



# Volunteers' Week ideas

Suggestions to celebrate our volunteers

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# About this resource

We are committed to collating best practices and good ideas for Healthwatch to utilise locally.

With this being an annual event and good suggestions being made every year, the network suggested collating this more formally, which would be easier to refer to than meeting notes, Workplace posts, and other fragmented information.

While this resource is focused on Volunteers' Week, it could also be applied to International Volunteers' Day or other local events.

## What is Volunteers' Week?

Volunteers' Week celebrates volunteers' outstanding contributions to communities across the UK.

The celebration usually starts on the first Monday in June every year. It is a chance to recognise, celebrate and thank the UK's incredible volunteers for all they contribute to our local communities, the voluntary sector, and society.

Further information, resources, templates, and information about what is happening nationally this year can be found at [volunteersweek.org](https://volunteersweek.org).

## What happens during Volunteers' Week?

- Nationally, across the VCSE sector, organisations will do a range of activities from open days to celebration events; every year, hundreds of online and in-person activities take place across the UK to mark Volunteers' Week and celebrate volunteers.
- For Healthwatch, it is an opportunity to get involved by celebrating your local volunteers, demonstrating their importance, and thanking them for their dedication.

# Why celebrate volunteers?

There is a multitude of compelling reasons why we should celebrate all the hard work and effort that volunteers put in, some of those being:

## Recognition and appreciation

### Volunteers deserve appreciation

They give their time and effort without financial compensation, so celebrating this shows that their work is valued, seen, and appreciated.

### Morale boost

A genuine thank-you can go a long way in keeping volunteers motivated. Knowing their work matters contributes to greater job satisfaction.

### Retention

Feeling appreciated can increase volunteer loyalty and lower turnover. This can save time and resources associated with onboarding, training new volunteers and other related work.

## Building a positive culture

### Contagious spirit

Celebrating volunteerism normalises a culture of service and giving back, inspiring others to get involved that can be wider than just Healthwatch.

### Stronger teams

Recognition fosters a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose, connecting people across different roles and backgrounds.

### Attracting new volunteers

Showcasing happy, engaged volunteers sends a positive message to potential volunteers, making your organisation more attractive to others.

# Amplifying impact

## Awareness & advocacy

Volunteer Week provides an opportunity to spotlight the work done by volunteers, raise awareness of important causes and demonstrate how volunteering makes a difference.

## Inspiring action

Seeing volunteers' positive impact can inspire others to step up and give back, multiplying the benefits locally.

## Highlighting the value of service

Celebrating volunteers reinforces the importance of community service and highlights volunteers' crucial role in addressing societal needs.



# Appreciation and recognition

## Thank-you notes, letters or cards

These could be digital or physical, or you could take it a step further, as Healthwatch Derby and Healthwatch Warrington did with their 'Achieve-MINT' thank-you gifts, which included a thank-you tag or a luggage tag to fold around the bag.



## Appreciation Gifts

These could be budget-friendly options, but the more meaningful and personal gifts show that you know your volunteers well. For example, Healthwatch Cornwall created a 'Volunteer Pack' that included teas, mints, chocolates, and other goodies. Healthwatch Kirklees, had a selection of gifts from a local shop, including local chocolates and biscuits.

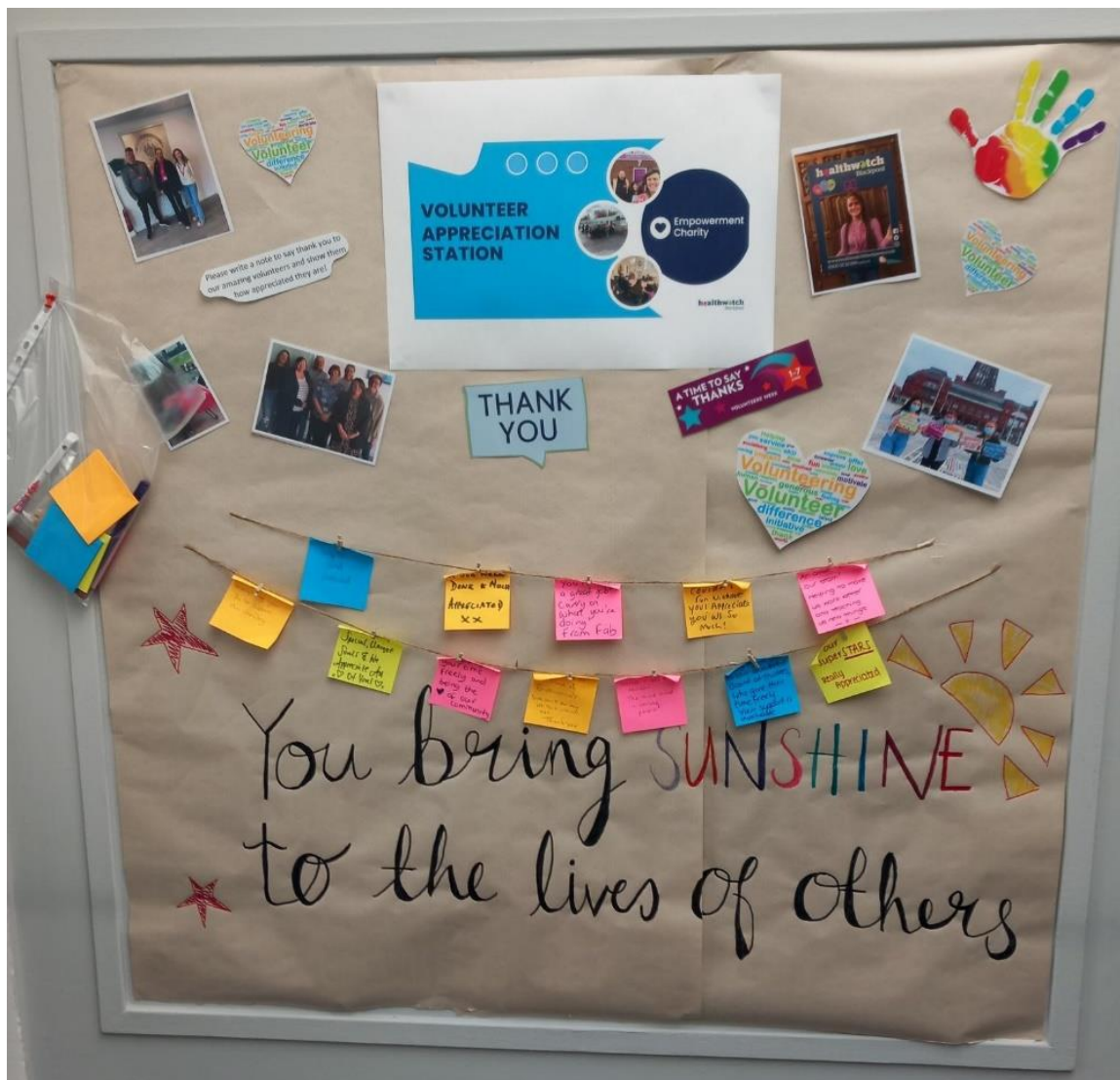
## Volunteer spotlights

This could be advertising Volunteers' Week on social media and email footers (resources available at [volunteersweek.org](http://volunteersweek.org)) or more personally featuring them on social media posts, newsletters, and other platforms you use. Remember to check relevant consent and that only some of your volunteers may like something so public.

## Creative recognition ideas

Ranging from certificates to an awards ceremony and personalised shout-outs to gathering comments and appreciation notes from others to share.

Healthwatch Blackpool's 'Appreciation Station' below was a space for people to leave a note with photos and artwork for their volunteers.



# Fun and interactive

## Social events

The budget for these can vary greatly, but you do a lot with a small budget.

- **Game evening** – a selection of fun games and light refreshments that will help build the team. Vary the games from classic to modern, board to digital, physical to non-physical, and even set up a friendly competition.
- **Mini-festival** – in 2023, a Healthwatch, in partnership with the local CVS and other local community organisations, came together to organise music, arts, a theatre group, with a volunteer café and stands to find out more about what each of the organisations does and to learn more about volunteering.
- **Family BBQ** – rather than just inviting your volunteers, include their families and make it feel like they are all a part of an extended family. This way, you can share with their families all the great work they do.
- **Coffee and cake** – sometimes the best things are keeping it simple, having a coffee morning for all, or taking smaller groups of volunteers out to thank them and check in with them.
- **Potluck** – each guests contributes a different dish of food. This could be shared out, could have a cultural focus, or bring a plate.
- **Mobile event** – such as arranging for an ice cream van, or other food or entertainment mobile entertainment to attend your location.

## "Feel Good" volunteering

Celebrate volunteering by doing an event that is different to their usual volunteering but that benefits people and local communities:

- **Park or beach clean-up** – organise a litter pick up in a local park or beach. This could then include volunteers' families and end with a light picnic, and some thank you messages, certificates, or awards.
- **Food bank** – this could be to help a food bank for a session, or to set up a collection date for non-perishable items to donate to a local food bank.
- **Volunteer swap** – arrange with another local community organisation to 'swap' volunteers for the day, and in groups (as not everyone might be available together), volunteer for them for a session.



- Some virtual options, as some volunteers might only volunteer digitally:
- **Online mentoring or talks** – arrange for supportive organisations to offer virtual mentoring or talks that might be focused on young people, career guidance, impact or what you feel is relevant to this group of volunteers.
- **Virtual tutoring** – helps others digitally by assisting people with digital tasks or conducting group sessions to tutor others on digital accessibility.

## Team-building challenges

Have some fun while also increasing the team camaraderie.

- **Escape rooms or murder mysteries** – potentially a more expensive option and more suited for small teams, but murder mysteries can often be supplied as a DIY, so they can be a cheaper option.
- **Zentangle** – an art session with a twist. It concentrates on gratitude, appreciation, and mindfulness. If you are unfamiliar with it, it is best to find a suitable facilitator.
- **Local landmark trip** – use what is local, such as a canal trip, a guided walk, a food tour, a street art tour, or a visit to a historical site, museum, or gallery.
- **Scavenger hunt** – local templates might exist, or you could create one and have challenges around your location incorporating some of the above landmarks.
- **Active session** – from axe throwing or archery, to mountain biking or football, whatever might interest your volunteers and can add a competitive edge and team-building focus.

## Contests and prizes

Here is where you can get creative and make this as interesting as possible. Likewise, if providing prizes, you could ask other organisations for donations, such as experiences or attraction tickets.

- **Photo competition** – could be voting from others, or by a panel of staff, and make it fun such as awards for the ‘most interesting’, ‘the strangest item’ or ‘most unrecognisable item’.
- **Impact awards** – think about not just the volunteers who have made the most obvious impact on your Healthwatch but also those who are perhaps more in the background and unseen, such as those who do administration or online only work.

# Support and development

While some of these elements may not directly relate to Volunteers' Week or be celebratory, they are essential to ensure a robust volunteer offer. They can be helpful to utilise during other events and provide awareness of the support offer.

## Webinars and workshops

These could be development events to assist your volunteers in continuing to grow their knowledge and skills or more focused on how they could work better, as well as tips and hints from each other. They could be delivered internally as peer-to-peer or externally from an expert to impart knowledge or train your volunteers on a topic.

## Resource curation

Providing a hub of resources for training, development opportunities, further ways to get involved, paid work, and supportive measures such as mental health resources and signposting to those who can assist. Alternatively, there could be access to small pots of funding for volunteers to run their own projects or part of projects to have some autonomy over.

## Networking opportunities

While this could be built into other elements such as social events, it could be more direct opportunities, as suggested by Healthwatch, which annually runs a 'reflection session'. During this session, volunteers have a safe space to give feedback on the year regarding what went well and what could be better and air any issues they have—enabling them to evaluate the current situation and continuously improve how they work with volunteers.

## Collaboration

Relating closely to networking opportunities, thinking more directly about working with other people and organisations.

For example, creating opportunities for volunteers to connect with others in the health and care sector where there might be opportunities to combine efforts for a more impactful outcome. Volunteers from other Healthwatch organisations could be brought together to share tips and best practices alongside ask each other how they work in their areas.

# Planning and promotion

## Theme and promotion

Think about making what you focus on for Volunteers' Week related to an element that is mission-relevant to your Healthwatch or a focus for your workforce.

Ensure to think about timelines, allowing for enough time to let anyone involved make plans for the event and how you will communicate this to ensure it reaches everyone promptly.

## External visibility

If you are planning on doing volunteer spotlights, sharing about the efforts and impact of your volunteers through articles, blogs, or similar, then think about what platforms this will be shared on, what templates you have that are suitable for this, and who will be responsible for it, too. If you have tools to automate or schedule posts and releases, this could assist in easing the pressure on small teams.

## Partner outreach

Building upon external visibility, can you amplify your message through partner organisations such as other local organisations, local authorities, ICB, media outlets, Healthwatch England, and other regional or national organisations.

Utilising Volunteers' Week resources and campaigns such as the Big Help Out could be part of a more extensive campaign to get a wider reach than usual. Furthermore, this could help your volunteers feel part of something bigger than the local team.



# Measuring impact

Thinking about what data you might use to help your Volunteers' Week campaign by using quotes, spotlighting, or facts and figures if useful to break it down into areas that might be useful, such as:

- **Quantitative data** – number of volunteers, volunteer hours, project outcomes, collaborations, social return on investment (SROI), number of beneficiaries, change in key metrics and other related items.
- **Qualitative data** – volunteer surveys about their satisfaction and engagement, improvements made, volunteer quotes, and other vital insights. Our [Guide to Volunteering](#) has examples of volunteer satisfaction surveys and further ways to demonstrate impact.
- **Storytelling** – focus on personal stories can be perceived as more individual and impactful; these could be demonstrating impact through a before and after, a journey they helped someone navigate through a healthcare service, a day in the life of a volunteer, or an 'Aha!' event where the impact of a volunteer was realised.

Storytelling can be shared through social media, written profiles, videos, audio clips, newsletters, annual reports, website articles or even more creative ideas such as social media takeovers or photo essays (using images with captions to tell the story).



## Volunteer quotes

Here is an example of personal quotes from volunteers of Healthwatch Lancashire from their annual report.

### Inna

"I was born in Ukraine and worked for 32 years as a doctor. When the war started and my city was occupied by Russian troops, I decided to change my life. I came to the UK, and I now volunteer with Healthwatch. I have been able to delve deeper into the cultural roots of society. With Healthwatch, I can make my contribution to the improvement of the lives of others."



### John

"As a volunteer if the role wasn't varied and fun I wouldn't be motivated to continue. It has been both of these in spades. How else would I have got to spend a Sunday in a vast Accrington mosque, where I walked through an inflatable bowel (true!) and met the Mayor of Hyndburn. All this has been underpinned throughout by the positive and welcoming attitude of the Healthwatch team."



### Rachael

"I started volunteering with Healthwatch Lancashire to get experience alongside studying a diploma in Health and Social Care. Volunteering with Healthwatch has given me a different perspective entirely. It can be quite challenging as you hear a lot of negative stories, but I'm so glad I stepped out of my comfort zone as it has given me so much confidence. I even enjoyed the days standing outside in the rain!"





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