



# Step forward

A report on the value of  
local community volunteering

by Lions Clubs International  
British Isles



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## Volunteering makes a real difference in local communities.

One in two people in the British Isles volunteer on a regular basis. Of these 81% are engaged in supporting local communities.

Two-thirds of people donate financially to charities. Yet since the start of 2020, most non-profit organisations have encountered difficulties in offering a service, a decline in funding - and an increase in demand for help.

The value of local community volunteering is clear. Volunteers respond to real time needs and deliver valuable financial, social and cultural benefits to millions of people, projects and causes.

Whether undertaken by individuals or groups, like Lions clubs, volunteers are the essence of local communities. This is most evident during challenging times that disrupt the usual rhythm and flow of community life.

**Step Forward**, is the latest community report published by Lions Clubs British Isles. It looks at the value of local community volunteering and celebrates:

- the positive energy of young volunteers,
- the power of paying forward,
- the quiet work of helping others,
- the joy of sharing food and friendship,
- the vital role of welfare support,
- the pride of belonging to a community.

For more than a century, Lions volunteers have served local communities. Step Forward tells our story and many others. It reveals the facts and figures behind local community volunteering. It identifies the value of volunteering and encourages readers to get involved in their local communities.

We invite you to read, reflect and act. If you'd like to know more, or get in touch with Lions Clubs British Isles, see: [www.lionsclubs.co](http://www.lionsclubs.co). Thank you.



Change  
the world

Life is  
an  
adventure  
for  
living  
and  
giving.

"How wonderful  
is that no one  
to wait a single  
moment before  
to change the

(Anne Frank)



**Learn to inspire**

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**Inspire to learn**

Young volunteers are a powerful force for good in their local communities

Most children say they would like to get involved in volunteering to help others and have fun.

**Giving. Gaining. Growing.**

Children learn the value of giving from charity fund-raising with the support of their families, guardians and schools.

They gain important life skills from taking part in local community service projects.

They grow as citizens from volunteering at school, in their homes, and within their social environment.

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The Lions Roar schools initiative inspires 7-11 year olds to 'think big and create world changing ideas'.



## Young volunteering in an interconnected global community.

A quarter of 16-24 year olds in the British Isles volunteer regularly. Digital platforms offer new opportunities for civic engagement that is valued by young adult volunteers. Social media presence amplifies voices, connects communities, and activates campaigns for local and global causes.



Lions clubs throughout the British Isles, and across the world, empower young people to volunteer in their local communities and beyond. Our initiatives include the Young Ambassadors and Shipshape awards, Youth Exchange and camps, plus Young Leaders in Service programme.



## Every penny counts

'None of us can ever run out of something worthwhile to give,' writes author Steve Goodier.

Giving well is a choice of heart and mind. Volunteers help others for multiple reasons. They give in many ways. The value of local community volunteering lies in being able to achieve a lot from the kindness of others.

Volunteering pays forward with generosity, gratitude, and good fortune. Finding a cause to support is an investment of time and money. Every minute matters. Every penny counts.

Donating and fundraising needs to have a positive impact. Volunteers add value through their passion and enthusiasm for a cause. This is multiplied by:

- good governance,
- being effective in tackling challenges,
- making the best use of resources,
- working in partnership with others,
- planning for the future.

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**Members of Lions clubs step forward by volunteering their time to support local communities and help good causes. Collectively, Lions Clubs in the British Isles typically raise over £9 million each year to help those in need in local communities at home and overseas.**







## Large streams from little fountains flow. Tall oaks from little acorns grow.

Most successful local community projects start small. A good idea and a few volunteers. An investment of time and energy. Step by step the initiative grows and moves forward.

Over time, a chain of kindness is created. Other people get involved. Businesses and individuals provide funding. Public support exceeds hopes and expectations.

Such projects influence community life in ways that cannot necessarily be anticipated. They start careers and new enterprises. They raise money for good causes and improve social connections. They enhance the character and culture of a local community.

Volunteer-led community projects make a real difference. Their value and potential is improved by the power of paying forward:

01

### Power of people.

Volunteers bring a wealth of experience, talent and desire to make things happen.

02

### Power of purpose.

Volunteers respond to a clear community need and seeing evidence of success.

03

### Power of planning.

Volunteers require a sense of direction to be empowered and take action.

**Pirbright Nurture Farm:** Children across the local community enjoy working at the Nurture Farm in the grounds of Pirbright Village Primary School. Specific 'nurturing' sessions help students learn as they care for the animals, improve the environment, grow plants and tend to crops.

An initial donation from Guildford Lions club kickstarted fund-raising and with the help of local community volunteers, the farm has become a flourishing reality.



## Wisdom from the past.

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Shokunin are the kind of people that care about what 'WE' make, instead of what 'I' make.

- Hōsai Matsubayashi

Photo by Austin Ramsey on Unsplash



### Making friends and having fun.

The personal value of volunteering in a local community includes making friends and having fun. This happens through hands-on experiences, including running events and projects to benefit others.

From bed races to disability games, sponsored fundraisers to talent shows - everyone can play a part in organising fun-filled community activities.

### Labour of love

Learning, teaching and applying craft skills to local community projects is a rewarding experience valued by many volunteers.

Being creative and crafting for charity can involve all the family. This satisfaction in helping others takes place in various local community locations including schools and care homes.

### Memories across the generations.

The quiet work of helping others continues over years with events and activities becoming established within specific communities. Places become associated with particular events raising valuable funds and bringing fun for many generations.

Fun and craft skills come together for Lions clubs in the run up to Christmas. Each year, Lions check Santa sleighs and make necessary updates. Ideas are developed to help different people in local communities from young adults in care to elderly people living alone without companionship. Parties are organised and toys collected to ensure children are not forgotten.



## Reasons to volunteer in local communities.

Virtual events have the potential to reach more people and enable new volunteers to get involved in charitable work outside local communities. Although these are set to remain, in-person activities offer additional value for local community volunteering.



'Having helped with the Lions Christmas sleigh in my local community, I thought joining Lions would be something I'd enjoy. It's great to be able to give something back to my local area. I've made new friends and it's brilliant to be part of something,' explains Phil Davison, Norfolk Broads Lions.

'My grandmother had been to lunches hosted by Shepshed Lions and thoroughly enjoyed herself. After listening to her, I volunteered at the lunch and from that decided to join. We raise funds to be able to make a difference to peoples' lives,' says Lisa Nielsen-Waldron, Shepshed Lions.



'I've been involved with Lions since I was about 10, helping at events with my father and grandfather. I really enjoy the social side of Lions, and making a difference in the community,' confirms Isaac Stares, Littleport Lions.

'My husband, who has been a member of Lions for more than 30 years, encouraged me to join. I always want to help others who need it,' states Hong Bui, Witney Lions.







## Lions serve local communities with values and a social purpose.

**Did you know that volunteers want to align their personal values with organisations that have a social purpose?**

Volunteers – such as Lions – are people who want to make a difference. They align their personal values and social purpose with the causes they support, organisations they partner with, and ways in which they spend their time and money.

**Did you know that volunteering helps to develop leadership skills while making a measurable difference to local communities?**

Community-based volunteering – for instance as a member of a Lions club – provide opportunities to serve with a social purpose. This experience helps develop valuable skills, for instance, through mentoring, managing projects, organising fund-raising, leading a team, or developing marketing campaigns.

**Did you know that people derive pleasure from volunteering at different points in their lives?**

Volunteering is undertaken by people – like Lions – of all ages and from all types of communities. They share common values, such as a desire to help others.



## **Kindness in action**

Alongside a focus on local community service, Lions get involved with five common causes: diabetes, vision, hunger, environment, and childhood cancer.

## **Global force for good**

With more volunteers in more places than any other service organisation, Lions step forward to tackle local community challenges wherever they occur.

## **Connect with others**

Join us to raise funds and help others with integrity, enthusiasm, innovation and creativity to achieve positive results through friendship and teamwork.

## **Living our promise**

By being open to change, Lions continue to be respected and trusted to meet the evolving needs of those requiring support in local communities.

**#JoinUs**

**#LionsGetInvolved**

**#LionsStepForward**



# Our Mission: Lions Serve.



It's that simple. Lions clubs are places where individuals join together to give their valuable time and effort to improving their communities, and the world.

## Our Values: Honest and ethical conduct.

**INTEGRITY:** Safeguarding and compliance

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** Personal responsibility

**TEAMWORK:** Innovation, creativity and leadership

**EXCELLENCE:** Mutual respect, diversity and trust





## Lions serve local communities at home and around the world.

Did you know that everyone on the planet is no more than an average of six social connections away from each other?

Community-based volunteers – such as members of Lions clubs – serve as social glue between individuals, groups and organisations. They boost community cohesion, bond people together and bridge differences.

Did you know that networked communications within and between local volunteers improve community action?

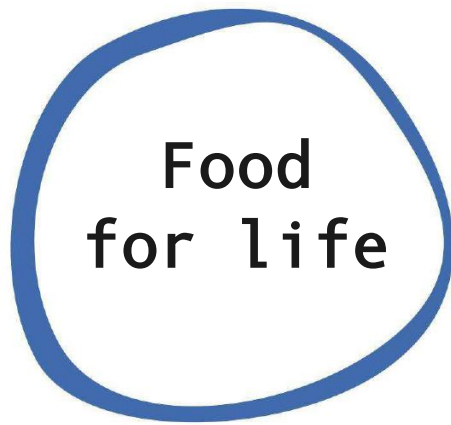
Local community volunteering – for instance with Lions clubs – spreads news and information quickly using the power of word of mouth. Online and traditional channels are used to mobilise people to take action.

Did you know that within any community 20% of people are great at getting things done?

Volunteers are ordinary people but some – like Lions – contribute to the achievement of extraordinary things. Their super talents are simple:

- Practical skills, local knowledge, common sense, familiarity with different situations, sense of humour, or specialist expertise.
- Community contacts, ability to find out information, or memory of the stories and traditions that make a community special.
- Able to put people together, make friends easily, call on the right person to help out, skilled at negotiating or solving problems.





## Volunteering in local communities can provide a vital lifeline for people living with food insecurity.

In many communities access to nutritious food is difficult. Others struggle due to financial or health problems. Some people lack the skills or facilities to prepare healthy meals. There are also social reasons, including isolation, that affect the ability of individuals and families to eat well.

Volunteers provide funds, food, education and welfare support. They arrange local community meals, support food banks and run events, such as out of school breakfast clubs.

Gardening, gleaning and growing food on allotments are all ways that communities gain from local volunteering.

Food poverty leaves many people reliant on community food services. It means parents go hungry and children lack the nutrients they need to develop and learn. Older people may no longer be able to cook at home or afford familiar treats.

Helping improve good food availability can be a long-term commitment by local volunteers. They also respond to situations that cause a rapid change in circumstances.

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Food is at the heart of many initiatives with the annual calendar of Lions clubs. The role of food in local communities includes the social value of shared meals. Friendships are made and memories rekindled.



Grow  
well

One of the very nicest things about life is the way we must regularly stop whatever it is we are doing and devote our attention to eating. - Luciano Pavarotti

Photo by Darren Wanliss on Unsplash



## All cultures value sharing food and eating with others.

Social eating in local communities is a valuable bonding experience that makes people feel involved and connected to others. Throughout history, spending time together over a meal has been common in families, workplaces and within community groups.

Many volunteer-led community projects focus on shared eating - helping people make new acquaintances and enjoy a social occasion. From grand feasts and holiday celebrations to casual catch-ups and relaxed picnics, there are plenty of ways in which volunteers traditionally bring together people in local communities to enjoy food.

The joy of sharing food and friendship is nurtured in local communities by volunteers:

01

### **Growing and exchanging produce.**

Volunteers work with local farmers, allotment holders and keen gardeners to create food boxes from surplus pickings. These can be sold in aid of good causes or donated to those without access to fresh fruit, vegetables, and other produce.

02

### **Talking about food traditions within a local community.**

People are interested in hearing more about traditional foods for their local community. Volunteers can also share stories and histories of food culture from places they have previously lived or visited when travelling.

03

### **Discovering new dishes and recipes.**

Every community - and group of volunteers - has members who are keen cooks. Cake bakes and cookbooks are examples of how they might share their favourite dishes and recipes.

#### **Supporting communities with food:**

Worcester Lions club has been helping cook meals for homeless people at Worcester Street Café and also provide them with a daily food bag.

Fifty years ago, Malton, Norton and District Lions started its popular community initiative that delivers fish and chips to the doorsteps of elderly and vulnerable residents during Winter months.



Welfare is an old idea.

To hope for a good turn in life  
– to do well and journey well.



Photo by Nathan Lemon on Unsplash



One  
good  
turn

Doing a good turn for others is its own reward.

Something as simple as a smile or a friendly word is a gesture of kindness that can be contagious. This 'ripple effect' helps make change happen in local communities. It is the natural conversation that encourages others to join in. It feels good and is how volunteering starts.

What is one of the most common reasons people give for not volunteering?

**'I've never thought about it.'**

What do people who haven't volunteered recently say would encourage them to get involved?

**'Being asked.'**

Helping is a meaningful experience.

Volunteering is an active belief in the value of helping good causes. Volunteers support human, environmental, animal and community welfare. They get involved to reduce suffering and tackle injustice.

Volunteers respond to emergencies and disasters. They apply freely their knowledge, skills, time and resources to support others at times of crisis. They are experts and the people doing the 'dirty' work where it is needed.

Lions clubs throughout the British Isles, and across the world, play a vital role in the welfare support of their local communities. They respond to requests for help and also work in partnership with other organisations.





When disaster strikes, volunteers put others first and do their best to help. When a powerful earthquake hit Izmir in Turkey, local Lions volunteered their service to initial relief efforts.

They handed out water, disinfectant and masks to survivors and search/rescue teams. They served hot meals to thousands non stop for 10 days. They distributed blankets, clothing, beds and bed linen, toys, soap, shoes and more. They made fires. They gave comfort to those in the local community who were made homeless.

**'The welfare of each is bound up in the welfare of all,' said activist, Helen Keller.**

**Helping hands**

Lions in Castries in Saint Lucia volunteered to create a bountiful kitchen garden at St Lucy's Home for the elderly.

Fresh vegetables grown from seedlings add valuable nutrients to the diets of residents at St Lucy's Home and Cornerstone House that provides food and shelter for the homeless.

The initiative reduces food costs, contributes to the island's food sustainability, and offers a form of therapy for volunteer residents who help to tend the garden.





## Places and spaces

Photo by Shane Rounce on Unsplash

Where are you local? asks writer and photographer, Taiye Selasi.

Our response recalls the familiarity of places and relationships that shape our lived experiences. Our shared communities.

Volunteers add value to shared spaces. From litter picking and tree planting to funding park benches and play areas.

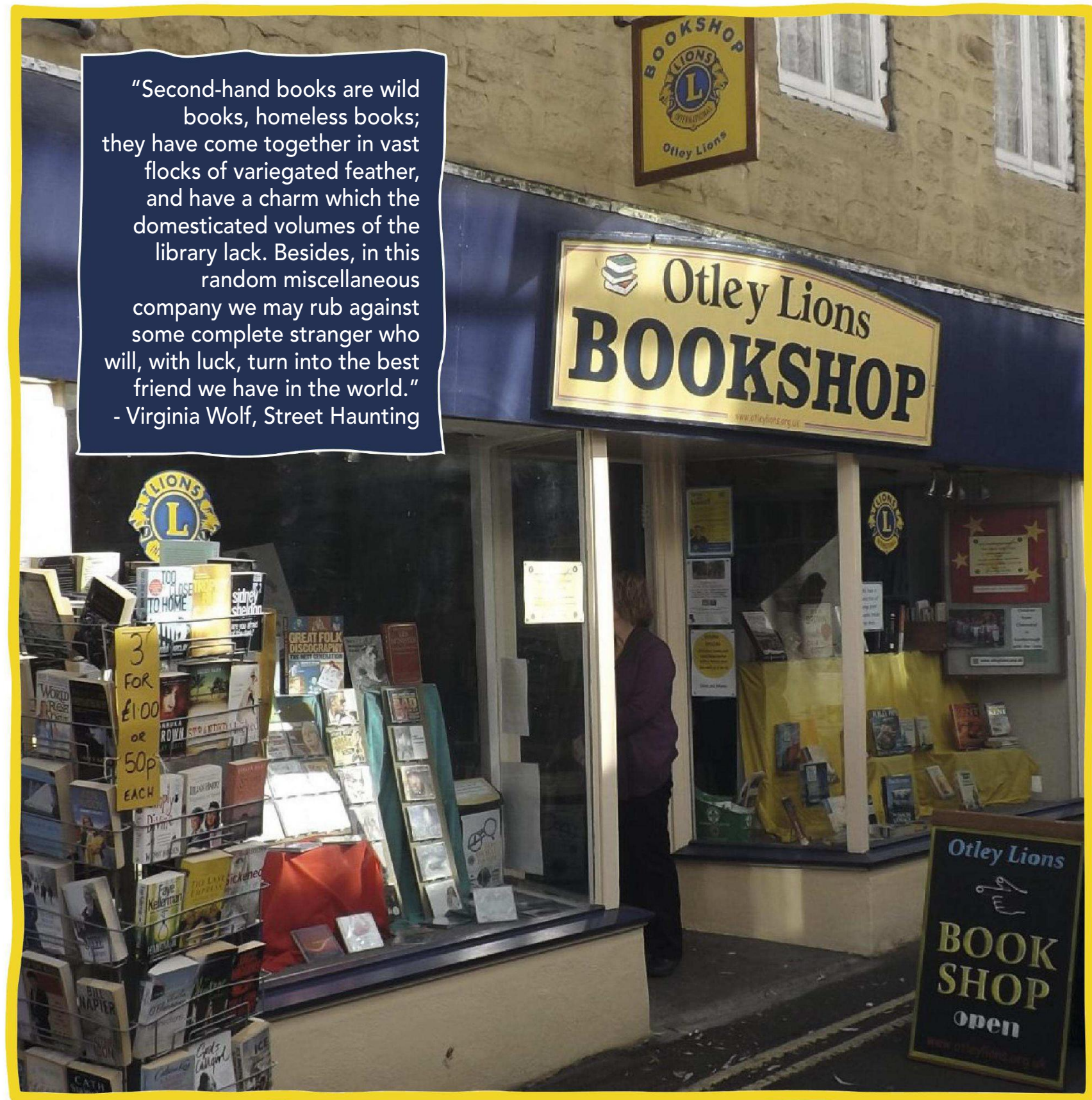
A shared community benefits from voluntary help in local places such as schools, libraries, churches, and hospitals.

Volunteer-led activities enrich lived experiences in public spaces. They facilitate social-interaction and community connections with shared enjoyment of arts, music, drama, sports, exhibitions, competitions, festivals, and general get-togethers.

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Wherever you live, work or travel across the British Isles, you are likely to come across members of Lions clubs and the projects we support. With more volunteers in more places than any other service organisation, Lions step forward to tackle local community challenges wherever they occur.







## MADE TO LAST: Pride of belonging to a community

A sense of belonging and participation in a community contributes to quality of life. Local interactions and relationships build ties in the social fabric of a community, and counter feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Members of local communities benefit from working together to address problems. Feelings of purpose and achievement arising from time spent helping others are meaningful and valuable to individuals and the wider community.

Spending locally develops economic and environmental resilience in communities. It encourages local enterprise and helps tackle local inequalities. Volunteers make a positive contribution towards this community wealth building through charity retail. The value of this local volunteering includes:

### **Reduce. reuse. recycle.**

01

Collecting, sorting and selling previously owned items by volunteers reduces the financial and environmental damage of landfill and carbon emissions.

### **Creative sustainability.**

02

From upcycling to repurposing raw materials, volunteers use their creative talents to rescue and produce things of value from discarded items.

### **Accessibility and affordability.**

03

Volunteers bring life and friendly faces to empty retail outlets, ensuring that community-based shopping remains accessible and affordable for all.

**Buying books:** Books are the gift that keeps on giving. Community bookshops and book-based charity initiatives are inclusive, improve children's literacy, and raise valuable funds.

**Bridgend Lions Book Fair:** Since 1994, over £200,000 has been raised to help local causes by recycling donated books. The 3-day Spring Book Fair and Autumn half-price clearance sale attracts thousands of customers and dealers to peruse over 25,000 books.



## HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

If you'd like to...

- offer, give or receive help...
- learn or discover more about volunteering...
- take part in projects and activities...
- support good causes...
- thank or celebrate volunteer work...
- donate time or money to support volunteering.....in your local community



## STEP FORWARD

01

**Make a difference.**

Think about how you can make a contribution to benefit others.

02

**Don't wait to be asked.**

Look for volunteer opportunities in your local community.

03

**Get involved.**

Take the first step, make contact and find out what's involved.

## JOIN US

Over 1.4 million people are members of Lions Clubs International. When individuals become a Lion, they join a local or online club. As a social community of volunteers we step forward and get involved wherever and whenever we can.

To learn more, locate a club or apply to join us, please get in touch. Full contact details for Lions Clubs British Isles are on the opposite page. Thank you.





## Get in touch

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#LionsStepForward

## Pass it on

Please accept our #LionsStepForward challenge and pass this publication onto someone else to read and enjoy.

Even better would be if you are able to leave it somewhere in your local community where others will be able to learn more about the value of local community volunteering.

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