

Frequently asked questions about volunteering



Do I have to give a set amount of time to my volunteering role or can I be flexible?

Organisations usually ask for a minimum requirement of time for volunteer roles and this is usually indicated on the advert for the vacancy. Most volunteering opportunities are flexible and you are able to fit easily around other commitments.

Do I need references?

Some organisations do ask for references; the role description and/or advert should indicate if a specific role will require references. If you are unsure about who you could use as a reference please feel free to contact us to discuss further.

Will I be able to use the organisation for a reference?

Volunteering can be a good way of developing references particularly if you have been out of paid employment for a little while or have recently been in education or taken time out for caring responsibilities. The volunteering policy of the organisation should outline the process for obtaining a reference.

Do I get my expenses paid?

Whilst you will not be paid for undertaking volunteer activities, organisations should reimburse any out of pocket expenses associated with the volunteer role for things such as travel costs. Most organisations have an expenses policy which outlines when expenses can be claimed and any limits to how much can be claimed; a copy of the expenses policy should be shared with you as part of the recruitment/induction process.

What sort of opportunities are available?

There are many different opportunities available to suit all needs. Volunteering opportunities include befriending, helping at Foodbanks, gardening, conservation, charity shops, litter picking, supporting groups with social media and Trustee and Committee roles to mention just a few. Our Volunteer Support Service can work with you on a one to one basis to identify opportunities for you based on your skills, interests and passions

I have a criminal record does that mean I can't volunteer?

Having a criminal record doesn't mean that you can't be a volunteer although there may be certain volunteering roles that you can't undertake depending on your conviction. If you are experiencing difficulties finding a volunteering placement because of your criminal record please feel free to contact us for advice and support.

Do I need specific skills, experience or qualifications to volunteer?

Most volunteering organisations offer training so you can build skills and knowledge which is one of the real benefits of volunteering. Some volunteering roles ask for specific skills and experience and these should be outlined on the role description.

Will I need a DBS check and do I have to pay for this?

Some volunteering opportunities do require a DBS check but the costs of this should be covered by the organisation.

Will I receive training?

Yes, organisations should provide training to volunteers both at the start and throughout the volunteer placement

Are you still able to volunteer during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The pandemic has had an impact on volunteering but lots of organisations have adapted in line with the restrictions and there are still many different opportunities available. There are also opportunities for those interested in supporting with the mass vaccination programmes and other COVID specific activities.

Will volunteering affect my benefits?

You can volunteer if you are receiving state benefits but there are certain rules that you need to follow. If you would like more information please contact us.

Can I volunteer from home, are there online opportunities?

Yes, there are volunteering opportunities that you can do from home or online and we can provide details of these.

I feel I may need some support with volunteering, is there anyone that can help?

Yes, supported volunteering opportunities are available and we can provide details of organisations that can assist with this.

Can I do one off volunteering?

Yes, there are opportunities to do one off volunteering and we can provide details of these

I work full time are there volunteering opportunities available in the evenings or weekends?

Yes, there are many opportunities available outside of working hours

I am an asylum seeker can I volunteer?

Yes, asylum seekers can undertake volunteering

I am a refugee can I volunteer?

Yes, refugees can undertake volunteering

I am not available the same days every week or may have periods where I can't volunteer , can I still do something?

Most organisations can be flexible around the personal commitments of volunteers.

Will the organisations be supportive?

Volunteers are vital to the activities of many organisations and should be fully supported to carry out their roles effectively. If you feel you need more help you should talk to your Volunteer Manager who will be able to discuss additional support requirements as appropriate.

What if I don't like where I am volunteering?

Unfortunately, volunteering placements don't always work out as planned. If you are unhappy in your volunteering role you should speak to your Volunteer Manager in the first instance to see what can be done to resolve the situation. If you are still unhappy, we can look into other volunteering options for you.

What do I do if I feel I am not being treated fairly?

If you feel you are being treated unfairly you should speak to your Volunteer Manager. If this doesn't resolve things many organisations have a problem-solving policy which can be followed. If you are experiencing problems, we can offer advice and guidance so feel free to contact us.

My question isn't listed here, who can I contact?

For any other questions around volunteering which aren't listed please contact us at volunteering@northumberlandcva.org.uk and we will be happy to respond.