



EVERYBODY BENEFITS: EMPLOYEE GUIDE

The value of volunteering



Supporting others spreads far and wide

Volunteering isn't just about giving time. It's about connection, purpose and doing something that feels genuinely good.

Small acts of contribution can help us regain perspective and remind ourselves of the value we bring to others - often at a time when we need to hear and feel it most.

It doesn't need to be a grand gesture. You don't need to be an expert or commit to something big. You simply need the willingness to show up - even for an hour.

So, whether you care about cats, conservation or cancer causes, passionate about helping the homeless and people with additional needs or just love to listen, there is someone or something out there that needs you.



Volunteering supports your own mental health

When we help others, our brains release 'feel-good' chemicals that can lift mood, reduce stress and create a sense of calm. Volunteering also opens doors to learning something new or developing existing skills which are both deeply linked to positive mental health.

Taking part in something beyond our usual routine and giving something back gives us a stronger sense of purpose -

something deeply linked to happiness.

Just as importantly, volunteering connects us with people. Whether it's chatting to someone new, working alongside colleagues for a cause or being part of a community group, that sense of belonging is powerful. It reminds us we're not on our own - and that we matter.

Doing good improves physical wellbeing

Some volunteering gets us moving without it feeling like forced, formal exercise. Maybe that's tending a community garden, walking dogs for a rescue charity or helping a local sports club. Even gentle activity can support

better sleep, lower stress and improve energy levels.

And because the focus is bigger than ourselves, it makes us commit - and the 'exercise' feels even more rewarding.





Growth through giving

Volunteering is also a chance to grow - sometimes without even noticing it's happening. But others will notice the change in you. More energy, more aware, more compassion - your renewed volunteering vigour could be infectious, and encourage others to follow your example!

You might pick up new skills, practise communication in new situations, try leadership in a supportive environment or simply rediscover strengths you haven't used in a while. It can be a gentle confidence boost and often a meaningful addition to personal and professional development.

Getting started – make it personal

You don't need a perfect plan. Just begin with two questions: what matters to me and what skills can I offer?

Is it nature? Mental health? Young or elderly people? Abandoned animals? Local community? Poverty and homelessness?

Maybe you've experienced a life-changing illness or addiction and can offer first-hand experience about coping in a local support group.

Are you a good listener? Then consider training with the Samaritans. Love to cook? Then volunteer at a homeless centre. Physically fit and strong? Help deliver furniture donations to families in need.

The possibilities are as endless as the people who need a helping hand



Make it matter

Choose something that feels meaningful - big or small. But make it matter so you get as much out of the experience as the charity you decide to support.

Then, think about what you can realistically offer. An hour a month. A single day. A short-term project. There is no 'right amount.' What counts is that it's manageable for you.

If it helps, try something with others - colleagues, friends or family. Going together can make the first step feel easier and more enjoyable.

And afterwards, give yourself a moment to notice how it felt. Reflection strengthens motivation. And remember you don't always need qualifications and experience to volunteer - you just need a big heart.



The gift of time

If you'd like to explore opportunities, speak to your manager or HR team to see what support is available through work initiatives.

If you are unsure exactly which type of charity you want to support, use online volunteering directories which make it easy to search by postcode and time available for inspiration. They also include smaller, less-known local charities who really need extra support.

Doit.life provides a UK-wide database of roles, while Volunteering Matters and Reach Volunteering focus on using professional skills and mentoring opportunities to enrich whole communities and individual lives – human and animal!

These platforms let you browse and compare easily and often allow you to filter by your own time commitments, from three days a week to one hour a month.

The NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations) also offers helpful information and links to local volunteer centres. And don't overlook your local library or supermarket noticeboard, Gumtree or Facebook groups – they can be surprisingly good sources of one-off requests or informal opportunities.

You don't need to climb Kilimanjaro to be someone's lifeline!





We need you!

Whatever your motivation, there is a charity out there who will need your dedication and your time.



Animal lover?

- RSPCA: dog walking and cat cuddling
- Cats Protection: cat fostering or helping in a rehoming centre
- Dogs Trust: kennel support and socialising dogs
- Blue Cross: helping in pet hospitals and rehoming centres



Great with kids?

- Action for Children: play sessions and family support centres
- Barnardo's: youth clubs, children's services and charity shops
- Home-Start: supporting parents with young children at home
- Scouts / Girlguiding: helping at weekly youth sessions



Nature lover or environmentalist?

- **The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)**: community gardening and habitat restoration
- **National Trust**: gardening and visitor help at beautiful properties
- **RSPB**: bird and wildlife conservation on nature reserves
- **Canal & River Trust**: towpath clean-ups and wildlife monitoring



A good listener?

- **Mind**: community support groups and wellbeing hubs
- **Rethink Mental Illness**: peer support volunteering
- **Samaritans**: listening and emotional support (training provided)
- **Age UK**: phone befriending for isolated older people
- **Macmillan Cancer Support**: befriending and emotional support calls



The sporty type?

- **Parkrun**: marshal a local run
- **Special Olympics GB**: supporting inclusive sports groups
- **Sporting Memories**: chatting about sport with older people

Micro-volunteering can have a massive impact too

Volunteering doesn't always mean leaving the house. It can be writing a supportive letter to someone in hospital, translating a charity leaflet, being a phone companion for someone lonely or helping with a charity's social media.

Giving back

Sometimes the most meaningful moments in life happen outside our day-to-day routine. Volunteering is one of those things that gives you the chance to do something different and make a positive difference.

Volunteering isn't about being a hero. It's about being human





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