

Volunteering For A Rape Support/Activist Organisation

By Stephanie

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Being a volunteer can be a very rewarding experience and for many survivors it can also be an important part of their recovery. There are many different ways to get involved in volunteering and many questions that you may wish to consider before you do so.

Why volunteer?

For many survivors volunteering for an abuse/rape support organisation can be an integral part of their own healing process. Survivors who are struggling to deal with the anger that they feel towards those who hurt them can find that directing that energy positive way can help them to deal with that anger in a healthy manner. For other survivors it is important to feel that something good has come out of the terrible things they have experienced and volunteering can offer survivors the opportunity of support others through the process of recovery. In addition, being a volunteer can give you the opportunity to learn new skills, meet new people and increase your confidence. It also looks great on your CV!

What kind of volunteering?

There are hundreds of excellent organisations that support rape survivors many of which rely on the work of volunteers to survive. When choosing what kind of work you might like to do then considering the following questions might be helpful:

→ *What kind of organisation do you want to be involved in?*

Every organisation is different and it is worth finding out what services a group offers and what their political view points are before getting involved. You may not wish to get involved in a group that only works with certain types of people for example, on the other hand you may wish to volunteer with a group that is very specific in the focus of their work.

→ *What sort of tasks are you prepared to do?*

Many organisations take on volunteers to assist in the running of their telephone help lines,

however there are many other ways in which you can give your time such as helping out with the day to day running of an office, supporting survivors who are going to court, helping with campaign work, fundraising, doing paperwork and talking to the press.

→ *How much time do you have?*

Some organisations require a minimum time commitment per week or per month, others are more flexible but most places will expect that you are committed to your voluntary role. Most organisations have opportunities that are out of normal working hours such as evenings and weekends.

→ *Will I get training and support*

Some organisations will offer a training programme for volunteers; others take an apprenticeship style approach and allow you to learn as you go. It is worth considering which approach would be more suitable to you and you may also want to check out what kind of support is available to volunteers as working with other survivors can potentially be very triggering work.

→ *Will I get expenses?*

Lots of places offer travel expenses to volunteers so do not be put off an organisation because you are limited by finances as help may well be available. It is also possible in the UK to keep claiming benefits and be a volunteer and childcare expenses may also be available.

How do I become a volunteer?

Once you have chosen an organisation that you would like to work for then you will need to get in touch to find out if they are taking on volunteers. Some places only recruit once or twice a year so it is worth getting in touch as soon as possible so you can get your name on any lists that they might have. Each organisation will have its own approach to recruiting volunteers and although it is unlikely that you will need any formal qualifications many ask for potential candidates to complete an application form, attend information events and interviews.

Can I volunteer for The Pandora's Project?

Yes! We regularly recruit members of the message board to join our staff team. Watch out for announcements seeking new staff to be chat moderators, section moderators and for team welcome.

Volunteering – my personal experience.

Early on in my recovery from the abusive relationship I experienced I was really struggling with the intense level of anger I felt not only towards my own abuser but towards the injustice that I witnessed taking place in the lives of all survivors. Time and time again I would read accounts in the press of the failure of the legal system to protect and seek justice for survivors from violence and found myself distraught at the epidemic levels of suffering and injustice that existed.

One day I read the following magazine article (4th article down):

['The said I asked for it'](#)

At the end of the article there was a contact for WAR (Women Against Rape) a grass roots anti-rape organisation. I realised that this was exactly what I had been looking for. I could no longer stand to just read about these awful stories and do nothing about it and I could no longer deal with the level of anger I felt in a healthy way. I contacted WAR and straight away was asked to help out on a campaign to raise awareness about date rape. The campaign itself – which you can read about [here](#), was an eye opener for me. It was based around an advert on date rape the tag line of which was 'Two out of three victims know their attacker'. This was the first time I had heard this information and I still remember sitting in the dark of the cinema with the shock of this revelation sweeping over me. Already I felt more validated and less alone.

I worked with WAR for several years and during my time there I was involved in campaign work, talking to the press, responding to survivors by email, letter and in person and accompanying survivors to court. Volunteering both allowed me to channel my anger in a healthy and helped me to feel that something positive was coming out of what I had been through. I learned a great deal about the issues surrounding sexual violence which in turn helped me with my own healing. I left WAR when I moved away from London and was delighted to be able to continue my journey as a volunteer when I was asked to join the team of board moderators at Pandora's

Aquarium. Being a volunteer has been immensely rewarding and has played an essential role in my healing and I would certainly recommend the experience to other survivors.

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