

Volunteering Shropshire Compact Briefing



Shropshire Compact

Volunteering in Shropshire

One of Shropshire's unique strengths is its strong culture of volunteering. Living in a rural area, Shropshire's residents recognise the importance of supporting each other and ensuring support is available within their local communities. Shropshire's residents provide both formal volunteering (formal volunteering means giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations to benefit other people or the environment) and informal volunteering support (Informal volunteering means giving unpaid help as an individual to people who are not relatives).

- Shropshire is home to approximately 135,611 formal volunteers and of those 89,380 volunteer regularly (at least once a month).¹
- In addition to formal volunteering, Approximately 191,088 people living in Shropshire informally volunteer and of those 110,954 volunteer regularly (at least once a month).²

Volunteering results in a range of benefits to communities, to those who receive support from volunteers and to the volunteer themselves.

The Benefits of Volunteering

- **Economic benefits**- Volunteers contribute considerable amounts of their time offering support and services they are not paid to deliver. It is estimated that every hour worked by Shropshire's army of 221,909 volunteers contributes just under £1.8 million (£1,775,272 million) to the local economy; based on Shropshire's average part time working wage of £8 an hour. (If the full time working wage was used at £10.42 an hour then the value would be £2,312,291).³
- **Community cohesiveness** – Volunteering can help individuals feel part of a community, the work they do contributes in many different ways towards building community resilience (providing support from within rather than looking outside of a community for assistance). Shropshire's Voluntary Sector organisations rely on their volunteers to deliver a range of services they could not otherwise provide. A survey of 446 of Shropshire's registered voluntary sector organisations, showed only 4% don't work with volunteers. 43% have between 1 and 10 volunteers, 26% have between 11 and 20 volunteers, 8% have between 21 and 30 volunteers, 13% have 31 or more volunteers.
- **Social benefits** – Volunteers develop networks and meet new people. Volunteering plays a significant role in reducing social isolation and building relationships between people within a community.
- **Intrinsic reward** – Volunteers gain a personal sense of worth and satisfaction from doing good for others.
- **Skills and employment** – Volunteers gain new skills and experience for employment. Research shows that as many as 1 in 5 volunteers (22%) go on to find paid work after volunteering.⁴

¹ Cabinet office Findings from the 2012-2013 Community Life Survey, Giving of time and money, TNS BMRB July 2013 <http://communitylife.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/explore-the-data.html>

² Cabinet office Findings from the 2012-2013 Community Life Survey, Giving of time and money, TNS BMRB July 2013 <http://communitylife.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/explore-the-data.html>

³ Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2013 Provisional Results ONS Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis on 19 December 2013].

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcm%3A77-328216>

⁴ Nadia Bashir et. al. Final evaluation of the Volunteering for Stronger Communities Project 2012-13, Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University, November 2013.

Types of volunteering

Volunteering opportunities are diverse from dog walking, to tree planting, to volunteer driving, to befriending. However the way people volunteer is often categorised into 5 main types:

- **Traditional volunteering** - volunteers build a relationship with an organisation and provide face to face volunteering with beneficiaries, outdoors or in an office. This type of volunteering can often last for long periods of time.
- **Gap year or internship volunteering** – Many people take time out to volunteer either in the UK or overseas for a spell of time. Many young people take a year out to volunteer and gain new experiences before completing their education or going into employment.
- **Volunteer tourism** – There are many opportunities available to travel as a volunteer and provide support in other countries (or at projects in parts of the UK).
- **Online volunteering** - Online volunteering makes it possible to volunteer for different organisations in different places, at home and at the volunteer's convenience. Projects may involve helping with social media, website design, proof-reading or online mentoring.
- **Micro volunteering** – This is a form of online volunteering in which small actions by many people are used to create big impacts. Micro volunteering is based on bite sized chunks or volunteering, short projects that don't require a long term commitment.

Good practice in working with volunteers

Shropshire's Compact signatories and their partners should work to recognise the following good practice principles:

- Recognise the benefits of volunteering and the social capital and quality of life generated through volunteering.
- Recognise that although volunteers give their time on an unpaid basis, volunteering is not free. Volunteering requires the investment of resources and support to be effective.
- Give volunteers the support, training and management that they need.
- Work to break down the barriers that prevent people from volunteering.
- Share, develop and deliver good practice in volunteering.
- Develop a better understanding of volunteering and the contribution it makes to society.
- Recognise the value of volunteer time in the design and costing of contracts/funding.
- Say thank you to volunteers and raise awareness of the contribution made.
- Involve volunteers in decision making, ensure they can influence the design of projects and services that matter to them.
- Support work to offer a diverse range of volunteering opportunities.
- Ensure volunteering is open and accessible and volunteers are treated fairly – adopt equality principles and practice through volunteering.

Top Tip

Consider the following in relation to volunteering: **Involve - Protect - Support- Thank**

Volunteering Support – Who to contact

Shropshire Rural Community Council and Oswestry Community Action (Qube) work together to provide Shropshire with a volunteering support team. They offer volunteer brokerage, volunteer forums and a range of other advice and information. To find out more:

 **Website:** <http://shropshirevcs.org.uk/our-services/volunteering/>

 **Email:** info@shropshirevcs.org.uk  **Telephone:** 01743 342169

The Shropshire Compact

For more information about the Shropshire Compact use the details below:

 **Website:** <http://vcsvoice.org/the-compact/>

 **Email:** VCSAssembly@shropshire.gov.uk  **Telephone:** 01743 252740