



Caritas
Westminster

Volunteering

W O R K B O O K

Your personal guide and action plan
to getting started with a meaningful volunteering experience

“Love your neighbour as yourself.”
Mark 12:31

Worksheet

This worksheet will serve to help you plan your future volunteering. We hope this will allow you to reflect on your hopes and expectations, as well as on what you have to offer as a volunteer. Some time spent answering the questions could lead to a more fulfilling volunteering experience. **ACTIONS** are in blue.

1. **Why** do you want to volunteer? What would you like to get out of this experience? What's *your* reason? What do you want to get out of volunteering? It is not only about what you can do for the charity or others. Really think about what kind of experience or benefit you are looking for – your personal motivation. You are more likely to enjoy and stick with volunteering, if the role matches your personality and expectations (for example: meeting new people, make a difference, try something new, gain a skill, find a new purpose, serving others is part of my faith, something to put on my CV to help me find a job, have some fun, feel good about myself, give back to the community). Write down all of your reasons, even the ones you think are not 'good' or 'valid' reasons.



2. **Which** cause do you want to support? Who do you want to help? What change do you want to see in the world / your community? What do you feel strongly about? E.g. no-one should go hungry or have no-one to talk to, the environment, making refugees feel welcome...

Observe yourself over the next few days or weeks: what do you react to strongly? Write it down.

Do you feel 'called' to do something about a particular cause or issue? Why not take it to prayer?

3. **When** do you want to volunteer? Be honest about the time you can give. It's better to give 1 h / month than to promise 4 h/week when you can't keep the promise. That's not helping anyone! Are there times when you won't be able to volunteer (e.g. to prepare for exams)? If you're on furlough? Not sure for how long? Let the charity know from the start! Do you need a flexible role or can you commit to a fixed shift over a period of time?

Think about the amount of time you can realistically give and when. Write down your other commitments or fixed restrictions, for example 'I can only volunteer during school hours during term time' or 'weekends only'.

4. **What** are your strengths, skills, talents, gifts that you can share? Are there skills you want to develop? Skills are not the same as formal qualifications. Are you a good listener? Good at baking? Do you have lived experience of, for example, bereavement, homelessness, substance abuse and could help others going through it now? Compassion, an open mind, a willingness to pitch in wherever needed and a positive attitude are often more important than formal qualifications.

Write down everything you are good at and that you enjoy doing. You may be a qualified accountant, but maybe you want to volunteer away from a desk.

5. **How** do you want to volunteer? With others? As a group (family/friends)? On your own? Do you want to drive, entertain, teach?

Write down which option(s) you would most enjoy.

6. **Where** do you want to volunteer? From home. Near home. Near your work place. In an office / alongside paid staff (Covid restrictions allowing!). School. Church/religious organisation. Outdoors. Charity shop. (Elderly: care home or home visits.) Food bank.

Think about the geographical location and the kind of environment that would suit you best. Write it down.

Your Action Plan

Now that you know what you are looking for and what you have to offer, it's time to find that a good match. Please write the steps you plan you take in the box below. What do you need to do? Write down some actions that take you closer to your perfect volunteering opportunity. Challenge yourself to get in touch with at least one charity or suitable person and start executing your plan within the next week!



REFLECT: Why, Which, When, What, Where, How – WHO, WHAT

LOOK: your local community, local volunteer centres, Do-it, NAVCA, newsletters (e.g. parish), Mutual Aid groups, JVN, Caritas Volunteer Service, Volunteering Fairs, Social Media

GO: contact charities; other volunteers; people you know who run a project you like; who could you ask to be your references; prepare answers to interview questions

Reflect: You have done most of this step already. Just a couple more things you could think about;

- For formal volunteering you will probably need to provide references. Who could you ask? You should always ask permission to pass on a referee's details to a charity, parish, school or other organisation. If you get their permission now, you'll be ready to act when you want to apply for a role.

- What other paperwork might you need? It could be useful to update your CV.

My next step/s:

Look: suggested actions: Browse the volunteering opportunities on the Caritas Volunteer Service website and/or look up your local Volunteering Centre. If you are interested in a charity, look at their website to find out more about them.

My next step/s:

Go: Go out there and talk to people. Even if it's via email. Suggested actions: contact at least one charity or place where you could volunteer. Attend a volunteering fair. Prepare answers to some common interview questions.

My next step/s:

Worksheet – Space for a Mindmap or Doodling

If you like drawing, you can use this space to brainstorm some of on your personal interests and how this can connect to ways in which you can use your gifts and talents to provide service for others.

Or doodle while you do all your hard thinking. We don't mind. 😊

We hope you found this workbook useful. If you wish to arrange a one-to-one call to help explore your options further or if you have any questions about using the Caritas Volunteer Service website, please get in touch:

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