



LSE Volunteers

Celebrating volunteering and fundraising
at LSE in 2020





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LSE Volunteer Pledge

The London School of Economics and Political Science pledges to encourage volunteering amongst its students. The LSE Volunteer Centre and Student Union will continue to work in partnership to further develop volunteering as an integral part of student life.

Volunteering offers benefits to our students and the local community in line with the School's values and commitments. By volunteering students can engage with the wider world, support the environment and gain new skills to compete in a rapidly changing job market.

Introduction

LSE students are among the most dedicated volunteers in the UK with almost 40 per cent of students giving thousands of hours of their time and raising thousands of pounds. With their skills, dedication and hard work, they have a significant impact on the lives of many people, including their own. Student volunteers at LSE foster a sense of community on campus and make an important contribution to the work of charities all over the world.

We're delighted to share with you their inspiring stories and hope you enjoy reading about the impact of student volunteers from LSE. The students and charities featured represent a handful of the fantastic individuals, groups and charities we work with. Join us to help celebrate volunteering and fundraising at LSE.

David Coles
LSE Volunteer Centre Manager

Victoria Longhi
RAG President 2019-20



A year in review

The LSE Volunteer Centre is at the forefront of LSE's engagement with the charity sector and is the hub of volunteering on campus. Each year we help thousands of students donate tens of thousands of hours to good causes locally, nationally and internationally. Our mission is to inspire and empower LSE students to volunteer for causes they're passionate about.

We're proud of the difference that volunteering makes to the communities we live, study and work in and how it can transform students' time at LSE. 70 per cent of students who volunteer say it improved their LSE experience and they also feed back that it enhances their knowledge of their degree subject, improves their well-being and they feel more part of LSE.

COVID-19 has provided unprecedented challenges for all areas of society and particularly those that were already most vulnerable. Our charity partners have made incredible efforts to help their beneficiaries and we were proud, but not surprised, by the response of the LSE community who stepped up to collect for foodbanks, befriend elderly people, deliver food to those shielding and many other tasks that were nothing short of essential to those relying on them. "Never more needed" was the theme for Volunteers' Week this year and it was particularly pertinent.

In the last year we have seen a huge amount of interest from students in volunteering with over 750 attending our two volunteer fairs and almost 250 taking part in our one-off volunteering programme.

Student Volunteering Week was another fantastic success with film screenings, micro-volunteering and our campaign to highlight the different ways in which volunteering can benefit students.

Our charity partners continue to offer varied and interesting opportunities, giving our students the chance to take on responsibility to make a difference for a cause that they're passionate about. As always we have had fantastic feedback from the organisations we work with about their relationship with the Volunteer Centre and the quality of work completed by LSE students, something the School should be very proud of.

We are also particularly proud to partner with colleagues across LSE such as the LSE Residence's Team, the LSE Faith Centre, Sustainability, LSESU and various LSE researchers.

We are excited to build on this year's successes and to inspire even more students to become part of the LSE volunteering community.

David Coles

LSE Volunteer Centre Manager



“Volunteering is an important part of being part of a community. Whether on the LSE campus, in a local neighbourhood or on an international scale, we can all bring about change by investing our time in causes we care about. The impact of volunteering on students can be truly life-changing by improving their well-being, confidence and skills, all whilst improving the lives of others. Volunteering fosters a cooperative and collaborative spirit on and off campus, and is valuable, necessary and rewarding for all that are #partofLSE.”

LSE Director, Dame Minouche Shafik





Aadil Khan

BSc in Government and Economics, 2020

*Crewmate at the **Literacy Pirates***

Since my first year, I have been a Volunteer Crewmate with the Literacy Pirates. I attend three-hour evening sessions, in which I read and write with local children aged 9-12 years old. The sessions are aimed at building the children's core literacy skills and confidence.

My volunteering helped me improve a number of skills including communication, teamwork and resilience. It also helped me secure a summer internship, with the Teach First Insight Scheme, and a graduate scheme offer. This was a two-week internship where I learned teaching theory, and then was placed in a school in London. Moreover, I was then offer a place on Teach First's Teacher Training Programme. My volunteering prepared me to work with children. Moreover, it gave me the confidence to apply for these roles and pass assessment centres.

Also, I strongly believe that volunteering helped me with my academic attainment. Firstly, volunteering allowed me a break from work, to ensure that I felt well rested when attempting summative projects. Secondly, volunteering helped me build up a life outside of LSE, which strengthened my time management skills and so helped me better manage my degree workload.

Volunteering has become a core part of my LSE experience. I believe that volunteering with the Literacy Pirates enabled me to engage with different activities, people and skillsets than I would have done without volunteering. Volunteering allowed me to engage with communities aside from the students and faculty at LSE. It made me feel a part of new communities in Hackney and Tottenham, by striving to increase the educational attainment of the young people in those boroughs. Therefore, volunteering strengthened my LSE experience and I would strongly encourage fellow students to take up volunteering.

“Volunteering has become
a core part of my LSE
experience.”

Aadil Khan





Emily Otvos

BSc in International Relations and History, 2020

Aminah Nihal

BSc in International Relations, 2021

Co-founders of the LSE Women's Interfaith Group

The LSE Women's Interfaith Group is a social action, charity initiative seeking to bring together female LSE students from all faiths and none. We run fortnightly sessions in which we primarily make sandwiches for homeless people, which are then distributed at the Islamic Society's Soup Kitchen on campus. We also host speakers, collaborate with other LSE societies and run targeted events such as a toiletries collection with the Athletics Union to make care packages. We have worked closely with LSESU FoodCycle who provide almost half of the food we use to make sandwiches, thus simultaneously promoting the key issue of food waste and reducing our costs – ensuring our project is as environmentally sustainable as possible.

We founded the initiative after receiving seed funding from Nisa-Nashim, a Muslim and Jewish women's partnership, in March 2019, and created the society at the start of the 2019-20 academic year. A problem with a number of interfaith initiatives that we had experienced was their temporary, superficial and sometimes awkward nature, and thus we wanted to create a society that allowed female students of faith to meet on a regular basis to discuss issues that were important to them, whilst simultaneously partaking in volunteering.

We saw a need to address multiple issues such as rising religious based hate crime and discrimination rates as well as exponential homelessness, thus endeavouring to create an opportunity to combat these problems through working towards common goals. The Women's Interfaith Group seeks to not only make a difference in our local community but build lasting connections and bridges between women of faith in an increasingly hostile and polarised environment.



“We want to make a statement as a group of empowered women of faith that we can come together to change our community for the better, dispelling stereotypes, barriers and prejudices.”

Emily Otvos and Aminah Nihal





Jennifer Fernandez Owsianka

LLB in Laws, 2020

Legal support for Toynbee Hall

One Saturday afternoon, I was triaging a new client at the Free Legal Advice Centre (FLAC) of Toynbee Hall. Hearing the client's distress over potential homelessness, years of struggle with mental health and addiction, I felt rather small and powerless. Sitting there with my notebook and pen in hand. I have listened to many traumatic experiences over the phone and it's never easy to listen to them. But being face-to-face with someone and seeing their immediate distress is incalculably worse. Nothing in your notes can help you then.

Volunteering has not completed my education, but rather it has begun it. It has stretched my education in an unpredictable way.

My FLAC supervisor told me that a volunteer's greatest asset is consistent commitment. As I've volunteered at FLAC for almost two years, on a weekly basis, I've been able to start a project to develop public legal education from scratch, and brainstorm ideas for projects to improve the client experience and

environment. Because I committed, I was given the opportunity to go beyond my current role, capabilities, and competencies.

Volunteering has been invigorating, challenging, and an incredible learning curve. It has shown me the benefits of studying law, but also the gaps in my skillset. It has acted as both complementary to my studies and as a counterbalance. I've realised that the more I'm surrounded by people I want to work and volunteer with, the more I commit and the more I want to contribute.

I am graduating this year and I've learnt that there is so much I don't know.

Graduating and leaving London is hard. I will no longer be volunteering here and I will also be leaving the supportive community of LSE and especially the LSE Volunteer Centre. The Volunteer Centre has been a voice of encouragement for three years – and an attentive listener to all my random ideas. Thanks to them, I firmly believe that volunteering positively impacts the LSE community.

I would recommend volunteering to anyone and tell them they'll change in unexpected ways.

“Volunteering has not completed my education, but rather it has begun it. It has stretched my education in an unpredictable way”

Jennifer Fernandez Owsianka





Léna Petit

MSc in Criminal Justice Policy, 2020

COVID-19 response programme with St Mary's Hospital

When the pandemic started, I had the feeling that I needed to do something and try to help. As I have no medical skills, I searched for opportunities to support the staff during these unsettling and hard times. I found out that St Mary's hospital was launching a COVID-19 Crisis Response Volunteering campaign and signed up immediately. I was already volunteering before with women overcoming drug addictions, but I never had the chance to volunteer in a hospital.

Whilst volunteering at St Mary's, our group was in charge of delivering meals for the staff. We used to provide lunch, and dinner, which will still continue but has decreased as the pandemic is now more under control. Whilst the plan was to provide meals, we also had to deliver an incredible amount of fabulous donations. The hospital opened a 'free shop' to store these donations and distribute them amongst the staff.

Volunteering was amazing. Alongside making me realise how complicated a hospital is from a logistics point of view, it also made me realise that a hospital is nothing else than a big family. The staff were really nice to us, which only motivated us to go beyond necessary and bring more joy where we could. I felt like I had a purpose, and I was making a small, but helpful, difference in this pandemic. Volunteering has slowed because we are receiving fewer donations, but I'll keep on trying to make a difference in the shifts I'll still do, and in everyday life.

If I had one thing to advise about volunteering, it is to try. Once you've tried it, you'll never stop!



“*I felt like I had a purpose, and I was making a small, but helpful, difference in this pandemic.*”

Léna Petit





Laura Reynolds

Community Participation Manager
COIN Street

We are close neighbours of LSE and really benefit from the students and the LSE Volunteer Centre. As a social enterprise working in Waterloo and North Southwark, LSE students are a great resource for Coin Street and help us to deliver a range of free and affordable sessions for the local community. LSE students are committed, enthusiastic and hardworking and they help us to run programmes to improve the wellbeing of local people.

A fantastic team of LSE volunteers help at our Young at Heart seniors party each January. The volunteers help welcome guests, serve drinks and dinner for over 120 older people and then join in the dancing and fun. Our guests love having bright and enthusiastic volunteers at the event and always comment on how brilliant they are!

We also have several LSE students supporting our tutoring and mentoring sessions, providing academic help and confidence building for local young people. These productive and friendly sessions really benefit local young people. The time and expertise of LSE students is invaluable. LSE students help put the fun in Family Fitness and Fun on a Sunday, running arts and crafts, sports activities and taking part in the dance. Volunteers mean we can increase the capacity of the sessions and benefit more local families.

Coin Street has been fortunate enough to have some LSE students who have been involved over several years. These volunteers really get to know the local community and give so much to our neighbourhood. Some students have gone on to work in the sessions and have found the experience in the voluntary sector useful for their future careers.

The LSE Volunteer Centre is a real pleasure to work with from the busy and well organised volunteer fairs, the insightful events and brilliant one-off volunteer teams. They really help LSE students find their role within Coin Street and within the London community.

REACHOut



Rebecca Waite

Volunteer Officer

ReachOut

ReachOut is a mentoring charity working with young people in disadvantaged communities to raise aspirations and help them grow in character and attainment. At ReachOut we believe that academic skills and character strengths go hand in hand to help our young people to achieve positive outcomes and go on to lead good, happy and successful lives. Support from a mentor can help to develop those key skills and strengths.

We have worked with LSE for a number of years, who provide us with countless volunteer mentors each academic year. The mentors are partnered with one of our young people aged 9 to 11, who have been referred to us by their schools.

LSE volunteer mentors meet weekly with their ReachOut mentor at after-school projects that take place in a classroom in our partner schools. For the first hour of each session the mentees and their mentors work one-to-one on Maths and English and structured character activities. The second hour ranges from arts and crafts to sports. As well as fun and team building, these group activities all focus on taking the young people through ReachOut's character journey which develops mentee' fairness, self-control, good judgement and staying power.

We are hugely grateful for the LSE Volunteer Centre, who encourage us to hold "Charity Tuesday" stalls on campus, and allow us to promote our opportunities to the LSE community. This helps us to reach students who have interests in line with our charity and are keen to make a difference within their communities.

LSE students have had an enormous impact on our projects this academic year, by being reliable, inspiring and fun mentors for our young people. We always find that our LSE mentors are extremely committed, and it's with this consistency and stability that we find our mentees best grow in character and attainment. Thank you to the LSE Volunteer Centre for helping ReachOut to have another successful year, and we look forward to all the future positive role models.





Volunteering has benefited me by...



Aaina Chopra

BSc International Relations, 2021

"... My volunteering has given me a different perspective into current day issues."



Jessica Thakkar

BSc Mathematics and Economics, 2022

"... My volunteering helped me connect with people and get adjusted to the new culture in London. Shifting to a new country was a big challenge for me like any other student. But my volunteering experience made me more confident and outspoken. Not only that, it helped me to create a difference, make people happy and use my time productively outside studies."



Fatima Kane

BSc Economics, 2022

"... My volunteering pushed me out of my comfort zone: it helped me build confidence and create some of my most valuable life experiences."



Annie Thomlinson

BA Social Anthropology, 2020

"... My volunteering has allowed me to connect with my local community which makes me feel more at home in London."



Ismat Qayum

BSc Philosophy, Politics and Economics 2021

"... My volunteering experiences have reminded me of something that can be easily overlooked: human connection. Be it the smile you give when helping in the soup kitchen, or the words of encouragement at the homeless shelter – the volunteering experience is enriched with the human interaction. It is these little interactions that enrich the volunteering experience and is – at least to me – the greatest benefit. When you look at volunteering in this light, it is less about the time you give up, rather, the smiles and words of encouragement you gain. That's the human connection we mustn't forget."



Crystal Isaac

BSc Philosophy and Economics, 2020

"... My volunteering has enabled me to meet new people, whilst learning new skills and developing my confidence."



Jennifer Fernandez Owsianka

LLB, 2020

"... My volunteering enables me to have a tangible impact beyond the classroom. It allows me to see the importance of tiny details needed for progress, ones that make my life and those of others better."





Volunteering has benefited me by...



Joshua Akinpelu
BSc Accounting and Finance, 2021

"... My volunteering has helped me to broaden my horizons, heightened my self-awareness and it enabled me to make a tangible impact on the lives of others."



Lauren Rae
MSc Management, 2020

"... My volunteering has pushed me outside my comfort zone, introduced me to new people and places and built up my confidence."



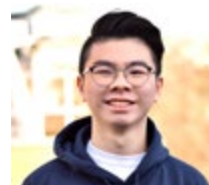
Maelys Hohagen
BSc in Management, 2022

"... My volunteering helped me to meet very different students from every course. I learned not only from my volunteering experiences but also from them!"



Ravneet Deol
LLB Law, 2021

"... My volunteering has allowed me to become more mindful; to stop and appreciate the moments where I'm able to help someone when I really can't see past the pressure of my degree. It's made my outlook more positive."



Stanley Sunata
BSc Finance, 2022

"... My volunteering has helped me feel like I'm part of the London community. Working with children from East London on green projects, I've been able to interact with this vibrant community, allowing me to understand the intriguing ideas and fresh perspectives its members have to offer. This experience has helped me foster the ability to connect with people from such different backgrounds, to better work with them to make the world a greener place."





RAG contribution

Victoria Throen Longhi

BSc in International Social & Public Policy with Politics, 2021

LSESU President 2019-2020

LSE SU RAG is quite an animal. Her technical name is “the Fundraising Arm of the LSE Students’ Union”. As an over 800-member strong society, and one of the most active groups on campus, RAG engages with thousands of students each academic year through its society collaborations, events, and challenges. We are proud to put on a diverse and ambitious programme ranging from Freshers’ Week and climbing Mount Kilimanjaro to comedy, quiz, and speaker evenings. Fundraising is arguably the groundwork of the vital work that charities are doing. I am proud and humbled to say that RAG raises each year in excess of £100k towards pressing local, national, and international causes.

What is further special about RAG is that we put, not just the fun, but the community, the challenge, the personal growth, and also the healthy discomfort in fundraising. Students take on challenges like climbing Three Peaks, a 24-hour row-a-thon, or getting involved with organising Freshers’ Week at LSE welcoming 1000+ students across six nights for charity. Key skills include teamwork, discipline, and creativity.

With RAG, you raise a substantial amount of money and you develop transferable skills in organising events and brand management. As a general point, then I find it encouraging that students at LSE fundraise for, and get involved with, social causes while working towards their individual degrees. I would like to end with saying that the RAG committee has felt like a family to me this year. We are 17 people across different degrees and interests, but RAG was a space and mission that brought us together. LSE SU RAG will forever positively define my time at university.

Come and get involved, you will not RAGret it!





RAG contribution

Rishi Chandarana

BSc in Mathematics with Economics, 2021

Resident RAG funny guy and Treasurer 2019-2020

I have spent the last two academic years working within RAG and have loved every single moment of it. It has introduced me to a wide range of charities and organisations and has also given me some of my best friends and greatest experiences. From tracking students in internal challenges such as RAG Gets Lost and Jailbreak to summiting Mount Kilimanjaro, RAG has allowed me to not only help in giving to communities that need support, but to also explore and develop my own skills and limits.

RAG is a community that allows students and societies to individually express their passions and interests in various causes and projects. It's involvement across campus has allowed me to feel at home with the work that I have done throughout the year. From being involved in the organisation of the RAG Band during fresher's week to experiencing other big projects throughout the year such as RAG Week. RAG has been an integral part of my life at university and has

Having previously worked as a challenges officer last year and currently being treasurer, I have experienced RAG from a fair few angles. Whilst I am seen as the funny guy on the committee, I have worked with the committee on many projects and even launched my own. During my time as treasurer, I noticed the difficulties that many societies bought up about collecting donations for their causes. I have liaised with RAG and the SU to begin works on formalising processes to allow for card machines and card payments to become more common and accessible for students wishing to raise money on campus. This is a project which as seen great success so far and is something I'd look to see continued into the next year.

RAG has provided me with a sense of purpose and belonging whilst at LSE and has given me opportunities and friendships I can cherish for a lifetime.





Our Student-Elected Annual Charities



Local Charity

RAG supports [The Felix Project](#). The Felix Project is a food charity promoting sustainability by rescuing edible food waste and delivering it free of charge to vulnerable people suffering food poverty in London.



National Charity

As our national charity, RAG supports [Refugee Action](#). Refugee Action is an independent charity providing advice and support to refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. It also campaigns for a fairer asylum system.



International Charity

Our international charity is [Doctors Without Borders/ Médecins Sans Frontières \(MSF\)](#). Their medical teams act fast to save people's lives in conflict zones, natural disasters, and epidemics. They go where they are needed the most. MSF also crucially bears witness to atrocities around the world. They are in a unique position to bear witness, as they are financially independent from government aid.





My Rag experience...

Shivani Gunasekaran Balaji

Masters Student, MSc Marketing

"RAG has undeniably been one of the best parts of my student experience in the UK. It makes raising money for incredibly easy and fun; through wild student parties, climbing the tallest mountain in Africa, and hitchhiking through Europe in a bizarre outfit. It's a great way to give back to society whilst also having a fun-filled university experience!"

Charlotte Morrison

1st Year LLB Law

"I was so nervous to join RAG, as I didn't know anyone beforehand- but I was so wrong! Both old and new members welcomed each other and we all became instant friends. I love being a member of RAG; I feel as if I'm making a difference to the local and wider community."

Mia Elkouby

2nd Year PPE

"RAG is a big community as much as a solid family. We all work together. So many people are excited about getting involved with RAG, either by organising an event or helping raising money for a good cause. This is what I loved about RAG: people's enthusiasm and dedication."support we were able to put on a great evening for the Athletics Union."

Lucy Morris

MSc Criminal Justice Policy

"LSE's RAG team and it's members are incredible. Throughout my only year at LSE, they have achieved wonderful things and made me feel so included and motivated to fight for all causes"

Kara Jessup

1st Year PPE

"RAG has allowed me to explore parts of LSE I would have otherwise been unable to see. From working with the SU and various London clubs for freshers week to picking out challenges for Date Night, I got to meet so many funny people and take part in really challenges !!!"

Nathen Allen

2nd Year Government

"In RAG I've been a fundraiser, a bouncer, an events organiser, a cashier and a Quizmaster. I only wish I had signed up sooner!"

Emilie Gjaldbek-Sverdrup

2nd Year IR student

"The saying of the year has been "RAG takes you places" and that is definitely true. From MSF talks to night club floors - and all for charity of course!"





lse.ac.uk/volunteercentre

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-  volunteer@lse.ac.uk
-  [LSE Volunteer Centre](#)

“*The LSE Volunteer Centre is a centre of knowledge on the transformational impact that volunteering has for LSE students. We inspire and empower the LSE community to volunteer for causes they are passionate about and aim to create active citizens, shaping a better world through volunteering.*”

The LSE Volunteer Centre

