

THINKING ABOUT VOLUNTEERING?



There is a huge range of volunteering opportunities available in North Tyneside, from short, one-off activities such as helping out at a community event, to regular voluntary roles within organisations or being a voluntary charity trustee. VODA's Volunteer Centre supports people to find out about and get involved in interesting and rewarding volunteering opportunities in North Tyneside.

VOLUNTEERING FAQs

What are the benefits of volunteering?

Volunteering is a great way to give some of your time and skills for the benefit of others. It is also a fantastic way to learn new skills, meet new people, improve your health and to have fun!

What sort of opportunities are available?

There are many different opportunities available to suit all interests, skills and availability. Volunteering opportunities include befriending, gardening, conservation, charity shops, fundraising, community centres, local events, and trustee roles, to name just a few.

VODA's Volunteer Centre keeps a list of volunteering opportunities available with charities and community groups in North Tyneside. You can see these at www.voda.org.uk/search.

We can also offer individual appointments to identify opportunities for you based on your skills, interests and passions.

Do I have to give a set amount of time to volunteer, or can I be flexible?

It depends on the role. Some roles are one-off, such as helping at a community event, some roles will allow you to pick and choose when you are available, and other roles may ask for a minimum time requirement - this will usually be stated on the advert.

Most volunteering opportunities are flexible and you can choose a role that fits around other commitments. A few hours a week is a common amount of time to volunteer, but there are opportunities to give 5 minutes, as and when you can, and other roles that take more time.

Do I need specific skills, experience or qualifications to volunteer?

Most volunteering organisations offer training, any role specific skills and experience that they require in advance should be outlined on the role description.

Can I volunteer from home or online?

Some volunteering opportunities allow you to volunteer from home or online and we can provide details of these.

Do I need references?

Some organisations do ask for references. The role description and/or advert should indicate if this is required. If you are unsure about who you could use as a reference, please feel free to contact us to discuss further.

Will I be able to use the organisation for a reference?

Volunteering can be a good way of developing references particularly if you have been out of paid employment for a little while or have recently been in education or taken time out for caring responsibilities. The organisation should have a volunteering policy which should outline the process for obtaining a reference.

I work full time - are there opportunities available evenings or weekends?

Some opportunities are available outside of working hours.

Will I receive training?

Organisations should provide the training necessary in order for you to carry out your role.

Will the organisations be supportive?

Volunteers are vital to the activities of many organisations and you should be fully supported to carry out your role. If you feel you need more help you should talk to your Volunteer Manager who will be able to discuss additional support requirements as appropriate.

Will I be able to claim expenses?

Whilst you will not be paid for undertaking volunteer activities, it is good practise for organisations to reimburse any out-of-pocket expenses associated with the role, such as travel costs. Most organisations have an expenses policy which outlines how to claim, what can be claimed for, and any limits to how much can be claimed. This being said not all organisations have expenses built into their budgets so it's best to check this out before agreeing to undertake a role in case this would be a barrier for you.

Will volunteering affect my benefits?

You can volunteer while receiving benefits as long as your ability to meet the conditions of your benefit is not affected. You should inform the Jobcentre that you are planning to start volunteering. More information is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/volunteering-and-claiming-benefits> and <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/volunteering-and-benefits>

Will I need a DBS check?

Some roles require a DBS check, others don't. Any checking costs should be covered by the organisation.

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I feel I may need some support with volunteering, is there anyone that can help?

VODA offers additional support for people with health conditions to access volunteering opportunities. This could include, for example, making phone calls, setting up appointments or accompanying to initial meetings. Many organisations support the use of a 'Volunteer Inclusion Plan'. This document can be completed together to discuss support needs.

What happens after I get information on volunteering from the Volunteer Centre?

VODA's Volunteer Centre can help you find information on local volunteering opportunities. You can then contact the organisation directly to find out more and apply for the role you are interested in. Or, if you prefer, we can help you contact organisations and apply for a volunteering role.

I am young person - can I volunteer?

VODA supports young people aged 14 plus to make a difference in their communities. This could include, for example, support to contact organisations or accompaniment to initial meetings. Opportunities to join social action projects may also be available.

I am an asylum seeker - can I volunteer?

Home Office guidance states that volunteering may be undertaken at any stage of the asylum process. More information is available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/803596/permission-to-work-v8.0-ext.pdf

I am not a UK national - can I volunteer?

Many immigration statuses permit volunteering, but it is important to check the conditions of your specific status. You can find more information on visa rules on the UK government [website](#).

What if I don't like where I am volunteering?

Whilst we hope that you would enjoy wherever you start volunteering, sometimes this doesn't work out as planned. If you are unhappy in your volunteering role we would advise you to your Volunteer Manager in the first instance to see what can be done to resolve the situation. If you are still unhappy, you could get back in touch with the Volunteer Centre, and we can help you to look into other volunteering options.

What do I do if I feel I am not being treated fairly?

Wherever possible we would advise you to speak to your Volunteer Manager. If this doesn't resolve things, many organisations have a problem solving policy which can be followed. If you feel like you're

not able to please feel free to contact us to discuss this further.

I have a criminal record - can I volunteer?

Having a criminal record doesn't mean that you can't be a volunteer. Many organisations welcome applications from a cross section of the community. However, certain offences may prevent you from volunteering in particular roles.

This can depend on various factors such as the nature of the offence, when it took place, whether it is considered spent or unspent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, and the nature of the role. Organisations should make information available on their policy and procedure on recruitment of ex-offenders.

Guidance on rights & responsibilities:

- <https://hub.unlock.org.uk/knowledgebase/volunteering-1/>
- <https://www.nacro.org.uk/resettlement-advice-service/support-for-individuals/jobs-and-volunteering/>

NACRO Resettlement Advice Service Helpline: 0300 123 1999. Unlock Helpline: 01634 247350
Information on spent & unspent convictions: <https://hub.unlock.org.uk/knowledgebase/roalong-list-of-sentences-and-disposals/> and https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/299916/rehabilitation-of-offenders-guidance.pdf

Some roles are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act. For these roles, organisations may ask about spent convictions or request Standard or Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.

If you are on a barred list it is a criminal offence to apply for a voluntary role involving the relevant regulated activity with children or vulnerable adults.

If you are on license or supervision it is part of the standard license conditions that you: "Undertake only such work (including voluntary work) approved by your supervising officer and notify him or her in advance of any proposed change." **This means that whilst we may provide you with information about volunteering opportunities you must discuss these with your supervising officer before applying.**

Please feel free to contact VODA's Volunteer Centre directly if you have any questions.

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