

How to contact us

Voluntary and Community Action

To find out more about how we can help you find the right volunteering opportunity, drop in for a chat or contact us to arrange an informal meeting.

Our offices are open to the public between Monday and Friday from 9.30am until 3.00pm and at other times by appointment. You can also contact us at other times by telephone, email or post and visit our website. We can also arrange to meet you at a venue closer to where you live or work if you cannot get to Leighton Buzzard.

Telephone: 01525 850559

Fax: 01525 376281

Email: volunteer@action-centralbeds.org.uk

Website: www.action-centralbeds.org.uk

Address: Voluntary and Community Action
Bossard House
West Street
Leighton Buzzard
Bedfordshire
LU7 1DA

so you want to volunteer?

Volunteer Centre South Bedfordshire is a service of Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire
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Member of Volunteering England and licensed Volunteer Centre
Member of the National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service



Volunteer Centre
Central Bedfordshire

Welcome

Recruitment and selection



Your local Volunteer Centre is **the** place to find out about volunteering opportunities in your area. We can offer you a free, confidential and informal appointment where our advisers can provide information and guidance on any aspect of volunteering.

Put simply, volunteering is about choosing to give some of your time (unpaid) to benefit the environment or people in the community... and it's a whole lot more than that! We understand that volunteering can be a highly rewarding and enjoyable experience. That's why our advisers take the time to discuss your interests, likes and dislikes, and availability before suggesting some opportunities that might appeal to you.

We work in partnership with local volunteer-involving organisations to provide a wide range of interesting and rewarding volunteering opportunities.

Volunteer Centres are committed to promoting equal opportunities and challenging barriers to volunteering. We offer impartial advice and guidance to **all** members of the community seeking to volunteer and do not make judgements on a volunteer's suitability for a role.

The information included in this booklet will help you to identify the right opportunity for you.

The recruitment process will vary depending on the organisation, is normally informal and may include some or all of the following:

- application form
- references
- trial period
- informal discussions
- interviews
- criminal record checks

The amount of red tape involved in volunteer recruitment can come as a surprise to potential volunteers. Do not be put off by this, it's important to consider the following:

- Application forms can seem very formal, but their primary purpose is to allow volunteers to give an idea of who they are, rather than being a selection or screening tool.
- Many organisations use role descriptions and person specifications to outline what is involved. Naturally they will want to work with those volunteers who offer the skills and experience most suited to a particular role.
- Most organisations will ask for references. Bear in mind that references do not have to come from an employer.
- Volunteers who will be working with children or vulnerable adults may be asked to undertake a criminal records check (known as Disclosure). This is a legal requirement to protect both volunteers and the client group they are working with.

Remember the application process is as much about you deciding whether you like an organisation, as about them accepting you as a volunteer. Don't be afraid to ask questions.

What kind of volunteering do you want to do?

There are all kinds of volunteering opportunities available locally..... here are just a few examples of the type of activity you can get involved in:

- Administration
- Accounting
- Advice work
- Advocacy
- Animal welfare
- Befriending
- Caring
- Charity shops
- Committee work
- Conservation
- Driving
- Disability
- Event organising
- Fundraising
- Heritage
- Homelessness
- IT support
- Gardening
- Mentoring
- Sport
- Teaching and training
- Telephone help lines
- Web design
- Women's groups

Opportunities are available locally and throughout Bedfordshire and Luton. Some opportunities will be close to home while others may be further afield so you may need to consider transport and access issues.

- How far are you prepared to travel?
- If you don't have your own transport, is there a bus route?

Our Volunteer Centre advisers can help guide you through the many opportunities available. They will contact organisations on your behalf and arrange for them to contact you. This is your chance to ask questions about the organisations, find out more about the opportunity and the recruitment process.

Making the most of volunteering

Volunteering offers something for everyone whatever your skills, background or experience. There are almost as many reasons why people volunteer as there are volunteering opportunities to choose from.

Volunteering can be a great way to:

- ✓ share skills
- ✓ help the community
- ✓ develop a personal interest
- ✓ improve your self-confidence
- ✓ gain useful experience
- ✓ learn new skills
- ✓ access training and qualifications
- ✓ relieve boredom
- ✓ enhance your CV
- ✓ get some work experience
- ✓ make friends and enjoy yourself

“There’s nothing wrong with self-interested motivation! Whether you’re wanting to impress your boss, try out new skills or simply to escape from the kids,”

Catherine 2004

You’ll be **amazed** at what you can do!

To find out what is available you can contact our Volunteer Centre advisers by telephone or email. You can browse our database of volunteering opportunities and even apply online by visiting our website.

What motivates you?

Whether you are new to volunteering or have a lot of experience it is worth spending some time thinking about your own interests, needs and motivations.

Questions you might want to consider:

have you had previous contact with an organisation that you would like to support?

do you want to volunteer to work with certain groups, e.g. children, older people, victims of crime?

do you want to volunteer for a particular cause, e.g. a cancer charity, an environmental organisation, or supporting services in hospitals or schools?



“I want to contribute to something I believe in.”

Your reasons for volunteering will influence the type of role and organisation you choose. Some volunteers feel very strongly about a particular issue or cause and want to help change things. Others want to improve things in their local community or environment, or may want to use or develop their skills.

Volunteering can be a great way to gain experience for paid work. Volunteering should not affect your entitlement to state benefits, ask your Volunteer Centre adviser for more information.

When do you want to volunteer?

Another thing to consider is the time you have available.

- 🕒 Will you be able to offer one hour a week or twenty?
- 🕒 Can you give time every week, once a month or only a couple of times a year?
- 🕒 Are there certain days you would prefer to volunteer?
- 🕒 Are you looking for a long-term commitment (for example one or more years)?...
- 🕒 Or a short-term project (this could be a one-off event, a particular campaign or helping out during holidays)?

Short on time?
Ask our Advisers about 'time flexible' opportunities where you choose to give as much or as little time as you wish.

Volunteer-involving organisations need to plan ahead and invest in your training, supervision and support. Some opportunities require a specific level of commitment, others may be more flexible. As a general rule, the more training and supervision you receive from an organisation, the greater the commitment they'll ask from you.

Some opportunities may not be available immediately as volunteers need to undergo training or await criminal records checks.

Top Tip

Be realistic about the amount of time you can give, it is always better to increase your involvement later on if you want to.