



Medway Volunteer Network's Guide for



March 2021



Volunteering Your Time

A few things for you to consider

If you're considering volunteering your time, you'll quickly discover there are many volunteering opportunities for you to choose from in Medway. This makes it really important that you find the right one for you.

Below are some key points you might want to consider when making your decision about where to volunteer:

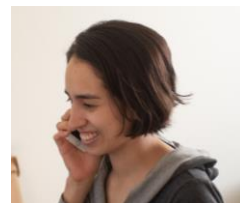
Pick an issue you really care about – Are there community problems that concern or are of interest to you? If your concerns include broad issues, like health or poverty, you may want to narrow it down to specific parts of the problem (e.g. cancer or homelessness).



What's your motivation for doing this and what would you like to gain? - This answer varies from person to person and there is no wrong answer. For some it offers the chance to give something back to the community or to make a difference to the people around them. There are lots of reasons people volunteer so you may find it helpful for you to understand your personal motivations for volunteering before choosing a role.



How much time can you offer? - For many people the biggest barrier to volunteering is a busy schedule. However there is no minimum time requirement for more volunteer roles - you can put in an hour a day, an hour a month, or an hour a year. Look for times in your routine where you are not busy, or you could combine volunteering with your existing activities like family time or your hobby (e.g. photography, gardening, reading etc.).



Consider the location of the volunteering opportunity - Remember to pick a convenient location - sticking with a volunteer opportunity will be hard if getting there is difficult for you.



Will you enjoy the volunteering role? - Remember to pick something that you think will be fun, fulfilling and enjoyable.





Getting the most out of your Volunteering

You're donating your valuable time, so it's important that you enjoy and benefit from your volunteering. To help get the best from your time volunteering, some useful things to remember include:

Ask questions. You want to make sure that the experience is right for your skills, your goals, and the time you want to spend.

Make sure you know what's expected. You should be comfortable with the organisation and understand the time commitment. If necessary, start with a small time commitment and build in some flexibility to change your commitment or focus if needed.

Don't be afraid to make a change. Don't feel compelled to stick with a volunteer role you're not enjoying – talk to your organisation about how you're feeling and they may be able to help you change your focus or look for a different organisation that's a better fit.

Enjoy yourself. The best volunteer experiences benefit both the volunteer and the organisation. If you're not enjoying yourself, try to identify why and then talk to your organisation to decide how you could proceed.

Understand your rights. You don't have a contract of employment as a volunteer, so you don't have the same rights as an employee or worker. However, you should ideally be given a volunteer agreement from your organisation. The volunteer agreement isn't compulsory, but sets out what you can expect from the organisation you're volunteering for. It doesn't form a contract between you and the organisation. A volunteer agreement generally explains:

- The level of supervision and support you can expect from the organisation
- What training you'll receive
- Whether you're covered under the organisation's employer or public liability insurance
- Health and safety issues
- Any expenses the organisation will cover
- Any expectations the organisation has of you in your volunteering role. The government advise that you can volunteer and still claim Benefits provided:
- The only money you get from volunteering is to cover expenses, like travel costs
- You continue to meet the conditions of the benefit you get.

