



# Why become a volunteer? A guide to the benefits of volunteering

## Table of contents

Introduction.....	1
What is volunteering? .....	1
• Volunteer examples .....	2
The benefits of volunteering .....	2
• Make a positive impact.....	3
• Gain new career skills .....	3
• Improve your wellbeing.....	3
• An opportunity to socialise.....	3
Become a volunteer.....	3
• Overcome the barriers.....	3
• Resources.....	4

## Introduction

Everyone has the right to volunteer and volunteering can be a hugely valuable and rewarding experience. This guide sets out the reasons why everyone should consider becoming a volunteer and the variety of benefits of volunteering.

## What is volunteering?

Volunteering is an umbrella term, which encompasses a huge range of activities. This can include formal activity undertaken through public, private and voluntary organisations as well as informal community participation and social action.

*NCVO defines volunteering as ‘any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment, individuals or groups other than, or in addition to, close relatives.’*

## Volunteer examples

People get involved in many different ways in their local community, as well as on a national or international level. Below are some examples highlighting the diversity of both formal and informal volunteering opportunities.

Formal volunteering involves volunteering through public, private and voluntary organisations. Formal volunteer roles typically have set hours, clear role descriptions and supervision by a member of staff within the organisation. Examples of formal volunteering include:

- Community Health Ambassador
- Delivery driver
- Young person’s mentor
- Telephone befriender
- Gardening volunteer
- Graphic designer
- Museum assistant

Check out the *Community Southwark* volunteer stories [here!](#)

Informal volunteering is not coordinated by an organisation or institution, and is carried out on a community level or through social action. Examples of informal volunteering include:

- Helping your neighbour with grocery shopping
- Providing free childcare to someone who isn’t a relative
- Helping out in your local church
- Driving an older neighbour to an appointment
- Participating in your local Mutual Aid Group

## The benefits of volunteering

Anyone with a small amount of spare time can volunteer, regardless of their background, age, or abilities. Having people from different backgrounds volunteering alongside each other can increase mutual understanding, and strengthen communities and organisations. Having a physical or learning disability shouldn’t prevent anyone from volunteering. No matter what your life situation is, there are a huge range of benefits of volunteering.

## Make a positive impact

- Give something back to an organisation or a cause you care about.
- Help others less fortunate or without a voice.
- Help the environment.

## Gain new career skills

*'Did you know that...'*

*Having volunteer experience on your CV can increase your chances of getting a job interview.*

- Volunteering is an opportunity to learn new skills, and can boost employment prospects.
- Gain new skills, knowledge and experience to enhance your CV.
- Learn things that would be transferable for employment, such as handling money, administration tasks, facilitation skills, running workshops, leading groups and much more.
- You don't need to give an employment reference to become a volunteer.

## Improve your wellbeing

- People who volunteer regularly report a greater sense of purpose and meaning in their lives.
- Spend quality time away from work or a busy lifestyle.
- Gain confidence and self-esteem.
- Reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation

## An opportunity to socialise

- Volunteering can make you feel valued and part of a team.
- It is a chance to get to know new people and make new friends in your local community.

## Become a volunteer

### Overcome the barriers

It is clear that volunteering has many varied benefits, both to the individual volunteer and the cause they are supporting. So what is stopping people from volunteering? Some of the most common barriers to volunteering are addressed below.

I don't have enough time due to work / family / studying / other commitments.

- As a volunteer, you have the flexibility to choose what hours suit you and what time commitment you can give, be it two hours or two days per week.



*Volunteering activities are flexible, and can be carried out at a time that suits you.*

I can't afford the costs of volunteering.

- Although volunteering is unpaid, it should not cost you anything either. It is best practice to reimburse out-of-pocket expenses, such as travel or lunch expenses, incurred in the course of volunteering.

I'm a refugee – can I still volunteer?

- Those who claim asylum in the UK are encouraged to volunteer whilst their claim is being considered and this will also assist with their integration if they are granted leave to remain in the UK.

I don't have any employment references to give.

- You don't need to give an employment reference to become a volunteer.

I don't know where to find volunteering opportunities.

- See the list of resources below for places where you can find volunteering opportunities.

## Resources

There are lots of volunteering opportunities available and you can get involved in many different ways, in all sorts of places, depending on your interests and concerns. Below is a list of useful resources with current volunteering opportunities to get you started.

- Community Southwark: [Southwark volunteering opportunities](#)
- Community Southwark one-on-one volunteer advice appointment: [book here](#)
- Contact your local Volunteer Centre [here](#)
- Do-it.org: [national volunteering database](#)
- Charity Jobs: [volunteering opportunities](#)
- Vinspired: [volunteering opportunities for young people aged 14-25](#)
- Reach Volunteering: [skills-based volunteering opportunities](#)



