

Improve your wellbeing after crime Volunteering: is it for me?

At Victim Support, we support thousands of people affected by crime every year. We understand that crime can affect us in lots of different ways. We can experience a real knock to our confidence and may not always feel like socialising or doing some of the things we used to.

Volunteering can be a managed way to get yourself back out there and is often a 'win win': it's an opportunity to help others, but evidence suggests that, in doing so, we can help ourselves just as much, if not more. It can help us meet new people, build a wider support network and learn new skills, while boosting our self-esteem.

We've put together this workbook to help you start thinking about the different volunteering opportunities out there, how you can get started and whether volunteering is for you.

***"What do I get out of volunteering?
I think it should be a case of what don't I get out of volunteering!"***
Lizzie, Victim Support volunteer

Why volunteer?

Volunteering involves giving your time to help others – without being paid for it.


It can be something you do regularly or just every so often. Either way, it could make a real difference to your wellbeing. As well as giving you some respite from what you're going through, knowing that you're using your skills to help others can be rewarding in itself, with all kinds of benefits. Research has found that it can help with your self-esteem and motivation, which has a knock on effect on various parts of your life, including your health and ability to get back into work.¹



But what would you like to get out of volunteering?

Circle any of the below and add any of your own ideas. I'd like to...

BINGO 26 7 42 83 15

| Volunteering | B | I | N | G | O |
|---|--|--|--|--|---|
| Try something new | Make use of my existing skills | Meet new people and make like-minded friends | Get more involved in my local community | Stay active and improve my physical health | |
| Learn new skills or apply what I'm good at to something new | Give myself a positive focus | Be more productive in my free time | Rebuild my confidence | Become more socially engaged | |
| Build or update my CV | Feel good doing something for other people | Support a cause that means something to me | Improve my mental health and reduce stress | Have some fun! | |
| | | | | |  |

"[Volunteering is] fulfilling, ever-changing (no day is the same), it's challenging on all levels."

Lizzie, Victim Support Volunteer

¹ www.nhs.uk/Livewell/volunteering/Pages/Whyvolunteer.aspx

What should you consider before applying?

There are some practical things about volunteering that are worth taking time to think about.

Ready?

After experiencing crime, it's completely normal to not quite feel your best. Volunteering could be a great step forward, but it's important to feel ready. The good thing is that volunteering can be very flexible – you can start small and get more involved at your own pace if you want to.

Time

How much time would you like to give? Try to be realistic about how much time you have to spare – this might be occasionally, a few hours regularly or at a particular time of day or night. You could sign petitions online, support the occasional event in your area, or become a regular volunteer. Remember, you can always build it up gradually if you find you'd like to do more – you don't need to put yourself under pressure!

Location

There are often volunteering opportunities right on your doorstep, but if you're looking for a particular type of volunteering role you may have to travel. Think about how far you'd be willing to travel, whether you're comfortable using your own vehicle or if it would need to be accessible by public transport. Some organisations will cover travel expenses, but others may not be able to. Take this into account when you apply and, as always, just ask the question once you've started a conversation with them.

Skills

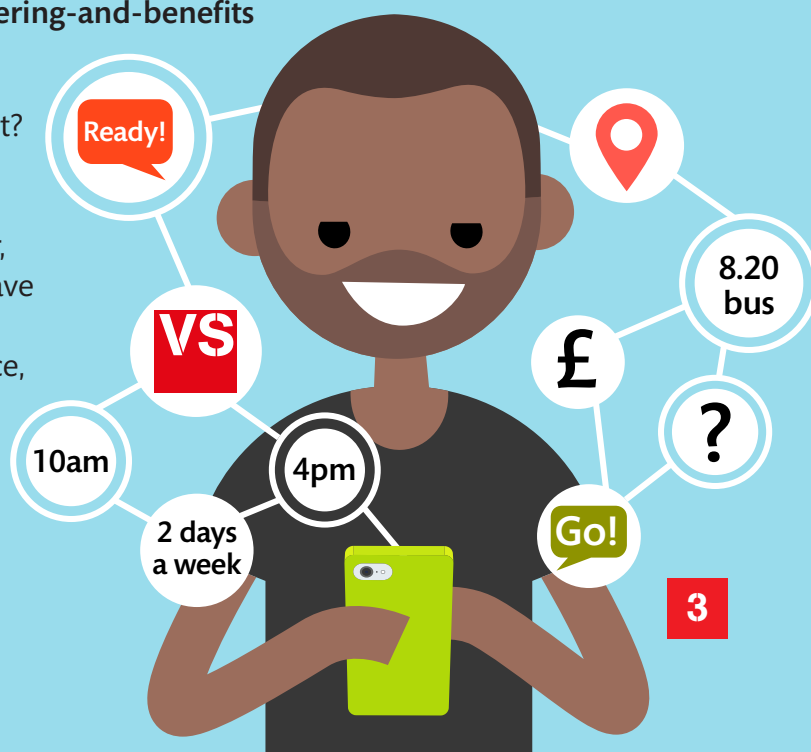
What is the organisation looking for? Do they need volunteers with particular experience or skills? Depending on the type of work that is involved, they may ask for someone with experience of working with children, knowledge of a particular subject – perhaps computers or gardening – or soft skills like patience, empathy and listening. What skills could you bring to an organisation?

Money

Will volunteering impact your benefits? If you're receiving benefits, you can still volunteer as long as you're not being paid for volunteering (other than out of pocket expenses), and you still meet the criteria of the benefit you're receiving. For more information check out the NCVO website here: www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/volunteering-and-benefits

Give back

Would you like to volunteer with Victim Support? It's important to make sure enough time has passed in your recovery before you consider volunteering with us as a face-to-face supporter, but there are lots of ways to get involved. We have various volunteer opportunities – fundraising, awareness raising, helping out in your local office, or taking part in research. If you're interested, talk to your VS supporter or contact your local office for more information.



What could you do?

There are so many different types of volunteering out there and it can be difficult to know where to start!

Take a look at the chart below. This is just a snapshot of what's available, but it could help you start thinking about which roles may fit your skills set and what you'd like to get out of volunteering. If you're unsure what a role entails, you could check online or ask your VS supporter to help you. Just remember, similar roles may vary in different organisations.

Charity Shop Assistant (shop floor)

Special skills: Teamwork, customer service and communication skills.

Great for... getting experience in retail, boosting confidence and developing your customer service skills.

Time required: Flexible, depending on the shop. You could volunteer for an odd shift every so often, or regular hours every week or month.

Charity Shop Assistant (preparation)

Special skills: Teamwork, organisation and stock control skills.

Great for... people who love organising, meeting new people and getting involved in the community.

Time required: Flexible, depending on the shop. You could volunteer for an odd shift every so often, or regular hours every week or month.

Community Fundraiser

Special skills: Comfortable talking to different people, creative and enthusiastic.

Great for... people who are target-driven, want to get involved in fundraising initiatives, while meeting like-minded people in the community.

Time required: It depends on the organisation – it could involve regular volunteering or helping out occasionally at events or in their office.

Event Supporter

Special skills: Teamwork, organisation and interpersonal skills.

Great for... keeping active, meeting new people and gaining experience of the events industry.

Time required: Depending on the role, it could be a few hours or a one-off event, but you could get involved in regular events throughout the year.

Event Organiser

Special skills: Teamwork, leadership and an eye for detail.

Great for... building your CV, making friends and improving your planning and time management skills.

Time required: Dependent upon the organisation and type of event.

Helpline Operator

Special skills: Listening, problem solving and empathy.

Great for... improving your communication skills, while directly helping others.

Time required: Occasional shifts or weekly commitments. Most organisations will require a training period where you may need to commit more time.



Community Group Leader

Special skills: Leadership, organisation and talking to different people.

Great for... Being creative, meeting new people and getting involved in the community.

Time required: Regular hours every week or month, or during the school holidays if working with children.

Befriender

Special skills: Listening, talking to different people, teamwork.

Great for... making new friends, getting involved in the community and directly helping those that are lonely or in need.

Time required: Regular hours every week or month – it's important to have the time to build relationships in this role.

Receptionist

Special skills: Friendliness, organisation, computer skills.

Great for... building your CV, meeting people and boosting your confidence.

Time required: Although it will depend on the organisation, you may need to volunteer regularly and be available in office hours.

Trustee

Special skills: Leadership, creativity, critical thinking.

Great for... Meeting people, building your CV, using your existing skills.

Time required: A few hours a month or every quarter, depending on the organisation.

Hospital Visitor

Special skills: Empathy, listening, being friendly and approachable.

Great for... making a real positive impact on people's lives, meeting people from all walks of life and keeping active.

Time required: There may be a minimum time commitment, but this will depend on the role. You are likely to have to commit to basic training.

Researcher

Special skills: research! Reading sources and writing up findings, computer skills.

Great for... fitting volunteering around your other commitments, building your CV and pursuing a passion or interest.

Time required: Can vary from one-off projects to longer regular commitments, depending on the needs of the organisation.

Administrator

Special skills: Organisation, computer skills and the ability to multi-task is often helpful.

Great for... building your CV, as well as your teamwork and organisational skills.

Time required: From occasional shifts to help with busy periods, to regular weekly commitments.

Wildlife Conservationist

Special skills: An interest in conservation, willingness to learn, loves being outdoors whatever the weather!

Great for... getting active, being outdoors and taking care of our environment.

Time required: This will depend on the organisation and type of role – it may be seasonal.



Find out more

Not found anything you like the sound of yet? Have a look at what opportunities are available in your area – different organisations are looking for different things, so there's a good chance you could find something to suit you. You could also talk to your VS supporter about what you're looking for.

To find out more information and to see what volunteering roles are available in your area, you might want to check out the following websites:

■ **Charity Job:** www.charityjob.co.uk

Find jobs with charities and volunteering positions in your area.

■ **Do-it:** www.do-it.org

Search for volunteering opportunities near you and read about campaigns supported by the Do-it community.

■ **Give What You're Good At:** www.givewhatyouregoodat.co.uk

A skills-based volunteering site for professionals. Give your time to specific projects posted by charities in your area.

■ **NCVO:** www.ncvo.org.uk

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations supports and champions all types of volunteering and voluntary organisations. Their website has lots of helpful tips and information about volunteering. Find your local Volunteer Centre using their location finder at:

www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/find-a-volunteer-centre

■ **Reach Volunteering:** www.reachvolunteering.org.uk

A skills-based volunteering site – find organisations looking for volunteers with your specific skills.

■ **Volunteering Matters:** www.volunteeringmatters.org.uk

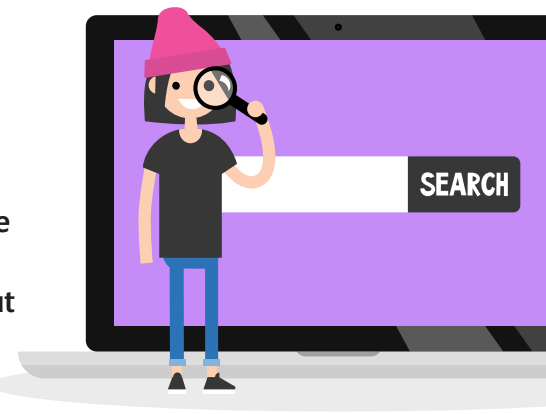
Find community-focused volunteering projects focusing on families, young people, older people and disabled people.

■ **V. Inspired:** www.vinspired.com

Volunteering organisation for 14–25 year olds. Find volunteering positions near you and develop your skills.

■ **Victim Support:** www.victimsupport.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer

We always need new volunteers to join our local teams so please view our current opportunities – we'd love to hear from you!



Terry's story: how volunteering helped me overcome anxiety

After suffering health problems which left him housebound, Terry developed severe depression, anxiety and low self-confidence. As a former youth offending worker he had an interest in victim care, so he decided to contact Victim Support about volunteering.

"At the time, my confidence was so low that I felt terrified going into this meeting, and I couldn't stop shaking, but [the VS manager] Yvette made me feel really comfortable. With help and encouragement from the local team, I started my initial training and haven't looked back since – I'm now making great progress in my role and volunteering has made such a positive impact on my self-confidence and wellbeing that I am now developing my own martial arts business. Volunteering has also allowed me to meet some amazing people and make some great friends with other volunteers in our team."

Remember, if you feel you'd like any additional support or advice, our door is always open. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

My local Victim Support contact:



We are an independent charity offering free, confidential support to people affected by crime and traumatic incidents.

For information and support, contact us by:

- calling: Supportline **08 08 16 89 111**
- using Next Generation Text (add **18001** before any of our phone numbers)
- online: **victimsupport.org.uk**

To find out how you can help us, visit **victimsupport.org.uk/get-involved**



victimsupport.org.uk

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