

GET INVOLVED
MAKE A DIFFERENCE



A GUIDE TO VOLUNTEERING
IN WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE

CONTENTS



Why volunteer?

Who volunteers?

What opportunities are there?

Getting started.

The volunteer centre service.

What to expect when you start.

VOLUNTEER MYTHS

BUSTING THE MYTHS

So, what does being a volunteer really mean?

DE-BUNKED

A volunteer is a person who freely offers their time, skills and experience to help others. This is usually done by taking part in an enterprise or a task for a community organisation or agency.

There are a lot of myths around volunteering... don't be put off. Get involved!

GET INVOLVED – MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A GUIDE TO VOLUNTEERING IN WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE

Each year, thousands of local people across our communities begin volunteering. They volunteer for different reasons – to gain experience, to share skills, to deliver for others and to make friends.

If you are still wondering if volunteering is for you, this guide will help you find out more about volunteering and what to expect when you get involved.

Remember the WDCVS Volunteer Centre Service is available to answer all your questions and help you find the opportunity that fits you best – just give us a call or come and see us.

Tel: 0141 941 0886

E: volunteering@wdcvs.com



I've never been involved in the community before...



I've never been involved with community things before...

You don't need to have previous experience in community activity, most organisations are happy to provide training and support which will allow you to gain any background experience which is useful. Many people do not realise that the third sector (community organisations and charities) employ a large number of people in Scotland and if you are looking for employment in the sector, volunteering can be a great first step. Even if you are not looking for work, getting involved in your own community can be really rewarding - and you will probably be surprised at all of the activities that happen there.

WHY VOLUNTEER?

Did you know around 1 in 3 West Dunbartonshire adults regularly volunteer?

Volunteers are crucial to the over 700 local third sector groups and charities providing valuable services across all of our communities. They rely on your time, commitment, skills and knowledge, so offering even one hour a week can make a real difference.

Anyone can volunteer and there are hundreds of opportunities available. We know it can be a bit daunting so here's some things to keep in mind.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE?

- ☒ **To help a cause close to my heart**
- ☒ **To help my community**
- ☒ **To pay back for a kindness/support**
- ☒ **To fill my day**
- ☒ **To learn/use a skill**
- ☒ **To make some new friends/contacts**
- ☒ **To get back into work**



HOW MUCH TIME CAN I GIVE

- ☒ **I can't give regular time**
- ☒ **Maybe a few hours a month**
- ☒ **Maybe a few hours at the weekends**
- ☒ **I'd like some regular hours each week**
- ☒ **Depends on the opportunity**

Although volunteering is a way of helping your community and others – it's equally important it's a two-way relationship. You can only make the most of it, if you know what you need too.

Volunteering will affect my benefits...



Volunteering will affect my benefits...

Benefit rules change from time to time, however Jobcentre Plus and the DWP encourage people to volunteer to help them to gain skills and broaden their experiences. Different benefits have different rules around the number of hours you can volunteer so we would always advise that you tell your advisor that you intend to volunteer.

We can help you to show how the volunteering is helping your job search activities if this would be helpful.

WHO VOLUNTEERS?

So, the easy answer is anyone who wants to.

No matter your age, skills, experience or background.



Young people

Volunteering can be a lifelong activity and it's good to start young. Schools and uniformed organisations offer some great opportunities.



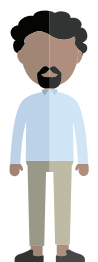
Students

Volunteering supports study by offering the chance to gain practical experience. It can also be a real boost to a CV when you are job-hunting.



People Looking for Employment

Volunteering can be an important part of employability. It gives the chance to use, develop or learn skills and can provide you with a meaningful reference for your applications.



Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Volunteering can be a great way to practice language skills and learn more about your community. You can generally volunteer while refugee status applications are in process.



People in Employment

Finding time to volunteer in between work and family commitments can be hard, but there are a growing number of opportunities in the evening and at weekends. Many one-off opportunities exist. Volunteering can also be a great way of getting experience if you are thinking of moving career or as way of developing new skills that may be help you progress in your job.



Retirement

Whether you retire early or have reached retirement age, volunteering is a great way of keeping active and engaged. It can help you use the skills you have developed over the years, or maybe just keep some structure in your day.



Older People

We are all living longer and keeping engaged is important. There is no upper age limit on volunteering, and your life experiences and skills are bound to be in demand. Many groups are looking for trustees and committee members – it could be you!

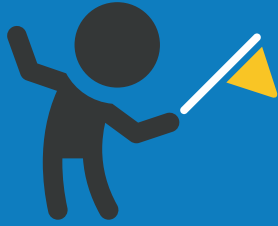


To be honest, there are so many we wouldn't be able to list them. From childcare to community development, sports coaching to committee members, stewarding to admin tasks, there is something for everyone.

But if you don't feel confident to do that or would just prefer to talk to someone face to face, you can always give us a call on 0141 941 0886.



I don't have enough time to volunteer!



I don't have enough time to volunteer...

Volunteering doesn't have to take up a lot of your time – just give as much time as you feel you can. Most organisations look for volunteers to give a regular commitment but there are a range of opportunities available – from a couple of hours every week to one-off activities.

I have something in my past...



I have a record from the past...

Everyone has a past... if you have any offending behaviour on your record and you are worried about how it could affect your volunteering come in and talk to us. Having previous convictions doesn't mean that you won't be able to volunteer. We can help you search for opportunities that suit your situation.

VOLUNTEER MYTHS

DE-BUNKED

I'm too old / I'm too young...



I'm too old.... I'm too young...

Is there such a thing as too old or too young? We don't think so. There are a range of opportunities out there – and we are sure that we can find something for people of every age. Some opportunities may have a specific age requirement but there will still be plenty to choose from.

GETTING STARTED – SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

We know that choosing the right opportunity can be a bit daunting. If you are new to volunteering, you might want to come along to one of our regular 'Introduction to Volunteering' sessions.

If not, here's a few things to consider when thinking through what's best for you.

1. Type of organisation?

Some people prefer to volunteer with small organisations. These are usually neighbourhood based and feed directly into what is needed or happening in your community. Others prefer to volunteer with a larger organisation, national charity or public service agency. Others have a particular cause they would like to give time to. The choice is yours and across West Dunbartonshire, there are organisations of all sizes and types to choose from.



2. Type of role?

Volunteer roles come in all forms. There are one-off opportunities, regular weekly/monthly commitments and opportunities that give you the option to volunteer from home. It's important you look at opportunities that fit in with your time and responsibilities.



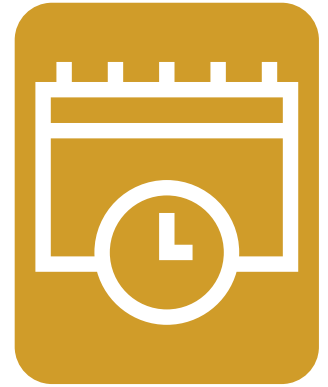
3. What skills are you looking to use/gain?

We all have skills we can share – and looking at how you could use your existing skills to help others, might be a good place to start. Don't be shy. But also remember volunteering is a great way to learn new skills.



4. When are you available?

As with the time of roles that interests you, it's important to be realistic about the time you have available. If your job involves shift work or you have a caring responsibility, a fixed weekly commitment may not be right for you. But if you are looking to get back into the community, it could be perfect. There are opportunities to fit everyone.



5. How far can you travel?

We know some people are happiest volunteering close to home, others don't. Take some time to think about what travel distance and time would work for you. Also, although we encourage every organisation to pay out of pocket travel expenses, not all do. So, this may be a consideration in your decision.



6. What do you need from volunteering?

Volunteering is a two-way relationship, and you will only get the best outcome if you are clear what you need from giving your time. Again, don't be shy. Organisations can only help you achieve your goals if you are clear with them.



Volunteering is too much hassle...



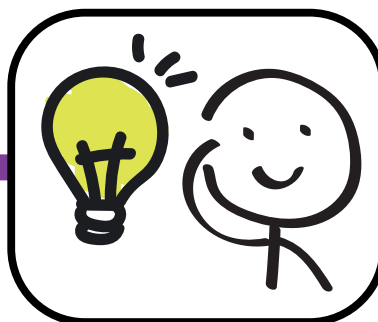
Volunteering is too much hassle...

We hope not! Some opportunities are quite fixed and have some things you need to do such as training or disclosure but there are lots of flexible opportunities available too. Most organisations will work with you to help you fit volunteering into your life.

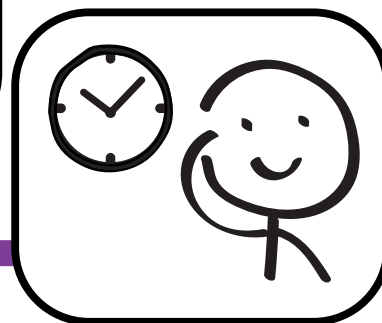
Want To Volunteer?



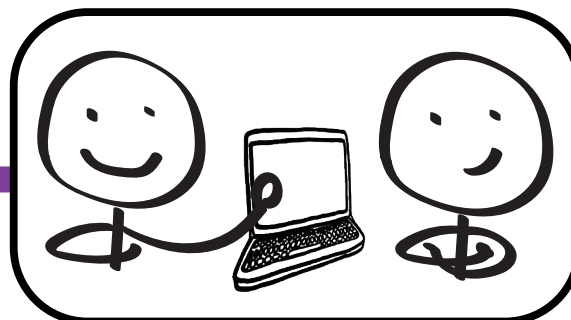
1 Think About Your Skills



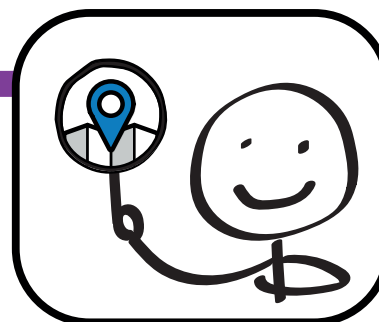
2 Think About The Time You Can Give



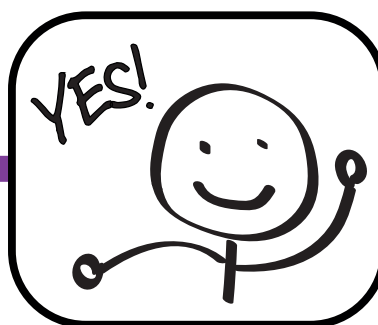
3 Look Through What's Available



4 Look Around Your Community For Ideas



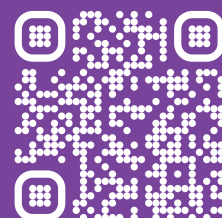
5 Make A Choice



6 Get Involved

Our volunteer centre team are here to help you at every step.

**Go on, get involved
Make a difference!**



THE VOLUNTEER CENTRE SERVICE

Getting involved for the first time can feel a bit daunting – but the Volunteer Centre is here to help. A service of WDCVS, the Volunteer Centre team are here to offer you all the expert advice and help you need to find the role for you, and get you linked up. You can contact us by email at any time but if you would rather speak to someone then we can arrange a telephone or video call, or a face-to-face meeting for you. Tell us what you are looking for and we will do the rest.

You can reach us on : Tel: 0141 941 0886

E: volunteering@wdcvs.com





WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU START

Although all organisations are slightly different in how they engage and welcome volunteers, you will find that most will:

- **Introduce you to your volunteer contact. This will be the person you can go to with any issues or questions you have during your volunteering journey.**
- **Give you a brief induction to the organisation. This will probably include introducing you to the staff and other volunteers, showing you around and telling you some more about the role you are starting. This also gives you a chance to ask any questions you have.**

I don't have any skills anyone would want!



I don't have any skills anyone would want...

Yes you do! We all have skills and talents which we take for granted but which other people really want and need. You might be selling yourself short – sometimes its hard to realise just what you can do. Come in and see us and we can help you identify your skills.

3

References

Most organisations will ask you to provide details of a character reference. This should be someone who knows you well - but not a relative

You're Starting

You should be able to start your opportunity within a few weeks

4

- **Tell you about the process for reimbursing travel expenses. If this is not raised, please ask.**
- **Offer you a regular time slot with your volunteer contact to talk about how things are going, anything they can do to assist you or any training you might need.**

Sometimes, you might find that the opportunity isn't quite what you expected. If this does happen, don't worry. Speak to the organisation or if you prefer you can contact us, and we can call the organisation for you and look at finding you a new opportunity to try. Please don't just stop going. Giving the organisation some notice will allow them to make sure anything you were doing is properly handed over.

I won't get anything to show for my efforts ...



I won't get anything to show what I've done...

You will have the chance to use or develop a range of skills during your volunteering and we believe that these should be recognised. We can offer access to a range of recognition opportunities including the Saltire Awards (for young people aged 12 – 25), the West Dunbartonshire Certificate of Volunteering Achievement and the chance to gain an SVQ level qualification too.



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With communities, for the community!

Tel 0141 941 0886

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