

The logo features a large, stylized white circle with a thick cyan outline. The word "WANDSWORTH" is written in a cyan, sans-serif font above the top half of the circle. The word "VOLUNTEER!" is written in a large, white, sans-serif font with a cyan outline, spanning across the middle of the circle. Below the bottom half of the circle, the text "You *can* make a difference" is written in a white, sans-serif font.

WANDSWORTH  
**VOLUNTEER!**  
You *can* make  
a difference

A guide to volunteering  
in Wandsworth

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“We couldn’t operate without volunteers.  
Every month, they contribute over  
1,000 hours of their time”

Volunteer Co-ordinator, Age Concern Wandsworth

## FOREWORD

Every year thousands of people in Wandsworth volunteer. They come from all walks of life, from students looking for work experience through to retired people, looking to pass on their skills and knowledge.

The contribution made by volunteers in supporting the local community is invaluable and we would like to take this opportunity to celebrate their achievements, as well as encourage others to realise their potential by taking an active part in life in Wandsworth.

We offer our thanks to the steering group who gave their advice on this guide and who are working together to raise the profile of volunteering in the borough. Its members were drawn from over 500 Wandsworth organisations who all play key roles in encouraging more volunteers.

**Cllr Maurice Heaster,**

Deputy Leader, Wandsworth Council

**Stefan Kuchar,**

Chief Executive Officer, Volunteer Centre Wandsworth

## A MESSAGE FROM THE STEERING GROUP

“At Wandsworth Citizen’s Advice Bureau, we have about 80 volunteers working for us at any one time, advising clients and assisting us with administration. We see first hand what volunteers contribute to our organisation. We have a high turnover of volunteers, as many use the experience and skills gained as a platform to employment.

On behalf of the Wandsworth Volunteering Steering Group, I commend this guide to you as a great way to start finding the right volunteer opportunity for you.”

**Olufemi Oluleye**

Chief Executive, Wandsworth Citizen’s Advice Bureau

Wandsworth Volunteering Steering Group

# About this guide

This guide has been put together to help you:

- find out about volunteering
- find the right placement and
- find out about what to expect once you are volunteering

Throughout the guide you can find hints and tips which will help you.

## Why volunteer?

People volunteer to develop new skills and to enhance their CV's. Others see volunteering as an opportunity to meet new people, give something back to their local community and to have fun!

“When a friend first suggested volunteering to me I was a little bit apprehensive. I hadn't worked in a while due to ill health and was nervous about being back in the work place. I started a volunteer administrator role over six months ago and I haven't looked back since. Volunteering has given me the chance to improve my skills and to gain some valuable experience but most importantly for me, it has really helped me to develop my confidence.”

**Stella Otoo – volunteer administrator**



# WHO VOLUNTEERS?

Everyone can volunteer. No matter what your age, skills and experience, there are plenty of opportunities on offer. The flexibility of these opportunities means that there will almost certainly be something suitable, so count yourself in – not out!

## Young people and students

Volunteering experience is an asset when you are applying for a job and can sometimes be a direct route into paid employment. It can also support your studies by offering practical experience.

## Employed people, parents and guardians

Finding time to volunteer can seem a barrier if you are already employed full-time or if you are a parent, or guardian. However, volunteering can be tailored to fit around your other commitments. You can volunteer during the evening, once a month or just for one-off events.

Parents often become volunteers to develop their skills as well as to get out and about. Some organisations provide crèche facilities or expenses towards child care costs.

## Older and retired people

There is no upper age limit to being a volunteer, your life experiences and skills are what many organisations are looking for. Many older people, for example, are trustees on management boards and this is a great way to put business knowledge and management skills back into use. Reading in schools and visiting other older people are just some of the things that older people enjoy.

## Don't rule yourself out if you...

### ...are looking for a job

Being a volunteer demonstrates that you are committed and ready for work. It will also provide you with training, practical skills and enhance your confidence in the work place, whilst you continue to seek a paid position. You can volunteer and still legally claim welfare benefits. However, before you start, you should notify your benefits office.

### ...live in a hostel or temporary accommodation

You don't need a permanent address. You can use the address of a friend or organisation that supports you. Lots of people who live in hostels or are homeless find that volunteering offers a positive activity that reconnects them with the local community and gives them a purpose.

"My voluntary work kept me going. It was so good to get out of the hostel and mix with other people who weren't in my situation and I wasn't judged. I felt really welcome and appreciated."

David Jones – volunteer gardener



## ...have a criminal record

In most cases, being an ex-offender should not stop you volunteering, but certain convictions will limit the type of activities that you can do. Having some volunteering experience and good references will count in your favour and increase your job chances.

## ...have additional support needs

Most organisations are very understanding and will do everything they can to help. If you do have particular needs, such as wheelchair access, then you need to discuss this with your chosen organisation. If you have a disability that's not physical, it's up to you to decide how much this affects you and whether you need to inform the organisation about it.

## ...are a refugee or an asylum seeker

Volunteering can be a great way to practice your English and learn more about your community. Refugees are allowed to claim out-of-pocket expenses whilst volunteering without breaking any rules. It is also fine to volunteer if you are in the process of appealing against a decision not to award you refugee status.


★★ **TOP TIP** ★★  
*Think carefully about what you want, what you can offer and how much time you want to give.*



# BEFORE YOU START

Think carefully about what you want to get out of volunteering and what you can offer. This will help you choose something that you will enjoy and that suits you. It's important that **YOU** benefit from volunteering. It should be fun!

Questions  
to ask yourself...



What type of organisation?

What role do I want?

What are my skills?

When am I available?

How far can I travel?

...turn over  
for more details

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

### What type of organisation?

There are many organisations that work with volunteers. It may seem difficult to choose, but think about your interests and passions, what you like and dislike?

### What role?

Consider the wide variety of roles that you can do. Think about your reasons for volunteering; is it mostly to develop skills or to have fun? Do you want to work in a team or independently?

### Your skills?

Whatever your skills, recognising them will help you to choose a role that's right for you. There is also the opportunity to develop new skills through volunteering.

### When are you available?

Organisations will expect a commitment from you as they will be investing in you by providing training, information and support. Some will advertise 'flexible' roles, whilst others require volunteers for specific times. Decide whether you need to volunteer flexibly or can commit to specific times. Be realistic and make sure that you don't over commit.

### How far can you travel? Other restrictions?

Decide whether you want to volunteer near to home or your place of work. Do you have a car? What locations are most convenient by public transport? Are you happy to make that journey in the dark? Most organisations cover travel expenses, but it is a good idea to check this before you start.

★★ TOP TIP ★★

Enjoy the experience and remember why you are doing it.

# GETTING STARTED

Once you have considered your skills and the sort of thing you are looking for, then it's time to get started.

“ Before I visited the Volunteer Centre Wandsworth, I really wasn't sure what volunteer role to do. I had also been out of work for a long time and lacked confidence in the work environment.

I saw a Volunteer Advisor and they really helped me. They gave me advice on what type of role would be best for me and helped ease my fears about getting back into the work place. I found the staff there very informative and helpful and the fact they referred me to the organisation I had chosen to volunteer with made getting into volunteering a lot less nerve wracking.”

**Marianne Martin – volunteer administrator**

## The Volunteer Centre, Wandsworth

The Volunteer Centre provides people with information on volunteering, offers expert advice on choosing the right volunteer role as well as matching individuals with Volunteer Involving Organisations and providing ongoing support to volunteers. The benefits of contacting the Volunteer Centre are that they:

- work with hundreds of different Volunteer Involving Organisations and have a wide variety of roles available
- have a team of expert advisors to support volunteers every step of the way
- run specialist volunteer projects for young people, ex-offenders and others needing additional support
- can arrange “short-term” volunteering, such as helping out at a local community event.

Volunteering should be fun!



## Find out about volunteering opportunities...

### ...face to face

Meet direct with one of the centre's Volunteer Advisors. Once you've been helped to select a volunteer opportunity, you'll be referred to your chosen volunteer organisation and provided with ongoing support. Appointments are held on selected days and you need to book in advance.

**"As a Volunteer Advisor I help people find volunteer opportunities that are right for them. It's very rewarding for me to see someone that I have helped to find volunteer work settled in their role, enjoying their time as a volunteer."**

**Daniel Blagdon – Volunteer Advisor**

### ...by phone

If you can't make it to the Volunteer Centre in person, then a Volunteer Advisor can call to discuss your needs, help you select a role that's right for you and then refer you to your chosen organisation.

### ...by email

If you are time-limited and eager to get volunteering, then tell the Volunteer Centre using the registration form, what sort of volunteer opportunities you are interested in. Their dedicated team will search through their current opportunities to find a role suitable for you and will email you all the details.

## Supported Volunteering Projects

If you lack confidence to volunteer, are unemployed, suffer with depression, have English as a second language, or have a criminal conviction, then joining a supported volunteer project is highly recommended. They are suitable for anyone who has experience of the above or who has had a key worker, support worker or social worker in the last 12 months.

As part of a supported volunteer project you will receive:

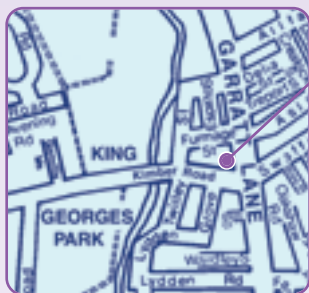
- help to complete a registration form
- face to face advice on the best options for you
- a referral to your chosen organisation
- on-going support during your volunteering.

**We will support you to make sure you have a fulfilling and positive volunteer experience.**



# ...LET'S GET STARTED!

Download registration forms from  
[www.wvsda.org.uk](http://www.wvsda.org.uk)



## Volunteer Centre Wandsworth

170 Garratt Lane  
 Wandsworth  
 SW18 4DA  
 Phone: (020) 8870 4319  
[enquiry@wvsda.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@wvsda.org.uk)

### Business hours: 10-4pm weekdays

- ring the Volunteer Centre to request a form
- drop by to pick up a form
- pick up a form at your local library.

### To find out about council support for volunteering:

Volunteer Promotion Officer

Phone: (020) 8871 6449

[www.wandsworth.gov.uk/voluntarysector](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/voluntarysector)

# WANDSWORTH VOLUNTEER!

You *can* make  
a difference

**5** Referral

**4** Volunteer Advisor  
appointment

**3** Contact from the  
Volunteer Centre

**2** Complete the form and post  
or email it back

**1** Download a registration form or call  
the Volunteer Centre



- 10** You're volunteering!
- 9** Trial period
- 8** Provide references
- 7** Interview or informal discussion
- 6** Your chosen organisation contacts you

**From enquiry  
to volunteering...**

# **10 STEPS TO SUCCESS**

turn over for more details

## 10 steps to success

### 1 Download a registration form or call the Volunteer Centre

Registration forms and guidance notes can be downloaded from [www.wvsda.org.uk](http://www.wvsda.org.uk)

You can also drop into the Volunteer Centre or pick up a form from your local library.

### 2 Complete the form and post or email it back

FREEPOST Vol Reg, WVSDA, 170 Garratt Lane, Wandsworth, SW18 4DA.  
[enquiry@wvsda.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@wvsda.org.uk)

### 3 Contact from the Volunteer Centre

Once your application form is received, you will be contacted to book an appointment with a Volunteer Advisor.

### 4 Volunteer Advisor appointment

You will discuss what sort of volunteering you would like to do and the advisor will help you find a suitable role.

### 5 Referral to your chosen volunteer organisation

Once the Volunteer Advisor has made sure that the role is right for you, they will refer you to your chosen organisation and will ask the right person to contact you to provide further information, this can accelerate the process.

### 6 Your chosen organisation contacts you

It may take a couple of weeks for organisations to get back to you, so don't be surprised. Many Volunteer Co-ordinators only work part-time or are volunteers themselves and this sometimes leads to a delay.

The organisation may send you an application form or invite you straight in for an interview or informal discussion. This differs from organisation to organisation.

**If after 3 weeks you have not heard from your organisation – contact the Volunteer Centre Wandsworth again.**

### ★★ TOP TIP ★★

Go to your interview prepared - have a good idea about what questions to ask and do some research on the organisation.

## 7 Interview or informal discussion

The organisation may invite you to attend an interview or informal discussion. They do this to make sure that you are the right volunteer for the job. It's also to give you a chance to find out more about them and the type of work that you will be doing. It is an excellent opportunity for you to ask questions!

**If you are unsuccessful at the interview stage, don't be disheartened. It doesn't mean that you can't volunteer, it's just that this role was not quite right for you. Contact the Volunteer Centre for advice and help in finding another opportunity.**

## 8 References

If your interview is successful, organisations often request one or two references. This is to check your details and credentials. A reference will normally be requested from someone who has known you for a year or more. People who can act as a referee for you include: a current or previous employer, volunteer organisation or someone in a position of responsibility, such as a teacher, social worker, doctor or a family friend.

It's polite to let your referees know that they are likely to receive requests.

## 9 Trial period

A trial period is designed to give you and the organisation a chance to try each other out. It can last anything from a week to six months.

## 10 Volunteering!

Congratulations, your trial period was successful and you are now a fully fledged volunteer. Enjoy!

## Routine checks

Having a criminal conviction should not stop you from volunteering.

### **Criminal Record checks**

If you will be volunteering with children or vulnerable people, you will need a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. This is a safety net for organisations to reduce the risk of recruiting unsuitable volunteers. You may also be required to declare criminal convictions, including those which are spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. The organisation should make it clear to you what criminal checks are required.

One in five adult males has a criminal conviction; however, many people are not willing to disclose convictions for fear of discrimination. It is recommended that you raise any concerns during your interview.

Criminal Record checks can take several weeks and sometimes several months. This can be frustrating, but stay in touch with your organisation for updates and find out what you can do in the meantime.

▶ **If you feel you have been discriminated against, contact the Volunteer Centre, for help in resolving the issue.**

★★ **TOP TIP** ★★

Stay in touch with your organisation while waiting for your CRB check.

## Going it alone

You may decide that you want to find a volunteer role independently. The most common ways are either via national volunteering websites, the internet or by approaching an organisation direct.

### Useful websites

[www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)


[www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)

[www.jobs.guardian.co.uk](http://www.jobs.guardian.co.uk)

[www.charityjob.co.uk](http://www.charityjob.co.uk)

You can also type keywords into a search engine, to identify organisations with suitable vacancies. For example try typing in; 'volunteer' and 'elderly' to see what volunteer roles are available.

**Volunteering projects provide the opportunity to get out and about and involved in the community.**

A photograph showing two people, a man and a woman, working together in a garden. They are focused on planting or tending to a large, dark-colored planter box filled with green plants. The man is wearing a light blue shirt and jeans, and the woman is wearing a dark blue top. In the background, there are more garden beds, a red utility vehicle, and other people, suggesting a community event or volunteer day.

Volunteers day  
at Balham  
Community Centre

# WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU START

Every Volunteer Involving Organisation is different but they have similar ways for inducting new volunteers and introducing them to the organisation.

## The Volunteer Co-ordinator

This is the person responsible for volunteers within your new organisation and will be one of the first people you meet. You may have already spoken to them when enquiring or at your interview. They will explain what your role is and will be the person to approach with any questions or concerns. They will support you during your time as a volunteer.

## Induction

You should be given the opportunity to attend a volunteer induction. The format of this will vary. It may be information on the organisation, with an introduction to staff, or it could be more practical, such as going through each step of your role, with an explanation of how things should be done.

## Volunteer Agreement

You may be asked to sign a Volunteer Agreement. This is a best working practice guide between the Volunteer Involving Organisation and the volunteer. It should detail what is expected of you and what you can expect from the organisation.

## Health and safety induction

Health and safety inductions are important and help ensure that in the case of injury, fire or emergency that you know what to do.

## Expenses

Most organisations have a volunteer expenses policy. They often help cover the cost of travel to and from your volunteering, as well as something towards refreshments or lunch. You may have to complete a claim form and submit receipts.



## Youth Volunteer Mural Project

### Support and supervision meetings

It is likely that you will be invited to attend support and supervision meetings to make sure that you are happy with your role and comfortable with the tasks that you are doing. It's also a good time to ask questions or express concerns.

### Volunteer team meetings

Volunteer team meetings are an excellent way to get to know your colleagues better, make friends and to have an input into your volunteer experience. Volunteer Co-ordinators update volunteers about the organisation, as well as providing further information on volunteer roles.

## BENEFITS AND THE LAW

Some people do not volunteer because they think that it will affect their benefits, this is simply not true. This section aims to dispel myths surrounding this. This is the legal position as it currently applies to the most common benefits.

**Income support** - You can volunteer for as many hours as you wish.

**Incapacity benefit and disability living allowance** - You are entitled to volunteer without this calling into question your ability to work.

**Job seeker's allowance** - You are entitled to volunteer as long as you are available for and continue to actively seek paid employment. Be aware that your volunteering may be seen as affecting the time that you are spending looking for work, if you are volunteering for a large number of hours.

**Other benefits that should not be affected are:**

- Attendance Allowance
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- Housing benefit / Council tax benefit

▶ **The laws surrounding volunteering and benefits may change, so check with Job Centre Plus on (020) 8877 6060.**

## INSURANCE

The organisation you volunteer for should have insurance to cover you if you have an accident whilst volunteering, however not all organisations will have this in place. Check when enquiring about a volunteer role.

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Volunteer Centre Wandsworth encourages all organisations registered with them to have an equal opportunities policy, however, some other Volunteer Involving Organisations may not have this. Ask about this before you start volunteering.

If you feel that you have been unfairly treated because of your age, race, ethnic background, religion, gender, sexuality, disability etc. then this could mean that you have been discriminated against. In the first instance, contact the Volunteer Centre Wandsworth to discuss your grievances.



Formal recognition for one outstanding Wandsworth volunteer

# FAQ's

## **Q I've been out of work for a long time, can I still volunteer?**

**A** Absolutely, volunteering is a great way to get back into the work place, gain new skills and enhance your CV.

## **Q I'm struggling to complete an application form**

**A** Application forms often come with guidance notes, but if none are available or they are not clear, contact the organisation and explain that you are having difficulty.

## **Q The organisation is taking a long time to get back to me**

**A** Organisations do sometimes take a while to respond to potential volunteers. If you haven't heard anything after 2 weeks, then contact either the Volunteer Centre Wandsworth or, if you applied directly to an organisation, contact them to pursue your volunteer experience.

## **Q I feel unsupported in my role, what should I do?**

**A** Ask to speak to your Volunteer Co-ordinator and clearly explain why you feel unsupported. If you feel nervous about doing this, contact the Volunteer Centre Wandsworth for advice.

## **Q I don't like what I am doing**

**A** Be honest and tell the Volunteer Co-ordinator. Make sure you clearly explain your reasons for disliking the role. They may be able to find you a new role. If not, then contact the Volunteer Centre Wandsworth, for a more suitable role.

# MOVING ON!

Eventually, it will be time to move on from your volunteer role. This may be because you have found paid employment, are looking for a new challenge or have other new commitments. When it comes to move on, follow the steps below:

- Give plenty of notice about leaving
- Explain your reasons for leaving. You may be asked to attend an exit interview. They are nothing to worry about and simply provide you and the organisation with the opportunity to discuss your reason for leaving and to evaluate your time there
- Finish up any work/assignments
- Hand back any keys, equipment that belongs to the organisation
- Stay in touch with your organisation, this will be useful if you need to request references in the future.

“Eight months after starting my volunteer role I was offered a paid job and it was all thanks to the invaluable experience that I gained as a volunteer.”

Anicha Hassanaly – volunteer receptionist



★★ TOP TIP ★★  
Give plenty of notice when you want to end your volunteering.

If you have difficulty understanding this in English, please contact:  
Wandsworth Interpreting Service: (020) 8672 1043/3649

English

যদি আপনার এটি ইংরেজিতে বুঝতে অসুবিধা হয় তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে এখানে যোগাযোগ করুন: Wandsworth Interpreting Service: (020) 8672 1043/3649

Bengali

Si vous avez des difficultés à comprendre ce texte en anglais, veuillez contacter: Wandsworth Interpreting Service: (020) 8672 1043/3649

French

અગર તે અંગ્રેજીમાં સમજવી મુશ્કેલ લાગે તો મહેરબાની કરીને

Wandsworth Interpreting Service: (020) 8672 1043/3649 પર સંપર્ક કરો.

Gujarati

यदि इसे अंग्रेजी में समझने में समस्या हो तो कृपया Wandsworth Interpreting Service का (020) 8672 1043/3649 पर संपर्क करें।

Hindi

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Polish

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Portuguese

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ, ਇਸਨੂੰ ਅੰਗ੍ਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਵਿਚ ਸਮਝਣ ਵਿਚ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਿਲ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ:

Wandsworth Interpreting Service: (020) 8672 1043/3649

Punjabi

Hadday kugu adag tahay inaad ku fahamto Ingriis fadlan la xiriir:

Wandsworth Interpreting Service: (020) 8672 1043/3649

Somali

Si tiene dificultad para entenderlo en inglés favor contactar a:

Wandsworth Interpreting Service: (020) 8672 1043/3649

Spanish

இதை ஆங்கிலத்தில் புரிந்துகொள்வதில் சிரமம் இருந்தால் நீங்கள் தொடர்புகொள்ள வேண்டியது: Wandsworth Interpreting Service: (020) 8672 1043/3649

Tamil

اگر آپ کو انگریزی میں اسے سمجھنے میں دشواری کا سامنا ہو تو براہ کرم رابطہ کریں:

Urdu

Wandsworth Interpreting Service: (020) 8672 1043/3649

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**Please call (020) 8871 6449**



Volunteering Steering Group members



Volunteer Centre

We charity for your community



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