



Volunteering  
in retirement:  
new  
beginnings





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*When I retired I looked for constructive ways of using my time, I wanted to put my skills at others' disposal. Volunteering is a way to make a difference and contribute to society.*

CSV Grandmentor

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# The start of something



**There are 14 million people over 60 years of age with a lifetime's worth of knowledge, skills, and experience to share.**

You can help others. It may be mentoring disaffected young people, helping children to read, transforming wastelands, repairing children's bicycles or improving the lives of isolated, older people.

Retirement is an opportunity for you to use and develop your skills and talents further than you thought possible.

Why not choose to give some of your time to get actively involved as a volunteer?

We are delighted to have the Government's support for our campaign aimed at increasing the number of retirees giving their skills and time to their communities. These are needed more than ever. We hope this guide inspires you to explore your retirement in a different way with us at CSV, the UK volunteering and learning charity.

Lucy de Groot  
Chief Executive

[www.csv.org.uk](http://www.csv.org.uk)



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It was great to see the role of volunteers so fully recognised during the London 2012 Games.

But a recent survey conducted by CSV revealed that nearly half of the organisations polled had a need for skilled volunteers, particularly in the fields of business development, marketing, accounting and finance.

I have seen for myself what a difference someone with business experience can make to a local charity – and it is always striking how much they too get out of the opportunity.

That's why the Government is supporting CSV's efforts to bring more newly-retired people into the voluntary sector.

Your skills, experience and time continue to be of immense value and, as this excellent guide shows, there are countless ways in which you can make a difference.

**Nick Hurd, Minister for Civil Society**

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# Case study: learning to balance

## Helen retired from her demanding career as a civil servant in the Department for Education.

“I felt jubilant about retiring,” says Helen. “I was really hungry for other constructive ways to use my time and new opportunities.” However, she deliberately made no immediate plans. “I needed to have a break, have time to think about what I wanted to do and how much time I wanted to spend on it.”

Helen was keen to use her experience, knowledge and skills in education, management and as a school governor to make a difference by working with individuals and groups, so six months after retiring Helen applied for CSV’s Grandmentor volunteering programme. She is now Grandmentor to a university student struggling with stress and depression. “We meet once a week. My role is a sympathetic listener; I try to boost her confidence and give advice to help her achieve her goals in life.”

“In the first conversation we had, my mentee was in tears but I’ve since been supporting her with chasing away her negative thoughts, and now she is much more emotionally stable. I’m gratified that I’m needed and what I’m offering is helping her.”



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*The key is having a balance of activities. You can volunteer for as much time as you want. That’s the great thing about being retired and volunteering – you make your own rules.*”

Helen, mentor and school governor

# Why volunteering matters



**Your unique skills and experiences are invaluable to your community. You can give so much by volunteering your time and skills.**

But there are benefits for you as well. A recent study found older people who volunteer are happier, less socially isolated, less depressed, and have a better quality of life than those who don't.

Volunteering gets people directly involved in their community in new and challenging ways. You'll be embarking on brand new experiences and making new friends along the way.

Many volunteers tell us that volunteering actually helps make the transition into retirement easier.

It'll be fun too, giving you enjoyment and personal satisfaction while practically supporting worthwhile causes that matter to you.



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***There is a real need for things to do in retirement and volunteering helps you to continue with your interests and keeps you happier. You keep your mind and body active which keeps you healthier.***

Colin, communications volunteer, former adult education teacher

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# Case study: skills you can 'bank' on

## Andrew retired after 36 years in banking.

"Being a bank manager taught me how to work with people in a respectful, positive and motivational way," believes Andrew. Along with his financial skills, this proves invaluable in his current voluntary roles. He has always been keen to volunteer but as retirement neared, he says: "I didn't want to be retired on Friday and wonder what I would be doing on Monday! I was very aware of the danger of cutting yourself off and getting lonely."

Volunteering was the answer for him: he has built on his role as a governor at a special educational needs school and is now a voluntary student support assistant, junior table tennis club secretary, accounts auditor for the Women's Institute, and support worker at a young offenders' prison.

At the prison he plays sport and offers support and encouragement to young men who have often been involved in serious crimes. "You learn about their backgrounds and that they've still got heart. Hopefully I've been showing them that someone's interested in them," says Andrew.

"I find my volunteering role really enjoyable and I wake up on a Monday morning really looking forward to the week."

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*Don't be afraid or wait too long as it doesn't have to be a life commitment. You can keep trying new roles.*

Andrew, volunteer support worker and auditor

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# Your skills count



***If I were a realist this [project] would not be here. Dreams and aspirations are what move things on. We aim to put lots of smiles on little faces.***

John, CSV City Can Cycle volunteer. He leads a team of older volunteer bike mechanics in the West Midlands

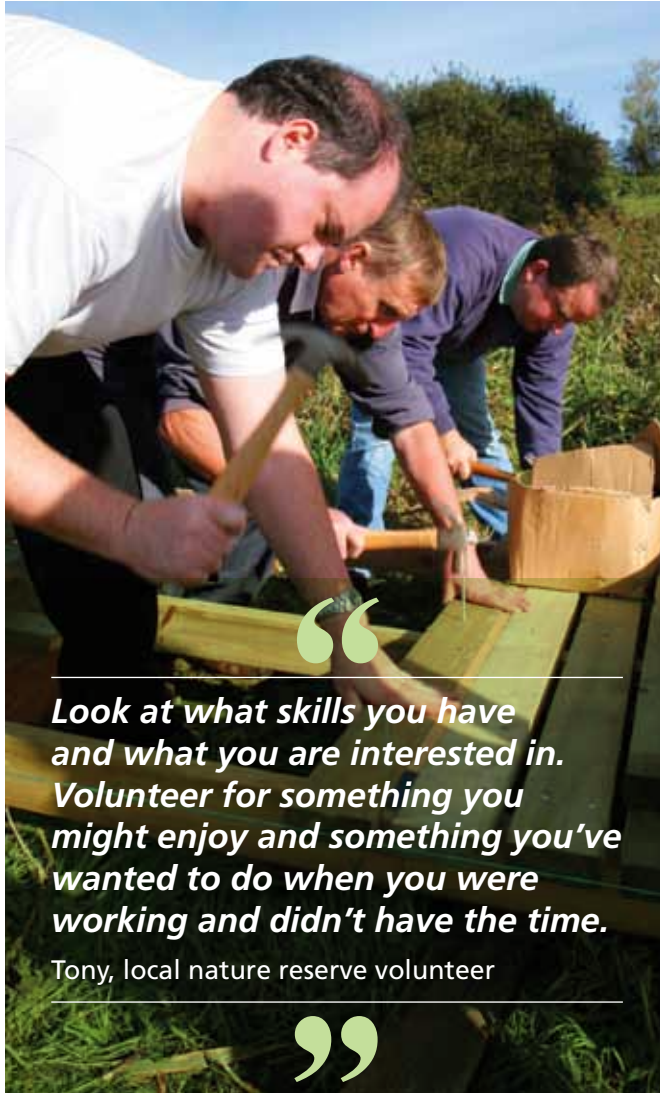
**The voluntary sector and many small organisations need additional skills more than ever to meet the challenges of the current tough economic climate<sup>ii</sup>.**

“In these times of economic downturn we are faced with stringent applications from funders and a more competitive environment. The skilled volunteers we have received from CSV helped us implement key business plans and milestones. Without this support we could not have got off the ground,” says Rahmat, Director of TechMaids, a new enterprise training women in IT.

Almost 80% of community organisations want volunteers to strengthen their existing services to make them more efficient and robust<sup>iii</sup>. At Bishop’s Cleeve Tithe Barn volunteers updated crucial policies and procedures for this volunteer-run community centre and listed building. “The help provided by CSV has been invaluable. Their skills have provided us with great ideas that will secure the future of our local heritage,” says John, Chair of Trustees.

Now, more than ever, you can make a significant and meaningful contribution to your community through sharing your life skills and experiences.

# Case study: a natural change



*Look at what skills you have and what you are interested in. Volunteer for something you might enjoy and something you've wanted to do when you were working and didn't have the time.*

Tony, local nature reserve volunteer

**Tony retired after 40 years as an insurance broker.**

Through a friend's encouragement Tony began volunteering for a local nature reserve while still at work: "It takes some courage to walk into a place and say 'I want to volunteer' when you don't know anyone", says Tony. "But it's a good opportunity to get out into the fresh air and do physical work, to meet people and extend your circle of acquaintances."

The "big change" of retirement enabled Tony to dedicate more of his time to the nature reserve and other voluntary roles, such as at a local pensioners' luncheon club. "You see people cheer up and it's very rewarding as the club is often the only contact with other people they get during the week," says Tony. Retirement has given Tony opportunities to use and develop his skills. For example, he has completed several conservation and ecology courses. He asserts, "There are different compartments of your life, and retirement is the next compartment for enjoying and doing the things you like."



# What can I do?

## The range of volunteering opportunities available is vast.

From being a trustee, to a mentor, providing administrative or financial support to a charity, befriending an isolated elderly person, fundraising, reading with primary school children, driving people with disabilities to day trips, carrying out conservation work in a nature reserve, the list is endless.

Choosing the right opportunity for you is essential.

You will need to consider how much time you can spare and whether you want a regular commitment or not. Many roles can be flexible and fit in with the rest of your life.

Think about what you want to get out of it. Do you want to meet new people, to develop new skills, do something completely different to your career, or to follow a dream?

Is there a cause or issue you want to get involved with? For example, do you want to work with young people, improve the environment or help homeless people? Or is the cause not a prime concern for you?

But don't just think about it – try some opportunities and see what suits you best.

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*It's one of the best things I've done in my life. I look forward to it every week.*

Ann, volunteer hospital receptionist, former health care admin worker

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# What you can expect



*Volunteering is a great way of maintaining and generating networks of friends.*

Ed, local Citizens Advice Bureau trustee, former education and health sector professional

**There are lots of aspects to volunteering which you need to consider. You can contact CSV on 0800 374 991 for more information but here are some of the key points.**

If your role involves volunteering with children under 18 or vulnerable adults you are likely to need to have a Disclosure and Barring Service check (formerly Criminal Records Bureau check). The community organisation you volunteer with will help and advise you with this process.

Volunteering may push you out of your comfort zone. This will help you to continue to learn and develop personally or steer you towards roles you feel more comfortable with. When you start a new role there may be times when things don't seem to be going to plan or as you expected. This is quite normal! As with any new experience it may take time to acclimatise to the new environment, people and culture. Seek support and guidance if necessary and talk through your concerns.

You won't be in it alone and previous experience is not always necessary. Community organisations should provide you with induction, training, on-going support and supervision. Many charities will cover some of your expenses.

# Next steps



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*There really is no substitute for the experience you've gained throughout your working life; I say 'use it, don't lose it!'*

Mike, volunteer office coordinator, former Prison Services manager

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Think about your passions, skills, time, and other commitments. Make sure that volunteering is right for you in this new chapter of your life.

If it is, CSV can help you explore your retirement in a different way and develop new skills.

We can help you take an active role in your community. We can help you decide what you want to do and to find a way of doing it. We can help you find a placement or support you to set up your own project.

CSV enables people of all ages and backgrounds to reap the benefits of volunteering.

## Get in contact with us

You can visit our website to see the whole range of opportunities we have to offer:

**[www.csv.org.uk/volunteer](http://www.csv.org.uk/volunteer)** or call us on **0800 374 991** to discuss the possibilities.





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CSV, the UK volunteering and learning charity.

CSV (Community Service Volunteers) creates opportunities for people to take an active part in the life of their communities through volunteering, learning and community action.

## Notes

Names have been changed in some of the case studies.

- i *The impact of volunteering on well-being in later life*, WRVS, 2012
- ii REACH, 2011
- iii *The Professional Skills Gap*, CSV, 2012

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