



East Durham Trust
Moving our community forward



Volunteer Centre
East Durham

Information about East Durham Volunteer Centre

East Durham Volunteer Centre has five core functions:

- 1. Strategic Development of Volunteering:** as the local experts on volunteering we inform strategic thinking and planning at a regional and national level. As member of Volunteering England, East Durham Volunteer Centre is part of a larger network that promotes Best Practice in all aspects of volunteer development and has achieved Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation which is nationally recognised.
- 2. Good Practice Development:** we promote good practice in working with volunteers to all volunteer involving organisations.
- 3. Developing Volunteering Opportunities:** we work in close partnership with statutory, voluntary and sector agencies as well as community groups and faith groups to develop local volunteering opportunities.
- 4. Voice of Volunteering:** we identify proposals or legislation that may impact on volunteering. We will lead and/or participate in campaigns on issues that affect volunteers or volunteering.
- 5. Brokerage:** we offer potential volunteers support and advice matching their motivation to volunteer with appropriate volunteering opportunities.

www.do-it.org.uk

www.do-it.org.uk is a national online data base of volunteering opportunities. Volunteering organisations can advertise their vacancies on this website free of charge through East Durham Volunteer Centre. We are able to handle all initial enquiries from potential volunteers who express an interest in any of the opportunities through the website.



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East Durham Volunteer Centre - Frequently Asked Questions

What exactly does East Durham Volunteer Centre do?

Put very simple, it is an agency which works with individuals, groups and organisations to support and develop volunteering in the community.

Why does volunteering need to be supported and developed?

Because volunteering can do much more than many people realise. Among other things, it reduces social isolation, provides essential services, helps promote people into paid work and builds local communities.

All that just from doing an afternoon shift in a charity shop?

Charity shops are one of the most visible users of volunteers, but there are an enormous variety of others. Volunteers work throughout our society in a huge range of vital roles such as drivers, teachers, active members of community groups, prison visitors, carers, gardeners and managers.

Isn't that just a way of getting people to do something for nothing?

Volunteers don't work for nothing. There are numerous rewards: they can improve existing skills, or learn new ones, earn a qualification or a reference for a paid job, make new friends and increase their self-esteem by contributing to their community, and receive ongoing support and training in their voluntary role.

But surely people can just find out what's available and sign up, so why do you need a Volunteer Centre?

Because a Volunteer Centre doesn't only point people in the direction of volunteering opportunities. For example, it works with organisations which need volunteers to ensure that volunteers' rights are respected, it promotes volunteering through local events and the media, it strives to break down barriers to volunteering for marginalised groups such as young people or those with disabilities, and it provides a voice for volunteers to local agencies and multi-agency groups addressing issues related to volunteering.

That all sound very airy-fairy; what's the real point?

The point is to work towards a society where everyone is fully aware of the scope and benefits of volunteering in their community.

Does everyone have to volunteer?

Of course not – volunteering is a positive choice for many people, but some may not want to volunteer, and those who do volunteer may not do so all the time. But everyone needs full accurate information about volunteering to be able to make a real choice about whether or not to take it up.

How do I comment on the service I get from East Durham Volunteer Centre?

We are always interested in how you've been dealt with by the Volunteer Centre. If you have any complaints about the Centre please refer to the procedure in the Volunteer Policy document given to you as part of your Welcome Pack.



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VOLUNTEERING - Your Rights

There are a few things that you should know before you start voluntary work.

1. Expenses – travel or telephone expenses or any other out of pocket expenses should be reimbursed when you volunteer, and should not affect any benefits you may be in receipt of. Keep your expense receipts. You should not be given a 'flat-rate' reimbursement or set amount of money per day to cover expenses.
2. Benefits – if you are unemployed and claiming benefits and looking for (paid) work, volunteering should not get in the way of your benefits as long as you're still available for paid work. If you are in any doubt you should contact your Adviser at your local Jobcentre for advice.
 - a. Jobcentre Plus, Hatfield House, St Cuthbert's Road, Peterlee SR8 1PB
Telephone: (0191) 220 2000
 - b. Jobcentre Plus, St. Johns Square, Seaham, County Durham SR7 7JE
Telephone: 0845 6043719
3. Training/Induction – Full information should be given to you about your host organisation before you start. It is very important that, on joining the organisation, you meet all the people that you will be working with, visit the places where you might be expected to go, learn about the routines in which you will be involved and how you fit into the organisation. You should also be given the chance to train and develop the skills you need.
4. Supervision/support – you should be told whom you are responsible to and support should be available from the organisation.
5. Health and Safety – you should not work in unsafe and unhealthy conditions. There should be a health and safety policy.
6. Insurance – the organisation you work for should insure you adequately.
7. References – you should be able to receive a reference on the basis of your voluntary work.
8. Voluntary Work Details – you should be given a clear description in writing about your voluntary placement and hours of volunteering agreed. Your voluntary work should not be a substitute for paid workers.



VOLUNTEERING - Do's and Don'ts

Do

- △ Think about why you want to be a volunteer.
- △ Ask questions about the organisation and what will be expected of you.
- △ Accept all out of pocket expenses. If you don't want or need them, you can always give them back as a donation.
- △ Keep in touch with East Durham Volunteer Centre and come to see us.
- △ Enjoy yourself and encourage others who may be interested in volunteering to visit East Durham Volunteer Centre.

Don't

- △ Start volunteering without knowing exactly what is involved.
- △ Over commit yourself – know your limits, as reliability is important to the organisation.
- △ Leave a project because you are fed up or having problems – talk to someone in charge of the organisation or come back to East Durham Volunteer Centre where we will be pleased to help as much as we can.
- △ Accept money as payment from someone you have helped in the course of your volunteering. The person can make a donation to the organisation if they wish.
- △ Let the organisation down. If you need time off for holidays, sickness or just a break, where possible, always let the volunteer co-ordinator know in advance.
- △ Think you have to commit yourself for long periods of time, many organisations only require volunteers from “time to time” so this type of volunteering may suit you better.
- △ Do anything you feel uncomfortable with. Speak to your volunteer co-ordinator or the person in charge at the organisation.
- △ Breach confidentiality.



VOLUNTEERING - Some Questions to Ask Yourself

If you are clear about why you want to volunteer, then you may have some idea of the sort of volunteering you want to undertake. The following questions may help you focus on the type of volunteering you would like to do and how much time you can give.

How much time can I spare? - Remember, you have other commitments so don't over-commit yourself.

If I am unemployed, do I have to sign on at a certain time and spend a regular amount of time job seeking?

Am I just doing voluntary work until something better comes along?

Do I need to arrange childcare?











Can I use my own transport or do I need to use public transport to get to my voluntary work?



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VOLUNTEERING - Opportunities

It can offer you the opportunity to:

-  Find out more about your community and what it has to offer
-  Structure your day
-  Find a new challenge
-  Gain valuable work experience
-  Build on your existing skills and gain new ones
-  Help you to be aware of the difficulties other people face
-  Make new friends
-  Increase your confidence
-  Involve you in your community
-  Gain a sense of fulfilment

Above all have fun!