



VAAC Blog

Benefits of volunteering blog



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***“I feel as if I’m spending a small part of my retirement time helping,
which obviously makes me feel good”***

Volunteering is a great way to support local charities and community groups, and it can make a huge difference to the communities around us. However, there are also personal benefits that can be gained by giving up some of your time to help.

To celebrate Volunteers’ Week lets have a look at some of the benefits that you might get from volunteering:

1. **Giving back to local community**

One of the most common reasons people give for wanting to volunteer is to give back to their local communities. Using some of your spare time to help the people and neighbourhoods around us can be deeply rewarding and give a massive sense of achievement.

2. **Making new friends / meeting new people**

If you would like to expand your social circle, volunteering can be a good way to do this. You can meet new people and spend time with different groups, developing your social skills and gaining confidence.



3. **Gaining new skills**

As well as using the skills you already have, volunteering can help you to learn new skills and gain valuable experience. Often the training opportunities that are available to volunteers are extensive and can be taken forward into future roles and careers.

4. **Employability**

If you are looking to improve your CV or want to work towards employment, either as a young person, or if you've been out of work for a number of years, volunteering can really help you to do this. The experience and skills that you can gain from volunteering can help you to gain paid work. It can also be a great way to try out a new area of work, before committing to a new career.

5. **Physical and mental health**

Volunteering has been shown to increase the health and wellbeing of people who give their time, and it is even included in the [NHS 5 ways to wellbeing guide](#). Some of the ways that volunteering can impact on health are:

- **Reducing stress**

Spending time in the company of others can help to lower stress levels, and improve overall mental wellbeing. Making friends and having fun whilst volunteering can be very beneficial to mental health.

- **Combating depression**

Through regular volunteering, you can build your social circle and support structure, and regular contact can help to distract you from depressive or negative thoughts.

- **Prevents feelings of isolation**

If you feel lonely or isolated, volunteering can be a great way to connect with new people.

- **Increasing confidence**
For people that are looking to build confidence in a work setting volunteering can help you to do just that. You can get used to working with other people, in a professional environment, and challenging yourself to achieve new things. Volunteering can also improve your confidence in social situations as you get used to interacting with new people and pushing yourself out of your usual comfort zones.
- **Makes you happy**
Research has shown that when we give to others our brain's 'reward centre' is activated, giving us a pleasure boost. By volunteering you can give to the communities around us and feel happier in the process!
- **Keeping active**
Volunteering can help you to keep active and improve your physical health, in fact studies have shown that people who volunteer live longer than those who don't. Older people, in particular, can benefit from the physical benefits of volunteering.

These are just some of the benefits that people can gain from volunteering, and we're sure that there are many more. If you would like to find out for yourself, why not have a look on the VAAC website to find out how you can volunteer locally – www.vaac.org.uk/volunteering.

