

Getting Involved

A Jewish Care Interact Guide

Getting involved

Participating in a variety of activities and contributing to the community in which you live are key to staying well and being happy.

Volunteering and participating in your community

Would you like to feel more involved and connected to other people and your community? Then volunteering may be for you—many organisations are ready to welcome you.

Volunteering is suitable for all age groups and may be particularly beneficial to wellbeing and happiness in later life. There is a role out there to suit everyone.

According to [Action for Happiness](#), a movement of people committed to building a happier and more caring society, the number one action that can contribute to personal happiness is giving. Apparently, our generosity is hardwired to the reward mechanisms in our brains. When we give our time, energy and kindness to others, it not only helps them, it's also great for our wellbeing too.

Research from the [Institute for Volunteering Research](#) suggests that volunteering can provide a sense of purpose in life. It helps to raise confidence and self-esteem by shifting focus away from ourselves and our own issues towards the needs of others.

When traditional employment opportunities are no longer relevant, volunteering can also provide a way of continuing personal development in later life. As a social activity, volunteering can bring people together to create new friendships through shared purpose.

Research also reveals that other positive outcomes associated with volunteering in later life include reduced symptoms of depression and increased quality of life. All of these benefits can lead to increases in physical activity and general strength as well as improved cognitive function.

Are you looking for more information on the numerous “feel good” aspects to volunteering? Perhaps now is the time for you to investigate. Check out these general resources:

- [Should I volunteer?, from the NHS Choices website](#)
- [Volunteering, from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations](#)
- [The volunteering search tool from the Do-it Trust](#)

There is no age limit in volunteering. Your journey starts here.

Volunteering within the Jewish community

The UK Jewish community has many well respected charities that work tirelessly to support those in need.

Volunteering with your synagogue

Consider your local synagogue for a quick route to volunteering. A simple call to the synagogue office will point you towards the welfare officer who can let you know about the different options within the community.

Roles may include:

- Befriending;
- Shopping for others or accompanying others shopping;
- Cooking;
- Hosting Friday night supper;
- Supporting the recently bereaved;
- Visiting hospitals; or
- Guiding synagogue visits for school children.

One great resource for ad hoc volunteering opportunities is Tikun in Temple Fortune. Here you can join a cooking club that prepares meals for the homeless or find some other opportunity. A dedicated volunteering coach will find you the perfect role that will match your skills and interests.

You can also visit the [United Synagogue's website](#) to explore the opportunities throughout Greater London.

Volunteering with Jewish Care

Jewish Care welcomes volunteers of all ages and the time commitment can be as little as an hour a week. Specific roles suitable to an older volunteer include:

- Residential befriending;
- Supportive community tea parties (where you host tea parties at your home on a monthly basis);
- Helping on Shabbat or festivals in residential care homes;
- Using a particular skill such as playing an instrument to entertain at residential care homes; or
- Exercising language skills (like Yiddish, Hungarian or Farsi) which are particularly helpful for communicating with people who have dementia and revert back to their native tongue.

[Jewish Care's volunteer team is happy to help find the right role for you.](#)

The Jewish Volunteering Network (JVN)

The [Jewish Volunteering Network](#) works across the community and throughout the UK with individuals and organisations promoting volunteering and volunteer opportunities. Lia Bogod, volunteer development manager, explains, "Volunteers do not get paid, not because they are worthless but because they are priceless".

JVN offers a range of volunteering opportunities for people who seek to give the gift of time to those less fortunate than themselves. Roles vary from helping serve food to the homeless, to wrapping gifts

in a shopping centre or driving nurses to a hospice when there is no public transport.

JVN promotes and enables all types of volunteering amongst all members of the Jewish community, regardless of age or religious affiliation. Its main aim is to connect as many people to volunteer positions as possible, mainly through its website where charities can advertise opportunities and potential volunteers can register to get in touch with these roles and charities. In any one time, there are about 300 different roles available—from planning arts and crafts sessions, to IT training for older people or driving cancer patients to appointments. The list is endless.

JVN also employs a part-time professional who helps people with learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities to be involved in volunteering. This person supports these volunteers in their aim to participate as an active and valued member of society.

Volunteering outside of the Jewish community

Gill Hyatt, volunteer coordinator at the Royal Free Hospital Hampstead says that many of her volunteers are over the age of 65 and maintain a full and active life, thanks to their involvement in volunteering. She says that volunteering brings structure to the day, and her older volunteers speak of a sense of appreciation for their work as well as the pleasure of being able to give something back and make a difference.

Volunteering in hospitals offers a wonderful opportunity to connect with others in a busy and bustling environment. The roles within the hospital are diverse:

- Visiting and talking to the sick;
- Reading to those with sight loss;
- Directing visitors in the hospital;
- Serving meals and refreshments on the wards; and
- Providing chaplaincy roles.

Hospitals generally cover the expenses of their volunteers. Most hospitals have a section on their websites detailing volunteering opportunities.

You may also want to consider the many volunteering opportunities in your city:

- Helping in soup kitchens;
- Supporting the schools reading project;
- Lecturing at the University of the Third Age;
- Volunteering in museums and galleries, such as the RAF Museum or the Jewish Museum; or
- Becoming a Trustee or Governor of a charity/school.

Take a look at the websites of [The Volunteer Centre Camden](#) and [Community Barnet](#) for a vast array of roles.

Finally, the [Paperweight Trust](#) offers support with administrative tasks at home, such as paying bills

and dealing with banks and insurance companies. If you have a background in law, accountancy, banking or social work, or you are a well-organised person, your skills could be put to good use through this organisation.

