

Your first steps to volunteering

Thank you for considering a volunteering role! There are many reasons you may be looking to volunteer - maybe you want to gain skills and confidence to get a paid job, perhaps you now have some spare time, or maybe you simply want to do something good for your community. Regardless of the reason, you'll want to find a role that is rewarding and fun.

When you have a better idea of what may suit you, you can refine your search accordingly, so it could help to think about the following questions...

- What are you passionate about or have an interest in?
- How much time can you offer, and for how long?
- Is there something specific you would like to learn or try?
- What skills and experience would look good on your CV?
- Are you keen to be with other people or do you prefer to work alone?
- How far are you willing or able to travel?

Volunteering is someone spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone who they're not closely related to. It can make a real difference in your own life and the lives of those around you. There are lots of ways to get involved and plenty of organisations that can help you find your dream role.

National Council for Voluntary Organisations

Once you've found something that interests you

When you find something you think sounds ideal, it's then time to contact the organisation. You might have a chat on the phone in the first instance, and then meet staff or volunteers from the organisation face-to-face. This is the time for you to ask lots of questions and check that both the role and the organisation are right for you.

Questions you might want to ask could include...

- Do they provide any training?
- Who you will be working with?
- Will they cover your travel expenses?
- Who will you be reporting to?
- Do they have a role description or other volunteer guidelines?

Understand your rights as a volunteer

As a volunteer, you will not have a contract of employment. This means you will not have the same rights as an employee or worker. Instead, you will usually be given a volunteer agreement that should explain:

- the level of supervision and support you'll get
- what training you will receive
- whether you're covered under the organisation's employer or public liability insurance
- health and safety issues
- any expenses the organisation will cover

The volunteer agreement is not compulsory, and it does not form a contract between you and the organisation.

You will not be paid for volunteer work, but most organisations will consider covering your travel expenses so that you are not left out of pocket.

Next steps

If you are nervous or uncertain about taking these first steps or looking for a suitable role, why not speak to someone at your local volunteer centre? They will be able to guide you through the process and offer one-to-one support. [You can find your local centre here.](#)

The benefits of volunteering

- ▶ Makes a positive difference to people's lives
- ▶ Improves your self esteem, confidence and wellbeing
- ▶ Gives you invaluable work experience
- ▶ You can access training and develop new skills
- ▶ You can use your existing skills and knowledge to benefit the community
- ▶ You can meet new people from a range of backgrounds
- ▶ You can feel valued and part of a team

