



Service at King's Volunteering Inspiration Pack

Volunteer and make a difference in our local, national, and international communities



In service to society

The vision of King's College London is to make the world a better place, going above and beyond what might conventionally be expected of a university. To this end a commitment to Service is the third and equal part of the university's academic mission, alongside Education and Research. [Service at King's](#) embodies the university's historic ethos of operating in 'service to society', manifested in a commitment to positive social impact, at home in London, across the UK and around the world.

This means helping to shape and transform local communities and societies around the world through social reform; embedding service to society within the educational experience; delivering research focused on meeting societal need; supporting volunteering amongst our students, staff and alumni; and helping to protect the environment around us – all leading to positive change now and in the future.

King's was ranked eleventh in the world, second in the UK and fourth in Europe in the [2021 Times Higher Education Impact Rankings](#), in recognition of the university's positive social and environmental impact. A key way we deliver positive societal impact is through volunteering and there are a diverse array of voluntary activities King's students, staff and alumni can do in order to give back and serve society.

What is volunteering?

In line with The National Council for Voluntary Organisations, we define volunteering as '*any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives.*' Central to this definition is the fact that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. Volunteering can be undertaken both formally, through charitable organisations, social enterprises or community interest companies, as well as informally through community participation and social action.

This pack is designed to be used all year round, to help you get involved in various easy and safe ways to support your community – whether this be remotely from the comfort of your home or workplace, individually, or with other volunteers. You could even organise an event for other members of the King's community to join. Wherever you are, you can make a difference.

This pack includes:

1. Why volunteer?
2. What counts as a Service activity?
3. Informal micro-volunteering ideas
4. How can I get involved?
5. Organising your own activity
6. What support can I receive from the Service Team?
7. Top tips, including ideas for sharing and celebrating

1. Why volunteer?

Volunteering has been shown to improve wellbeing and reduce isolation, with latest research even showing the [causal effects](#) between volunteering and increased life satisfaction. It can be a way to improve your sense of purpose and belonging, develop skills and experiences, and contribute meaningfully to communities. Acts of giving and kindness can:

- Create positive feelings and a sense of reward
- Give you a feeling of purpose and self-worth
- Help you connect with others

Volunteering activities can include informal, small acts of kindness towards others, or larger ones such as volunteering in your local community – either way, you can find a way of making a difference.

The NHS [wheel of wellbeing](#) is a great tool to use when thinking about how volunteering can support your own health and happiness. We believe that volunteering should be **mutually beneficial**, so don't be afraid to choose an activity that prioritises your needs first. You can use the wheel to identify areas which are low in your life, and match them with volunteering opportunities which help to strengthen those areas.



2. What counts as a Service activity?

Quite a lot, actually! Please see our [definition of volunteering](#) – it is also important that the activity does not replace paid staff members, and if volunteering for a company or organisation, beneficiaries of the service are not being charged.

There are many things you can do to give back to your local community. Check out your [local volunteer centre](#) first to find out what opportunities exist near you. Their teams can often give advice on what causes and roles may be suitable.

Short-term volunteering

Here are some ideas to give you some inspiration for an informal Service activity:

- Volunteer or donate to a local food bank. Use this [website](#) to locate your nearest one, or check out this map of [independent foodbanks](#).
- Help tend to a community garden, such as [Urban Growth Learning Gardens](#) or [Brighten Up London](#)'s drop-in sessions.
- Offer practical help for a local person in need, from maintenance to lifting furniture with [GoodGym](#) (you will need to register before signing up).
- Contribute needed items to your local [homeless shelter](#) e.g. [The Manna Centre](#), or donate unwanted digital devices to charities such as [Community Tech Aid](#).
- Pick up litter with your local [CleanupUK](#) group in your streets and parks, creating cleaner, more connected communities. You can also check out their [guides](#) for solo litter picks.
- Initiate a campaign for a social issue that is important for you, for example by starting a petition or an open letter.
- Take part in befriending phone calls or visits with isolated or elderly people. [In-Deep](#) or [Age UK Westminster](#) and [Lambeth](#) are a great place to start.
- Submit records of wildlife for a citizen science project, [Nature's Calendar](#) (The Woodland Trust) to help scientists monitor the effects of climate change.
- Share info, donate or write a blog for a charity or cause you care about.



Longer-term volunteering

King's works with a number of brilliant charities and community organisations, allowing you to take action on various themes throughout the year, such as:

Education

[The Kids Network](#) – Mentor / [The Access Project](#) – Tutor / [IntoUniversity](#) – Various roles

Community groups

[Age UK Westminster](#) – Befriending & Digital Support / [Breaking Barriers](#) – Various roles with refugees / [Food Bank Aid](#) North London – Packing, sorting, deliveries

Environment

[Climate Ed](#) – Ambassador / [Urban Growth Gardens](#) and [Bankside Open Spaces](#) – Gardening

More ideas can be found on our [Service in Action webpages](#). To see how members of the King's community volunteered through the COVID-19 pandemic, please visit the [Continuing to Serve](#) webpages, check out stories from [staff](#), [students](#) and [alumni](#) volunteering, and see the [Service annual report 2019-20](#).

3. Micro-volunteering (if you're really stuck for time!)

Small acts make a big difference. The micro-volunteering actions below take less than 30 minutes and if you organised a group of people to come together, those small actions can accumulate over time to make a huge difference! Success is not just measured in numbers or output but in the opportunities and connections created when people come together.

- Be a Tree Watering Champion – check out Trees for Cities [guide and map](#).
- Help visually-impaired people with tasks on the [Be My Eyes](#) app.
- Switch to a green and fair energy supplier, and support others to do the same as part of the Citizens UK [Fair Energy Campaign](#).
- [Zooniverse](#) - contributing to people-powered, cutting edge research.
- Have a clear out of your work clothes to the charity [Smart Works](#) or donate items to your closest Salvation Army bank [on this webpage](#).
- Sign petitions or writing to your MP, e.g. on [Change.org](#) or for the [Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill](#).
- [Sowing](#) seeds, planting, or weeding in a shared green space.
- Support an elderly person with Age UK as a [digital buddy](#).
- Play games on [Free Rice](#) for donations to the United Nation's World Food Programme.
- Write a letter to [poorly children](#) or a message of solidarity for Amnesty's International's [Write for Rights](#) campaign.

4. How else can I get involved in volunteering?

- Visit the [Service in Action webpages](#) or [KCLSU Volunteering](#) to discover a range of external volunteering opportunities to inspire you. If you're a student, you can build up your volunteering record to receive awards. There are also links to other volunteering platforms such as [Reach](#), [Do-it](#) and [Vinspired](#).
- **Arrange your own activity:** You can pick a Service activity to undertake in your community on your own or with others, depending on your local COVID-19 guidelines. See the next section of this guide to find more info on how to organise your own activity. If you need some additional help organising or promoting an event, contact service@kcl.ac.uk
- **Participate in an existing activity:** We promote various volunteering events run by our King's community on the Global Day of Service [news story](#), [Twitter](#) and the [Service in Action webpages](#). Previous events have included [how to start a Wellness box initiative](#) and an [upcycling workshop](#) for the homeless community.
- **Share your skills:** Charities and community organisations are always on the hunt for individuals with expertise to help them in their daily projects, from finance, marketing and communications to trusteeship. Check out [The Fore](#) and [Link Up London](#) for current opportunities to make a meaningful difference.
- **If you are staff, remember you can use your Service Time.** Did you know that King's staff members get three paid days each year to volunteer? This is pro-rated if you work part-time. Don't forget to use them up before the end of the year!
- **If you are alumni** and need further guidance or volunteering ideas, visit their [webpages](#) or contact the Alumni Team: volunteering@kcl.ac.uk

Safety first

Although in the UK people are no longer being asked to work or volunteer from home, the main priority should be to keep yourself and others safe. Before volunteering you should read the government guidelines for wherever you are, and changes are coming into effect from 1 April 2022 in the UK for anyone volunteering or working in regulated [Care Quality Commission \(CQC\)](#) settings - such as hospitals and care homes. You can read the UK government's guidelines on how to help safely on the [UK government website](#). If you are volunteering with a charity or community organisation, please also carefully read their health & safety guidelines.

5. Organising your own activity

The King's community is full of passionate people and ideas. We'd love you to organise your own event so others can join, so here's some guidance to get you started. (KCLSU also have a [useful guide!](#))

1. **Pick a cause** – take a look at your [local Volunteer Centre](#), local council Twitter feed, or the [Service in Action](#) pages for groups who are seeking help. Search 'volunteers needed' plus the name of your area, or filter 'latest' with the hashtag **#NeverMoreNeeded** on social media channels. If you're in London, check out [HandsOn London](#) or [Team London](#).
2. **Speak to your colleagues, friends, family, and neighbours:** Does someone you know already have a connection with a charitable organisation that may need some extra help?
3. **Brainstorm an idea.** You could think about:
 - **Unique skills and talents:** What special skills and expertise do you, your peers or colleagues have that could help a community? For eg. [Olivia Capozzi](#) used her fundraising communications skills to support the charity Home-Start. Platforms such as [Link Up London](#), [Goodsted](#), [The Fore](#) and [UN Volunteers](#) advertise requests for skilled help.
 - **Resources to share:** How could you share your services with the community? For example, King's Sport opened up their sessions for the King's community, including free mindfulness sessions and yoga. [The Cares Family](#) and [Teach For Better](#) are keen for volunteers to share their passions and activities with community members.
 - **Fundraising challenge!** A virtual walk, run, or a friendly competition for your team or peers to cook for less than £10 a week, such as the [Live below the Line](#) food challenge, and donate the rest of your usual weekly food budget to charity.
 - **Creative opportunities:** Could you spread happiness through getting crafty? The Culture Team's [Make Do Play](#) includes lots of creative sessions, from drawing to origami, and these creations could be sent to a charity, community or key workers. Or you could host a virtual poetry club and write cards for local elderly people in care.
 - **Wellbeing:** Think about calming activities which might help to give you some time out away from the desk, but which give back to the community at the same time. This could be a litter pick or weeding in your local area, then coming together to celebrate.
4. You could speak with a charity or community group about your idea for some helpful pointers.
5. Build a volunteering team and assign roles – e.g. a main point of contact, an organiser, someone to help document the activities. This could be any size and does not have to be people in your immediate circle!

6. Provide simple instructions – people love to get on with it themselves but need some guidance first to know how.
7. Organise your schedules and if you are King's staff, request [Service Time](#) with your line manager.
8. Run through – do you have everything you need?
9. Promotion – make an Eventbrite and share with the Service Team.
10. Afterwards – how can you celebrate and evaluate what you've achieved? Perhaps you can stay in touch, make it a regular occurrence, or share the idea with another team!

6. What support can you receive from the Service Team?

If you have an idea but need some additional support, we can help with:

- **Discussing your activity:** Our Volunteering Team can help discuss your idea, practicalities and how to make it engaging for other members of the King's community. Please get in touch with service@kcl.ac.uk
- **Promotional support:** If you do need a helping hand, we can support with setting up your event on Eventbrite and sharing it on our Service channels, such as Twitter, Instagram and on our [Service in Action](#) webpages.
- **Evaluation:** We can help if you'd like to evaluate your own individual activity!
- **On hand support:** If you have any questions before the day, on the day or after the day, please contact service@kcl.ac.uk.
- **Celebrating:** we are in the process of building a new coordinated approach to volunteering across the institution. [Sign up for updates](#) on the new volunteering service and email service@kcl.ac.uk to be added to the Service Champions mailing list to hear about wider Service opportunities across King's.
- **Emailing to local alumni:** if a group gathering is permitted by your local COVID-19 safety guidelines, the alumni team can also contact alumni in your region (city or country depending on the number of alumni which live in the locality) to advertise the activity and encourage them to join you on the day. Email volunteering@kcl.ac.uk

7. Top tips for your volunteering

- Have a good think about why you're volunteering, what you'd like to gain from it, and what change you'd like to make in the world. Check out this 2 minute [RSA video](#) for some motivation.
- If you are volunteering with a charity or organisation, make sure you **contact them early**, and allow enough time for your application to be processed, training to be completed and any [DBS](#) certificates to come through (if working with groups at risk e.g. children, elderly). Charities are usually very stretched, so don't be afraid to pick up the phone or send a few emails to find out the outcome of your application and when you might be expected to start.
- Don't put all of your eggs in the same basket! It's beneficial to have a few potential options for volunteering to account for changes in demand, your schedule, and when they can accommodate you. After making your enquiries early, keep some back-up options too such as one-off volunteering events, and ask them where else they can recommend if you are not needed.
- **Connections afterwards:** How else can you increase the impact of the organisation or cause? Ask your team or peers whether you can share your experience and spread awareness of the issues, and how others can get involved. Help us create a movement at King's!
- Once you have a better idea of dates and times, block out time in your diary to prioritise it, and think about what you might need before and after. If you are staff, book your [Service Time](#) early (ideally 2 weeks notice) with your line manager.
- When planning an activity for others, the simpler the better and think about how you can make it fun and accessible for all!
- Many people are working in a hybrid way, so there are still opportunities to bring King's global community together digitally! Could you check in at different points during the day on Teams, or have a virtual jamboard to collaborate or post ideas?
- Communicate well and in advance. If organising an event, make sure everyone knows how to meet, for example which platform, what time, what to bring, and if they need to do anything in advance.

Capturing your volunteering: photos and video

- Let's celebrate and share all of your amazing work! Make sure to take photos and videos and post on social media, tagging us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram by using **@ServiceAtKings** and if alumni, **@KCLalumni**. Don't forget the hashtags **#ServiceAtKings #MakeADifference**

- You can take a selfie, video, or screenshot of your volunteering, telling us why Service is important to you and why you want to support your community.
- Please get consent from any other volunteers before taking their photos as they may be posted online once shared with us.
- If you don't use social media, you can still share your photos and videos with us via email and we can post them to our website and social media channels. Please send your photos and/or videos, plus information about your volunteering activities to service@kcl.ac.uk.

Some example social media posts you could use:

- *I'm writing thank you notes and letters to send as part of Volunteering at King's! @ServiceAtKings @KCLalumni #ServiceAtKings #ForeverKings*
- *To make use of my Service Time I'm picking up litter in my area and joining people from across the world to #MakeADifference! @ServiceAtKings #ServiceAtKings*

Your photos and videos will help us spread the word about Service at King's and encourage more people to take part.



Most importantly, enjoy the activity and knowing that you are supporting others. You are taking part in a movement that is making a difference in communities all over the world.

Quotes from the King's community

'To anyone considering volunteering I would say definitely go for it, you never know where you might end up and the difference a committed team can make!' – Rebecca, Student Action for Refugees

'Service and volunteering for me is all about paying it forward by bringing groups of people together to make the community a better place. I would encourage people to find a cause or charity they are passionate about and just go for it. Every charity and community project I've been involved in has brought me happiness and given me a sense of purpose.' – LaiHa Diamond, Business Support Manager, King's Community Business Service

'The most important lessons I have learnt this year are that there is no such thing as not having enough time or that it is not the right time. You always make time for things when you believe in them passionately... you will never regret the time you spend helping others and contributing towards making a meaningful difference.' – Nusaiba, Student led-outreach project

'I will look back during this period and know that I made a small, but hopefully useful, contribution to people's lives in south London. I think that all students and staff would benefit from some experience in serving society as it puts our own life worries into perspective.' – Dr Dr Barry Quinn, Former Clinical Senior Lecturer in Simulation and Team-based Education and Honorary Consultant in Restorative Dentistry in the Faculty of Dentistry, Oral & Craniofacial Sciences



THIS IS YOUR PERMISSION SLIP TO
#BRIGHTENSOMEONESDAY AND PASS ON
SOME POSITIVITY.