

Self-directed support

'Giving something back' to your community

A true community is a place where everyone feels empowered and able to 'give something back' and make a valued contribution.

'Giving something back' to your community can help improve your happiness and well-being.

This fact sheet looks at different ways that you contribute and 'give something back' to your community.



To get more help contact In Control.
Tel: 0121 4745900
Email In Control
help@in-control.org.uk

Find more fact sheets at:
www.in-control.org.uk/factsheets



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The basic facts

There are many ways that you can 'give something' back to your community. Here are some ideas on ways you can 'give something back':

- become a volunteer
- set up a social enterprise
- join or set up a time bank
- set up a small sparks project.

More information

Here is some more information on the different ways that you can contribute to your community.

Become a volunteer

As well as benefiting others, volunteering can also be personally rewarding. There are thousands of different volunteer opportunities out there.

The benefits

Becoming a volunteer means that you will need to give up some of your time to help others. But many people find that volunteering also helps them in lots of ways, such as:

- being able to do something fun
- increasing your confidence
- getting a sense of satisfaction or achievement
- having the opportunity to meet new people and make friends
- increasing your skills.



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Ways to volunteer

First of all, you need to decide how much time you have to spare for volunteering - then you need to find out who needs some help. Here are some ideas on the different volunteering opportunities:

- working on local community projects
- caring for animals or wildlife
- spending time befriending other people
- improving local community facilities and the environment
- helping out at a local charity

You can contact your local Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) or Volunteer Centre to find out about opportunities in your area. You can find out more about volunteering, and find information about local volunteer centres, at the website of Volunteering England www.volunteering.org.uk

An example

Good Morning Chadwell in Blackburn is run by a group of volunteers who take it in turn each week to call other local people - often isolated through disability, old age or poor health - to check that they are okay and if they need help with anything. Something as simple as a phone call can make a big difference to someone else's week.



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Setting up a social enterprise

A social enterprise is a business set up for a social or environmental purpose.

As with all businesses, social enterprises deliver goods or services. The difference is that social purpose is at the heart of what they do and any profits or surplus made is reinvested towards achieving that purpose.

Setting up a social enterprise is about using your skills to make a difference.

Like for any other business, you will need lots of advice and support to set up a social enterprise. The Social Enterprise Coalition has lots of information available on their website: www.socialenterprise.org.uk

An example

Odd Socks is a unique, innovative clothes recycling enterprise created by Joe Tomlinson and his friends. Run by disabled people, for disabled people, its primary aim is to empower local residents to build better lives - for themselves and for others. The idea stemmed from Joe's desire to be seen as more than a passive recipient of social care. Instead, he wanted to give something back to his local community.

Join or set up a time bank

Time banks link people in a local area together to share their time and skills. Everyone's time is equal: one hour of your time earns you one hour of someone else's time.

A time bank is a very good way to help strengthen communities. It can help to:

- bring people together
- build a person's confidence and skills
- build community networks
- encourage community participation.



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Giving or receiving time

Time banks measure and value all the different kinds of help and skills we can offer each other. People using a time bank help each other out with everything from making meals, giving people lifts to the shops, DIY, gardening and simply spending time with someone who is lonely.

Who is a time bank for?

A time bank is open to people of all ages, disabilities, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. In fact, a time bank benefits from the diversity of people taking part so there is a wide variety of skills available.

To find out whether a time bank is running in your area, just visit www.timebanking.org/find_a_timebank.html. If there isn't, don't worry, it's really easy to get one started - just take a look at www.timebanking.org.uk to find out more.

An example

Clapham Park Time Bank has a membership of 130 local people and it is an important part of the mental health recovery and prevention programmes offered by the South London and Maudsley Trust. The area has many people from black and minority ethnic groups and also has high levels of unemployment and ill-health.

Through the time bank, members play an important part in improving each other's mental well-being, and in addition to one-to-one help between individuals, a group of about 50 people also regularly attend events where time credits are exchanged for fun activities such as belly dancing classes, gardening, walk and talk sessions, and 'open mic' nights. Time bank members are also encouraged to run their own projects and to help the time brokers to staff the office and take phone calls.



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Getting a Small Sparks grant

Small Sparks is a grants programme that helps people to do new and exciting things in their community.

Grants from £50 up to £500 are provided for activities or services that will support local people and communities. It is a small amount of funding that can be used to kick-start or improve community-based services.

To find out whether there are Small Sparks grants available in your area, contact your local council.

An example

Neil Atkinson used a Small Sparks grant to organise a village event called 'Catching the History of Wawne'. It was designed to help all the people in the community come together and learn about their heritage - and everyone got really involved. They made a timeline in the Village Hall, buried a time capsule, had a history treasure hunt, and finished with a harvest supper for the whole community, where some of the Brownies who had been involved received special 'Wawne Culture' badges.



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There is a lot more information on the In Control website: www.in-control.org.uk

Other places you can find out more are:

www.thebigsociety.co.uk

www.direct.gov.uk

www.socialenterprise.org.uk

www.timebanking.org

www.volunteering.org.uk



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About the In Control and Me project

A three-year project to produce accessible information for everyone who wants to direct their own support, funded by the National Lottery through the BIG Lottery Fund. You can find out more at www.mencap.org.uk/incontrol or www.in-control.org.uk/icandme