



An Introduction to Volunteering and Volunteering Facts

Being a Trustee is just one of many opportunities to volunteer and so as Trustee Week begins, it seemed appropriate to write something about volunteering and why we do it.

Fact:

17.1 million adults in England volunteered formally over the last 12 months [2009/2010].

Around one million full-time workers would be needed to replace them, at a cost of £18 billion to the economy.

[Taken from the 'Volunteering: the Facts', NCVO]

Why do so many people volunteer?

Some people actively look for volunteering opportunities because they believe they have something positive to offer and, additionally, they may or may not realise that they also stand to gain in a variety of ways. They may have had personal experience of receiving help from an organisation and want to be involved in providing the same for others or they may simply have been drawn into volunteering opportunities through people they already know, such as family or friends on the look out for support for their particular organisation or project.

There are lots of reasons why individuals become volunteers so perhaps the question should be, once people have begun volunteering, what keeps them motivated to give their time, skills, enthusiasm, energy and ideas?

An organisation or project that is committed to making a difference to others usually includes individuals who are also driven to make that difference, through taking the time to build relationships and often reaching those people who, for whatever reasons, are not in contact with statutory services. It's building up those kinds of relationships and seeing the difference that they make which encourages volunteers to keep on giving their time and effort in order to make a difference in some way to the quality of life of those around them.

But volunteering doesn't just add value to the voluntary and community sector, it also brings all kinds of benefits and changes to the individuals who get involved. Just a few examples of the kinds of benefits volunteering can bring are that it enhances employability and can influence career choice; it creates and provides opportunities to be a valued member of a team, to meet new people or make new friends and it can improve skills or even enable individuals to discover new ones.



The Pathways Through Participation project (a joint research project led by NCVO in partnership with the Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR) and Involve) is an interesting read and provides insight into the many factors which affect how, when and why individuals volunteer. To read either the Summary or the Final Report, go to the Pathways Through Participation website:

<http://pathwaysthroughparticipation.org.uk/>.