

# *We support stronger communities...*

**Volunteers play a significant role in supporting services across a range of areas and communities throughout Somerset.**

Their involvement has benefits for:

- **Somerset County Council** - providing value added services that would either need a significant financial outlay to achieve or not to be offered at all
- **Individuals** - improving their lives by helping them with a range of practical activities
- **Our volunteers** - enhancing their well-being, health, and the development of their skills and knowledge.

**National research** suggests, “*The social benefits of volunteering can be between six to twelve times the investment made*” and therefore has a major benefit to helping the Council achieve its goals.

The Council has a three year contract with CSW *You Can Do* to identify, recruit, train, and deploy volunteers across a range of service areas, including Children’s Services, Adult Social Care, and Transporting Somerset. Whilst most volunteers typically commit between 2 and 4 hours per week, others will join for short term projects such as the Summer Reading Challenge which encourages children to read during the school holiday.



**At the end of the first year of the contract we have just over 1,000 volunteers engaged in the following areas.**

## *Active Living Centres*

There are over 120 Active Living Groups for people over the age of 50 across the County. These provide an opportunity to develop and maintain friendships and contribute to community life. They help to reduce the effects of isolation and loneliness which are shown to have a negative impact on the quality of someone's life.

The groups are supported by over 600 volunteers who carry out a range of tasks including coordinating activities, preparing food, or acting as the group's Treasurer or Secretary. The volunteers are supported by a Volunteer Engagement Adviser employed by CSW *You Can Do*. Each year representatives from the groups come together at a Jamboree to celebrate their achievements, share good practice, and network with other agencies and sources of support.

## *Transporting Somerset*

Approximately 200 volunteer drivers carried out over 88,000 journeys last year, covering over 1,000,000 miles, enabling people to get to essential health appointments as well as a range of other crucial services. This reduces the cost of 'no shows' at health appointments, reduces anxiety, and provides a cost-effective alternative to funding other methods of travel.

In addition to recruiting new volunteers, CSW *You Can Do* carry out annual document checks, ensuring drivers have the necessary insurance cover, MOT certificates etc. This year the Council and CSW *You Can Do* are developing a new Passenger Assistant role that will enable volunteer drivers to carry young children or vulnerable adults.

## *Children's Services*

Volunteers, working alongside professionals, are helping children and young people develop their full potential, achieve at school, and transition into adulthood. Over this three year contract we aim to recruit 115 volunteers. The volunteers will work: in Getset Children's Centres, with young carers and with young people leaving care. They also support children and young people, with a disability, in a range of groups, as well as help individuals to access and take part in community activities.

Individuals volunteer with Children's Services for a variety of reasons, including giving something back to a service that has helped them. Many volunteers have used the time to build the skills and experience that will enable them to become professionals in the sector.

## *Adult Social Care and Community Support*

There are approximately 100 volunteers working with the Adult Social Care Team or in a Community Support role. The majority work with people in their homes to overcome short-term barriers that prevent them leading fulfilling lives. For example, this may include supporting clients in using IT to stay in touch with friends and family, or simply to access local activities. This early preventative work can stop a situation escalating into a need for more intensive social care support.

A number of volunteers work alongside social care professionals providing longer term support that improves lives and enables the care system to work more efficiently by freeing staff to focus on more complex activity.



# Feedback From Volunteers and Beneficiaries

A recent evaluation with volunteers found that 100% were “happy with their volunteering role” whilst 97% felt their Council placement was either “good” or “excellent”.

## When asked to comment on the support they received from CSW *You Can Do*,

- 89% said they received the help and support that they wanted
- 94% stated the written information that they received was useful
- 97% felt the team communicated well with them
- 100% were satisfied with the service they received
- 92% of beneficiaries said that the Service had met all or part of their needs.

## What worked well?

- Having someone patient and encouraging
- Receiving support to stay in the same place, ie home
- Support ‘to work things out’ and with ‘knowing what to go for’
- Receiving a boost and a supportive ‘push’
- Having one-to-one time
- Being extremely friendly but setting goals when needed
- Providing companionship and someone to talk to

# Going Forward

Over the next year the service will enhance the numbers of volunteers working with the Council, to deliver services, improve the quality of life for individuals, and to enable our volunteers to achieve their personal goals.

## Help us promote volunteering within Somerset County Council

For more information please contact:

 **01278 664180**

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**[www.somersetvolunteer.co.uk](http://www.somersetvolunteer.co.uk)**

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