

# New to volunteering? What you need to know

## What is volunteering?

Volunteering means giving your time to help a charity, organisation, or community group without being paid. It can help you build confidence, learn new skills, meet new people, and gain experience for your CV. Many organisations welcome people with no volunteering experience, and training is often provided.

## How can volunteering help me?

Volunteering can help you:

- Create a routine and structure to your week.
- Build confidence and reduce isolation.
- Learn new skills or keep existing skills up to date.
- Gain experience to add to your CV.
- Meet people who may offer references or job opportunities.
- Explore different types of work and careers.



## Can I volunteer whilst claiming benefits?

- In most cases, yes. You can usually volunteer while claiming benefits as long as you continue to meet any job-seeking requirements, such as being available for work.
- Make sure you tell your work coach or benefits adviser that you are volunteering.

## Will I have to pay travel costs?

- Many organisations reimburse reasonable expenses, such as travel costs, but this varies. It's always worth asking before you start volunteering.

## What if I don't have references?

- Most regular volunteering roles ask for two references. These are often character references rather than employment references.
- References can usually come from a teacher, former employer, colleague, support worker, or someone who has known you well for some time (not family members).
- Organisations will ask volunteers to commit to a role for a few months before providing a reference for future jobs.

When choosing a volunteering role, try to **find something you are genuinely interested in and would enjoy**. Even a few hours a week can help build confidence, develop skills, improve wellbeing, and support your future job goals.

**Unlike applying for jobs, you don't need to apply for lots of volunteering roles.**

It's usually **best to apply for just one or two roles** that interest you. If a role is advertised on our Hub and you meet the requirements, the organisation is likely to value and need your support.

Turn over to find out more about using our [Volunteer Hub](#) to find a role.

# How Can Volunteer Centre Sutton Help You to Volunteer?

We work with local charities and community groups across Sutton to offer a wide range of volunteering opportunities through our **Volunteer Hub** — a simple, searchable database of roles from over 140 local organisations.

Have a look at our website at [www.vcsutton.org.uk/volunteer](http://www.vcsutton.org.uk/volunteer) for further help and support about volunteering.

## How to use our Volunteer Hub [www.vcsutton.org.uk/volunteer-roles-hub](http://www.vcsutton.org.uk/volunteer-roles-hub)



1

Look for a role using the search or filters. Read the role details to see if it's right for you and what skills you need.



2

Fill in the short form at the bottom of the page and tell the organisation why you're interested.

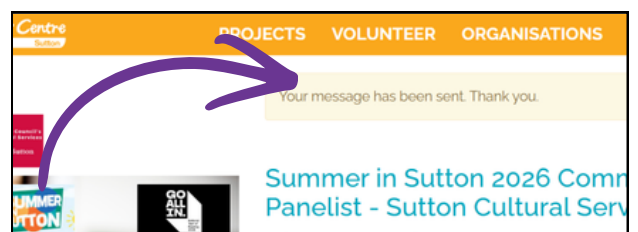
**TIP:** Use the message (no more than 100 words) to tell the organisation a bit about yourself, and why you are interested in, and suitable for the role.



3

We'll check your form and send it to the organisation within 3 working days.

**TIP:** When you click on the **SEND MESSAGE** button, you should see this which tells you we have received it.



4

The organisation will usually contact you (by phone or by email) within 10 working days to explain what happens next. This might include an interview, references, or a DBS check.