

Giving back | Volunteering for the Vaccination Rollout

"It is a well known fact that volunteering gives personal pleasure and satisfaction to the individual involved. Volunteering can also provide services that might otherwise not exist, and the recipients, as we know from experience, enjoy and reap the benefits." **Paul C**

Since January, 2021 - Age UK Cornwall Volunteers have given their time, skills and boundless energy to support the NHS Vaccination Programme at Reeds Pharmacy, Truro. During these 6 months, they have enabled over 27,500 residents of Cornwall to receive their Covid vaccination. This is an incredible feat. Paul, a volunteer for the rollout, wanted to share his story and why Volunteering is so important.

Volunteering for you and your Community

Why would anybody want to be a volunteer? The question, surely, is why wouldn't anybody wish to volunteer their time, energy and skills to the community groups that need them?

As an active volunteer since I reached adulthood, covering a plethora of different community groups, I can only say that it gives me immense pleasure, whatever it is I am doing at the time. **Giving back, to a society that has given me and my family so much, means a lot and is so rewarding.**

I currently volunteer as Admin Support for the National Covid vaccination programme. After my partner used Reeds Pharmacy to get vaccinated, I was really impressed with the service and thought it worthwhile to offer our time to help. That occurred in early March 2021 and this support continues today. The volunteering entails lots of face to face contact with members of the general public that have pre-arranged a Covid vaccination. I log them into the computerised system, brief them on the process, issue their paperwork (and associated documents) and

reassure them when needed. All in all, it is a very enjoyable and satisfying way of spending just a small part of the spare time I have now that I am retired. **The feedback we get from the public has been 100% positive and that, in itself, is a very worthwhile reason to be volunteering.**



Running a 7 day week requires a huge number of volunteers to make it work. My current group requires 16 people per day, seven days a week, to ensure it runs smoothly. Organising that is a major task and comes with many challenges for the Coordinator! Illness, unavailability and other commitments, all make the job stressful on occasions, I'm sure!

Luckily, through hard work, a social media campaign and word of mouth, new volunteers have come forward and a "shout" to fill a vacant slot usually ends up with a willing volunteer coming forward. **Our Coordinator works tirelessly to ensure the programme runs as smoothly as possible. The results are there for all to see - a hugely successful campaign has provided amazingly good results. Well done, Debbie Stubbs, Age UK Cornwall.**

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Appreciation for our volunteering support is well recognised and acknowledged by the general public. Almost without exception, they have shown absolute respect for us. Working with others within the vaccination programme brings its own rewards too. New friendships have been made and lots of casual relationships too. **It is real team effort, one that we all feel strongly about and are happy to make sure that "things work" when it really matters.**

Why Volunteering is so important

Make a difference and change lives

Not too many groups or individuals gain the full recognition they deserve for their volunteering efforts. **This is because it mostly occurs behind the scenes, with very few people really knowing, or appreciating, exactly what goes on or is needed to make some groups operate.**

Having now filled almost every position on various committees over the years, I am only too aware of the joined up approach and thinking that is needed to run and manage a voluntary group successfully. The time, effort, commitment and dedication needed to run a successful group is immense. That is where some older heads, used to organising events, come into their own. That being said, **there are roles to suit every skill and ability, and without them, they wouldn't operate on such an enormous scale, both locally and nationally.**

The whole of the UK relies on a vast number of like minded individuals, groups and organisations to offer their time and skills. This ensures that their own communities, both local and National, are better places to live in. Society wouldn't operate as we know it, without their involvement.

I have to say that I am immensely proud of the voluntary groups I work for and with. The sense of pleasure and achievement is huge, so let's return to the first sentence....**why wouldn't you want to volunteer to help your own community by committing a bit of time and effort ? It is so rewarding !**

Written by Paul Caruana and dedicated to Volunteers everywhere



Volunteering for Age UK Cornwall

Age UK Cornwall & The Isles of Scilly relies on tireless support from volunteers across Cornwall & Devon - offering vital services that improve health & wellbeing in local communities.

If you would like to become a volunteer, find out more about volunteering or apply for one of our roles - **please call our Helpline on 01872 266383 or visit www.ageuk.org.uk/cornwall/get-involved/volunteer/**

