

- or friend and volunteer together.
  - Use quotes from your older volunteers about what they get from volunteering with you.
  - If you provide childcare facilities, mention this in your publicity. Grandparents who regularly look after small children may welcome the opportunity to volunteer while their grandchild is safely taken care of.
  - Target older people working at home. a large-scale European study found that home workers were almost twice as likely to volunteer as non-home workers.
- Finally, here's a few quotes showing how important your voluntary opportunity can be to older people!**

'Makes life worth living'  
 'I don't have time to feel sorry for myself'  
 'I get to meet some very nice people'  
 'It's fun and keeps me young'  
 'There's real satisfaction in making someone happier'  
 'Voluntary work fulfils my life'

**Further reading :**

The 21st Century Volunteer (this includes details about baby boomers) [www.nfpsynergy.net](http://www.nfpsynergy.net)

Volunteering by Older People by Filiz Niyazi - Please ask to borrow a copy from our Resource Library.

Also see the Volunteering England website [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk) and click on Good Practice Bank.

Active Ageing in Active communities - free report available on-line [www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/1861347626.pdf](http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/1861347626.pdf)

[www.csv.org.uk](http://www.csv.org.uk) (Community Service Volunteers) see link [www.csv.org.uk/Volunteer/Senior+Volunteers/](http://www.csv.org.uk/Volunteer/Senior+Volunteers/)

[www.vitavolunteering.org.uk](http://www.vitavolunteering.org.uk) - see report Volunteering in the Third Age.

[www.ageconcern.or.uk/ageism](http://www.ageconcern.or.uk/ageism)

[www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2006/20061031.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2006/20061031.htm)

**Contact us**

**Poole Volunteer Centre**

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How to.....recruit older volunteers

*Good practice guides for  
 Volunteer-involving  
 organisations*



Funded by GoldStar to share Good practice



*This snapshot on Recruiting Older Volunteers was kindly written by  
 Monique Munroe on behalf of Poole & Bournemouth Volunteer Centres.*

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# Recruiting older volunteers

By 2021 the UK population of over 60's will have risen by 30%. Good news if you use a lot of older volunteers to run your service.

Before you get too excited though, there's at least nine things which could prevent that extra 30% from volunteering for you.

They:

- are too busy caring for sick dependents and/or looking after grandchildren
- Find your insurance policy doesn't cover older people
- Can't get to do the volunteering because of transport issues
- Feel that they are too old to volunteer
- Have a disability or a health problem
- Can't afford to volunteer
- Spend a lot of time socialising with friends and having long holidays
- Are worried about the risk of being sued and the amount of bureaucracy involved in some voluntary opportunities
- Lack confidence:
  - and feel they don't have anything to offer
  - in making the initial contact with an organisation
  - in their ability to carry out what is listed in the role description.

Knowing the barriers that prevent older people volunteering is very useful. While you may not be able to do very much about the first point (except perhaps offering them something to fit around their caring e.g. a small task they could do at home), you can about the others. Taking action now will mean that an older person may come to you rather than another organisation who may not have taken the time to overcome them.

So, we know about the barriers, now let's look at why older people do volunteer:

- Combat loneliness.
- Pass on skills.

## What do you need to be aware of when recruiting and using older volunteers?

- Don't 'retire' them just because your insurance limit is 70! Many people can continue volunteering for a further 10 years or more!
- Retirement or amending tasks should be based on ability and should not be age restricted. Your Volunteer should know their own limitations and these can be discussed at regular supervision or one-to-one sessions.
- Ensure your insurance will cover them.
- Ensure that the workplace is kept as free of obstacles as possible. This of course goes for the safety of all volunteers, but particularly older ones as a fall increases the risk of health complications.
- Not all have confidence for tackling new things, particularly machinery or IT. You may need to look at your current training programme and consider taking more time on certain aspects. Ask the last group you trained to complete a feedback form to see if there was an area they would have preferred to have spent more time on.
- Create new opportunities that can be done at home, or slice up existing roles, so that the relevant parts can be carried out there.
- Use older volunteers to promote your volunteering opportunities to their peers.
- Try not to organise evening meetings, unless arranging transport for your volunteers. Older volunteers can be unhappy about going out at night especially if they have to rely on public transport.
- Some older volunteers may tire easily, so bear this in mind when setting up the voluntary opportunity.
- **Re: Publicity Material**
  - Have a good range of posters showing older and younger volunteers working together to appeal to a wider audience.
  - Many older people go abroad during the winter. What will they do when they return in the summer? Could you advertise a time limited opportunity for these people?
  - Mention the amount of life experience they have.
  - The problems they have overcome and how they can use this experience to help others.
  - Suggest that people can bring their husband/wife

- Give something back.
- Something to get up for in the morning.
- Fed up with looking at the same four walls.
- To help cope with bereavement/divorce.
- Something to do instead of joining a special interest club.
- To help other people with their problems.
- Because it was suggested at a retirement course.
- To keep busy and minds active or to keep fit and active.
- Fill up spare time.
- Maintains a purpose in life after retirement and children leaving home.

The following is a list of things that older people have said that they want their voluntary opportunities to be. How many of your own opportunities meet these? If you bear in mind when creating new opportunities, or when thinking of the wording for a recruitment advert, you will be in a good position to bring new volunteers to your organisation, rather than watch them go to others.

- Something which involves a variety of tasks.
- That is interesting, stimulating and rewarding.
- That will tie in with existing interests/hobbies.
- Smaller tasks which can be done from home.
- Something which is fun and enjoyable.
- A job without an upper age limit.

If you have ever had any doubts about recruiting older people, here's a few reasons why you should use them. For example:

- On average older people will stay longer with an organisation than younger people.
- They are prepared to work more hours.
- They have a great deal of experience and skills to bring with them.
- They are usually committed and reliable.