

Volunteering

Maybe you're already volunteering your time but feel that you can gain more from the experience, or maybe you're just considering it, whichever it may be this section will hopefully shed some light on what it's all about.

Becoming a volunteer can mean many different things to different people. Some people may not even realise they are volunteering when they actually are, but helping to organise your local social group is indeed volunteering.

Apart from the benefit to the group that you are volunteering for and their beneficiaries, volunteering can provide you with many benefits including;

- The chance to do something that you've never done before
- The opportunity to meet new people and make new friends
- The opportunity to learn new and exciting stuff from a diverse range of people and add new skills and experience to your CV!
- Increasing your confidence
- Knowing that your contribution is make a difference

Once you start volunteering you can usually expect:

- Payment of out-of pocket expenses such as travel*
- Ongoing support and appropriate training
- An enormous sense of wellbeing!

*If you are involved with a small community group expenses may not always be offered, working with the group to find a source of funding or income to cover any out of pocket expenses may be a good idea

A clear idea of what your role will be;

- Who will you working with?
- What will you be doing? – Just fundraising isn't really a clear description of a role – you need to know what kind of fundraising – will you be expected to write funding bids or organise collections or events?
- When will you be doing it? – what kind of time commitments are involved, is there a regular time you will be needed, or is it more as and when?
- How will you be doing it? – What resources and tools will you have access to?
- Who can you go to for information and support? – Where is the person who did the role before you? Are they still around for support?

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Appropriate training and handovers

You should always receive a decent handover from the staff or volunteers who you will be working with.

For example - If you are new to a group and stepping in as the new Treasurer then the group should ensure that you get a decent handover (even if you have already been part of the group this should happen) if you just get given a pile of accounts and a cheque book – protest!

Someone should be going over those accounts with you, as well as going over the group's financial policy and procedure – if they don't have either of these – then encourage the group to produce them, ultimately, these policies and procedures are in place for your protection and guidance!

You can seek advice from local volunteer bureaus or similar organisations for guidance on writing documents such as these.

Likewise, if you are going to be fundraising for the group, then you should be made aware of previous funding attempts – both successful and unsuccessful, otherwise you will be wasting your time applying for funds that are doomed from the outset – it also makes the group look unorganised and no one wants to fund an organised group!

Support

What kind of support you will receive will of course be dependent on the size of the group you are volunteering with, the role which you take on and whether or not the group employs staff specifically for volunteer support. For example if you are volunteering for a charity with paid staff and are fulfilling a complex role in their group, then training and support from should be comprehensive. If however you are volunteering with a local social group, then a handover from the group and a chat with other volunteers might well give you a good enough idea of what your role entails.

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