



Rewarding Volunteers: special events and reward schemes

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Introduction

Volunteers are essential to the voluntary sector, carrying out a huge variety of activities to support organisations, groups and individuals in all areas of society. One of the most important ways organisations can reward their volunteers is by recognising and celebrating the work they are doing. This resource outlines several examples of special volunteer awards, events and reward schemes to celebrate your volunteers' contribution in a meaningful way.

Volunteer Awards

Southwark Stars

Organised by Community Southwark, [Southwark Stars](#) is an annual event held at The Tate Modern's Tate Exchange to celebrate Southwark's most inspirational volunteers and community groups. This event gives Community Southwark the opportunity to celebrate those who take the time to volunteer to support others, thus helping to make Southwark a better place.

The award ceremony is split into 12 categories, including Volunteer of the Year, Positive Contribution to Wellbeing Award, Disabled Volunteer of the Year and Young Volunteer of the Year. This event brings together outstanding volunteers, community groups and local people across Southwark to celebrate their achievements during a special night out. Last year, due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Southwark Stars event was held online for the first time. [Click here to see videos and photos](#). Keep an eye on our website and newsletters to see how you can nominate your volunteers for Southwark Stars 2021!

Southwark Civic Awards

The [Southwark Civic Awards](#) celebrates the exceptional contributions to civic, community or family life by individuals, businesses, projects or organisations in the borough. Nominees include anyone who has given a lifetime, or many years, of service or made an exceptional contribution to civic and community life in the previous year.

Only a handful of citizens are awarded an honour each year, with winners receiving the 'liberties' of one of Southwark's three metropolitan boroughs – Bermondsey, Camberwell and Southwark. In addition, a Young Citizen of the Year Award is given in recognition of the exceptional community spirit, generosity or civic mindedness of a young citizen in the borough, under the age of 25.

To nominate someone, you can contact the Southwark Mayor's Office by calling 020 7525 7303 or emailing mayors.office@southwark.gov.uk.

Mayor of London's Volunteering Awards

Every year, the Mayor of London celebrates the contribution of volunteers across the city through the [Mayor of London's Volunteering Awards](#). Each winning individual volunteer, or team of volunteers, receives a personal letter from the Mayor of London to thank them for their service to London city and its' residents. An awards ceremony is usually held at City Hall, hosted by the Mayor and other special guests.

The awards categories change every year, with three categories being judged in 2020: Crisis Response, Delivering Differently and Community Champions, as well as a special category – the Mayor of London Young Volunteer Special Award. The 2020 awards were slightly different to previous years, as the GLA (Greater London Authority) granted a small amount of funding to the charity with the winning volunteers.

Keep an eye on the Mayor of London's website for information on the 2021 award categories and consider nominating a volunteer or group of volunteers in your organisation, to give them the opportunity to be rewarded for their incredible commitment.



The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

The [Queen's Award for Voluntary Service](#) is the highest award given to volunteer groups across the UK, with winners receiving a certificate signed by the Queen and a domed glass crystal. Representatives from the group may also be invited to attend a royal garden party. Any group of 2 or more people doing volunteering work, which has been running for 3 years or more years, can be nominated for the award. [Click here to nominate a volunteer group](#).

Volunteer Events

Volunteers' Week

[Volunteers' Week](#) is a national event held every year during the first week of June. There are lots of different ways that organisations can get involved, such as running an event or awards ceremony, collaborating with other organisations in your local area, getting active through wellbeing walks or community clean-ups, and many more ideas which you can [read here](#). At Community Southwark, we celebrate volunteer's week by showcasing volunteers' stories, running outreach programmes with the local community, holding a picnic, and sharing volunteering opportunities within the borough.

International Volunteer Day

Mandated by the UN General Assembly, [International Volunteer Day](#) is an annual international event which takes place on 5 December. This day is an opportunity organisations to thank and recognise the invaluable contribution that volunteers make to creating safer, stronger and more resilient communities across the world.

Each year, there is a designated theme for the day, which in 2020 was: Together We Can Through Volunteering, along with dedicated hashtags and emojis for use across social media. By getting involved in International Volunteer Day, it is a chance to promote the work of your organisation and its volunteers among the international community.

Volunteer Reward Schemes

ValueYou card

[ValueYou](#) is a charity that offers a volunteer recognition scheme for people who dedicate time volunteering in their community. They believe that communities should find ways to say thank you to people who help out. Their initiative partners with local independent businesses who want to give by offering a discount to volunteer members. Membership is free of charge, and the work helps to encourage people to shop locally and support small businesses. You can sign up by emailing coordinator@valueyou.org.

vInspired

[vInspired](#) is a scheme which allows young people to sign up for a reward card in return for time spent volunteering in their local community. The card gives discounts on products and days out across the UK and Europe, with the scheme mainly operating in London. If you're interested in learning more, [you can sign up for the scheme here](#).

Credit schemes

A credit scheme involves volunteers receiving one credit for each hour they spend volunteering, which can be redeemed against leisure activities, cultural attractions, or sports facilities. Some organisations create their own credits scheme by partnering with businesses in the local area, or you can enrol in a programme such as [Tempo](#) which already has established partnerships. This type of scheme can be an effective way of enhancing volunteering in parts of the community where volunteering rates are low.

