



Christmas volunteering: 8 ways you can make a difference to those in need

Spread some Christmas cheer this year by volunteering your time or giving a gift that makes a difference.

Christmas is a time of goodwill and giving back, so why not join the one million Brits who volunteer over the festive season and put the magic back into someone's Christmas this year?

Many charities need a little extra help during the festivities, particularly in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, and they rely on a legion of brilliant volunteers who help feed the homeless, or call an older person who's facing spending Christmas alone.

Volunteering your time isn't the only option at Christmas. You can also give a gift that will help others, or unleash your inner elf to raise money for people living with dementia.

Here, eight ways to make a difference this Christmas.

Volunteer at Crisis at Christmas

Crisis at Christmas has been running since 1967, providing homeless people with hot meals, a safe place to sleep, company, and the support and advice they need to get back on their feet during the festive season.

"Social distancing means we'll be doing things differently, but we'll be looking after as many people as we possibly can," says the charity. "And the spirit of a Crisis Christmas will be exactly the same. We will treat people with care and respect – giving them that warm Crisis welcome, so they get their dignity back and feel ready to take on life again."

While in some areas, Crisis is focusing on experienced volunteers only this year, others are still looking for volunteers. Find out [what's needed in your area here](#).

There's also sponsored volunteering this year, in which volunteers can support Crisis even further by getting their friends, family, or company to sponsor you. This will help guests with a safe place to stay, offer companionship and support from volunteer befrienders, and essential food and festive treats. Find out more on [their website](#).

If you can't volunteer, you can still help by reserving a homeless person a place at Crisis at Christmas for just £28. Find out more on the [Crisis website](#).

Gift a Refuge Parcel

Refuge provides women and children escaping domestic violence a safe place to stay.

Often women will leave with just the clothes they have on their back. For just £10, you can buy a family an 'emergency parcel' containing toiletries, food, nappies, children's clothing and a change of clothes for mum. Find out more on the [Refuge website](#).

Volunteer as a Call Companion

More than 1.4 million older people suffer from loneliness. Charity [Re-Engage](#) is on a mission to ensure no-one over the age of 75 spends Christmas alone with their Community Christmas project.

The charity has recently set up a new call companion service that volunteers can get involved with. Call companions make regular telephone calls to lonely and isolated older people providing a lifeline of friendship – which is needed now more than ever as many people have fallen into further isolation due to lockdown measures.

Over time, call companions and the older person they are paired with will get to know each other well and will spend many hours over the phone, sharing stories as well as offering vital support.

Volunteers can become a call companion, a coordinator, or a volunteer interviewer. Find out more on [their website](#).

Help a homeless young person

Most of us are fortunate enough to have a warm bed to sleep in on Christmas Eve, but many young people will be forced to spend the night on the streets.

Centrepoint warns that this could be the worst homelessness crisis in the charity's 50-year history, as the pandemic has led to thousands of young people losing their jobs and their accommodation.

Donations are more crucial than ever this Christmas, so Centrepoint has now launched their [Christmas 2020 appeal](#). For £20 you could help buy starter packs for young people, £60 could help towards counselling for young people, and £150 could help provide young people with dedicated key workers.

Find out more on the [Centrepoint website](#), where you can also sign up to [sponsor a room](#) for a young person for £12 a month.

Help someone who's lonely this Christmas

Spending Christmas in hospital is never nice, especially if you're on your own, far from family or suffering from dementia.

During the Covid-19 crisis, the Royal Voluntary Service's staff and volunteers are working in local communities, delivering essential supplies, library books and activity packs, and providing companionship support, home from hospital services and patient transport.

Their [Virtual Village Hall](#) offers volunteers a wide range of activities to take part in online, promoting wellbeing and keeping people active and occupied through the pandemic. Sign up on [their website](#).

Alternatively, you can make a donation to the Royal Voluntary Service's £5million COVID-19 Emergency Appeal by donating [here](#).

Dress up for Elf Day

As things are little different this Christmas, The Alzheimer's Society is asking volunteers to get involved in some festive fundraising digitally this year. Volunteers can choose an activity with their [free festive fundraising guide](#), before setting a date and time, while making sure to follow local lockdown guidance when arranging activities. You can pay in your donations on their website [here](#).

Volunteer at a food bank

Food banks provide an essential lifeline for families living in poverty all year round, but especially at Christmas.

[The Trussell Trust](#) has a number of voluntary opportunities on its website, including volunteering in their warehouses and at their emergency food bank centres. You can also make a donation online and find your local food collection point.

Volunteer for a local good cause

There are so many small charities looking for reliable, friendly volunteers over Christmas and throughout the year. Search the national volunteering database [Do-It.org](#) for the latest opportunities near you.

By Natalie Cornish, 17/11/2020

<https://www.prima.co.uk/leisure/events/a29710854/christmas-volunteering/>