

VOLUNTEERING



IN A CHARITY SHOP



Volunteering Opportunities in Charity Shops in Bexley Borough & Surrounding Areas – December 2011

Who can volunteer in a charity shop? Anyone who has a little time to spare and would like to use it to benefit a charity can be a volunteer in a charity shop. Volunteers are often parents with young children, students, people using volunteering to improve their employability prospects, retired people and part-time workers. This type of volunteering can also be useful for people who have had health issues or who have additional support needs.

What does volunteering involve? Volunteers often enjoy their time at a charity shop as it gives them the chance to meet people, make new friends, become part of a team and learn new skills while raising money for charity. You may be asked to sort donations, price goods, work on the till and create window displays. The number of roles in a shop mean that you can volunteer behind the scenes or deal with members of the public, whichever you feel most comfortable doing. Special skills are not required as training is given as you volunteer, but if you have experience, you should tell the shop manager as it can often be put to use. Volunteering need not interfere with other commitments, and most shops only ask for a regular commitment of one half-day per week.

Staff & Volunteers Most charity shops have a paid Shop Manager, working with a large team of volunteers, who help to sort and sell the stock. Save The Children shops are unusual in that almost all of their shop team are volunteers: other organisations have found that employing a manager 'pays for itself', as these people can give more time, skills and attention to the role. Charities with several shops often employ an area manager, to oversee all of the shop operations.

Training Volunteers should be given training on both retail matters – including health and safety – and the charity itself, so that they understand what the organisation is working for as well as how to volunteer safely in store. Guidance should be given on sales techniques and display together with any specialist knowledge for the task they are undertaking.

Sorting & Cleaning Donations Donations are processed in the backroom of the shop. Bags are usually be emptied onto a sorting table and donations are inspected to ensure they are of saleable quality. While some donors take great care to sort and clean their goods before giving them to charity, not every one does this and charity shop volunteers need to beware they might find soiled or sharp items. However full training is usually provided for this role and protective clothing such as gloves are supplied where necessary. The majority of charity shops also have steamers, which are used to clean and freshen up textiles. Some shops also have a washing machine in the backroom.

Pricing The pricing of goods is often left up to the shop manager and their team, though some organisations issue pricing guides.

Selling online Some charities also sell things on eBay. This is particularly valuable for collectables, such as records or china, as they can attract a far greater market value than they could on the high street.

The Value of Charity Shops Charity shops make money for their parent charity, and raise awareness of their work. They raise more than £160 million every year, allowing people to reuse and recycle their goods and preventing large quantities of stock from entering the waste stream. Volunteers in stores can make new friends and learn new skills through their volunteering eg customer care. Lastly, charity shops are a dependable source of good quality items at low prices.

For a full list of current opportunities in charity shops operating in the borough and surrounding areas please contact the Volunteer Centre on 020 8304 0911 or email us at bexleyvc@bvsc.co.uk with 'Charity Shops Information Request' in the header. Kindly include your address because if you are outside our area we can then signpost you to your local Volunteer Centre for opportunities closer to your home.