



Volunteering for GAP

What is GAP?

GAP is Bristol's Gentle Activity Project for older people – a partnership between Bristol City Council and the Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme in the West (RSVP West) funded by Bristol Primary Care Trust.

Project aims

GAP will recruit and train a team of volunteers over the age of 50 who will be supported to deliver safe, enjoyable, gentle group activity sessions across a variety of community venues that older people can easily get to and where they feel comfortable. Sessions will run regularly.

Who can volunteer?

We welcome volunteers from all sections of the community who are over the age of 50.

What do volunteers do?

Volunteers will lead seated and standing gentle fun exercises to music to get people mobile and exercising without even realising it! These sessions will be a valuable social time for participants and will help to maintain their physical abilities and independence.

The key role of volunteers is to:

- lead groups of older people to undertake gentle activity sessions
- enthuse and motivate older people to take part in safe and fun activities
- plan the sessions
- choose relevant music with the group
- assess the venue for possible risks (you will be taught how to do this)
- collect registration forms and maintain registers.

What GAP can offer you

The great thing about volunteering for GAP is that anyone over 50 can take part and you don't need any experience. As a volunteer you will obtain:

- A sense of real satisfaction through helping others
- The opportunity to turn peoples' lives around – for the better
- Free nationally accredited training and support – learn new skills!
- Membership of RSVP West - a group of volunteers dedicated to helping their local community
- Improve your personal physical activity levels whilst helping others to be more active
- The chance to get out and meet new friends
- Support and mentoring
- Travel expenses.

Would I make a good volunteer for the GAP project?

When first joining a project it is important to be open-minded. If you have the energy, enthusiasm, willingness, interest and a smile then you will make an excellent volunteer. If you do not like being the focus of attention of a group or do not enjoy any type of physical activity, then volunteering for this project may not be for you.

What training do volunteers receive?

All volunteers will receive adequate training to help them carry out their role effectively and with confidence and this will be at no cost to the volunteer. We use a course called 'Active in Age', created by the Beth Johnson Foundation, which has been specifically designed for people who are willing, but maybe without knowledge or experience, to deliver the sessions. This is a level-2 qualification accredited by the Open College Network (OCN). It will be a five-day training course, one day a week, with each session lasting six hours including breaks. You will learn about the effects of ageing on the body, mobility, stretching and strengthening exercises, relaxation and breathing, the benefits of keeping active, use of music/equipment and session planning.

What support will I get as a GAP volunteer?

General volunteering support will be provided by RSVP. In some cases we will try to link you with a 'buddy' so that you can share delivery of sessions. Your GAP trainer will also be available to offer support. We will also hold 'get-togethers' every few months to provide you with new ideas and help you with any questions you may have from delivering the sessions.

What is the minimum amount of time I have to volunteer?

We will try to make our volunteer opportunities as flexible as possible to encourage a broad range of people to get involved. Hours will be agreed on an individual basis.

When and at what times can I volunteer?

The sessions will run regularly, so you will need to commit to a regular timeslot. Sessions can start with half an hour's activity, and as the group gets fitter and stronger last up to an hour. Sessions mid-morning and mid-afternoon are popular. These sessions can also be tagged onto coffee or tea to make them more sociable. To include this, the longer activity session and your travel time shouldn't take more than a couple of hours.

Where will I be placed?

We will endeavour to place people within local areas to where they live to reduce travel and time.

When can I start getting involved?

Once you have completed your application form, we will be in touch with details about the next training course. You will need to complete a portfolio during the course, which will be submitted to OCN for accreditation. Full support and guidance will be provided throughout. Once this has been received and your CRB check has come through then we will be able to go about setting up and promoting your sessions. If there are any sessions being delivered in this time you will be welcome to go and join in with them to find out a bit more.

Can I volunteer at the weekends or evenings?

Most classes will probably take place daytime during the week. However, if you are unable to do this and we feel that the target group would like to have a session during the evening or weekend then we can look into setting up a session.

If I work full time, can I still volunteer?

Yes, you can. We will just need to find a time that suits you and other older people. Do think about how this will fit into your life and whether you have any other responsibilities, as we don't want you to over-commit yourself.

Will I have to undergo a CRB check?

Before you start volunteering we will run a reference and criminal record bureau check. This is standard procedure for everyone who works with vulnerable adults, but usually doesn't rule out anyone who has committed unrelated offences in the past. This will be at no cost to the volunteer, and can be discussed in more detail in confidence.

Will I be insured as a volunteer?

Once you have completed and signed the RSVP GAP application form you will be covered by RSVP's personal accident and public liability insurance (see a summary of the cover at <http://www.rsvp-west.org.uk/insurance.html>).

I don't drive, can I still be a volunteer?

Yes, there may be other ways that you can travel, e.g. walking or bus.

Can I volunteer if I have a disability?

Yes, but we may need to adapt what you do to your strengths.

What if I change my mind after starting to volunteer?

You can change your mind at any time. However, please bear in mind that although the training is free to volunteers there is a cost to delivering the training. If you complete the training and then decide not to deliver any sessions, you will have taken up someone else's place and so members of the community will not have a new session to attend. If you do have any doubts just speak to one of the organisers. We can offer support through 'buddying up' and professional support and advice.

Am I signing up to volunteer forever?

No, you may volunteer for either as long or as short a period as you like, though we do initially request that you commit yourself to this project for at least one year. Your volunteering is important to the local community, so if you can keep going then you will be helping others as well as yourself.

Who can I talk to if I have a question/problem?

You can contact either:

- Jan Snook or Ken Dolbear, RSVP West, The CREATE Centre, Smeaton Road, Bristol, BS1 6XN.
Telephone: 0117 922 4392 or 0117 925 0505.
Email: office@rsvp-west.org.uk
- Tina Ashley, Administration Officer, Sport Services, Culture and Leisure Services, Bristol City Council, Colston 33, Colston Avenue, Bristol, BS1 4UA.
Telephone: 0117 922 3241
Email: sport@bristol.gov.uk

How do I become a volunteer?

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer with GAP please complete the application form, which is available to be downloaded from the RSVP West site (<http://www.rsvp-west.org.uk/gap>). Once we receive your application form we will get back to you with details of what to do next.