre with no previous experience of watersports other than being a participant on school sessions. He volunteered for several weeks. His attitude and commitment were recognised, and so it was not long before he was offered a paid position as an assistant. He is currently training for his water-based qualifications and has recently acquired his Powerboat Level 2.



“Working at Wimbledon Park has been a new experience and I've made new friends. I've learned new skills, some of which I never thought I would do in life. I love my job, I get to build a great relationship with the children and have fun while doing it.”



Kate McLaughlin

Kate progressed to our new and improved volunteer scheme for 2012 after several courses with the Centre as a child. Participants have come from a variety of backgrounds. They were asked to commit to a minimum of 4 weeks in order to learn the basic skills and coaching methods to be an assistant. Kate originally came to the Centre as a sailor but has put a great deal of effort into improving her paddling skills. Her coaching ability shows real promise and the Centre hopes to develop that with her over the coming seasons.

“I understand much more about what the instructors actually do thanks to the training and experience I received on the programme. It really has made me want to train for the Assistant Instructor qualification. Hopefully in the future I can get my Dinghy Instructor qualification so I can transfer the skills I have learned here to open up further possibilities in watersports.”