

# what is volunteering?

Volunteering can be rewarding and can give you a real sense of purpose at the same time allowing you to use existing skills and possibly gain new ones. Volunteering is your choice, it needs to be right for you, this guide gives you some advice on things to think about before you decide if it is right for you.

The Warrington Volunteering Strategy quotes the nationally agreed definition of volunteering as...

**'...an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives.'**

## Is volunteering what I want?

Volunteering is an investment of time and energy that a person decides to make which benefits another person, a cause, an organisation and the community as a whole. Volunteering is about taking responsibility and furthering an organisation's mission.

If you are looking to access volunteering for the very personal benefits of self confidence or meeting people but without the responsibility of volunteering you could look into participation instead. This means you can take part in activities or hobbies and get those benefits without the pressure. Sometimes people think they want to volunteer when they need to participate. The two are very similar, one just comes with responsibility. There is nothing wrong with participation at all, it's whatever is right for you at the time.

# What can I get out of it?

Depending on why you enter into it or what you end up doing there are lots of benefits from volunteering, for example...

- **Making good use of your time,**
- **Useful experience that can lead to employment or education**
- **Gain confidence in specific tasks**
- **Develop new skills or build on existing ones**
- **Contribute to a cause you believe in**

You might wish to gather some skills or experience so you can move into paid employment which is a great thing to do, but be honest with the organisation about your reasons and they will probably try and help you get as many new experiences as they can.

There are lots of different volunteering opportunities across Warrington You can choose what you want to do within reason, when you want to do it and for how long. If you put thought into the opportunity you choose and effort in performing the role you will hopefully find the experience healthy, enjoyable and rewarding.

Here are some questions to ask yourself before you decide to volunteer:

- **What's my main motivation for thinking about volunteering?**
- **What would I enjoy/be really interested in?**
- **What would I really NOT want to do?**
- **What do I aim to gain out of this experience?**
- **How much time do I have for volunteering?**
- **What time of day do I want to volunteer?**
- **How long can I volunteer for? Short-term? Long-term?**

The answers to these questions might help you decide if volunteering is what you want to do right now.