



Heritage Buddies Pilot Project: Background

Heritage Buddies is an innovative pilot project funded by Historic England to test and trial an approach to delivering social prescribing and wellbeing through heritage in local settings.

NCVS is working with different heritage and befriending organisations to design and pilot the Heritage Buddies role to explore what works for: Organisations, volunteers, participants.

Project aims

- To help people access and appreciate the value of their local heritage and the local historic environment and experience how it can positively benefit their health and wellbeing.
- To help widen community access to heritage organisations and activities they offer, especially those experiencing social isolation.
- To support active interest and participation with local heritage and the historic environment, strengthening community cohesion and pride of place.

Heritage and Wellbeing

There is growing evidence for the wellbeing benefits gained from connecting to our heritage and historic environment. These include:

- Greater connection to a place or community.
- Connect to meaning and purpose in life.
- Increases self-esteem.
- Social engagement.
- Sharing experiences.
- Helps reduce isolation and loneliness.
- Feelings of belonging.
- Helps brain health through learning and reminiscence.
- Physical exercise from a venue visit or historic walk.

“Whether through visiting, volunteering, learning or creative practice, engaging with heritage can strengthen confidence, resilience, hope and social connections. We can all benefit from the quality of the place we inhabit, especially if its historic environment is cared for and its historic green spaces are accessible.”

Historic England’ A Strategy for Wellbeing and Heritage’



The Role: Heritage Buddy at Newstead Abbey / Nottingham Castle

Purpose of the role:

To support people to enjoy the benefits to health and wellbeing from engaging with heritage and historic environments in the local community.

What will you be doing:

Help and encourage the person / people you are supporting to be more confident in getting the most from the heritage site, project or activity that they want to experience.

Help the person / people to increase confidence and enjoy engaging with their local heritage and history, through supported site visits and / or organised site activities.

Offering a clear welcome meeting on site.

Help orientate people to the site and activities.

Offering supportive and friendly guidance tailored to interests.

Sharing your enthusiasm for heritage and the historic environment through your own experience of volunteering.

Skills, experience and qualities needed:

You don't need any special qualifications or experience to be a Heritage Buddy.

You will:

Be friendly, approachable, and interested to support others.

Have an understanding personality, be good at listening, non-judgemental, able to show empathy and patience.

Be enthusiastic about local heritage and history, although you don't have to be an expert.



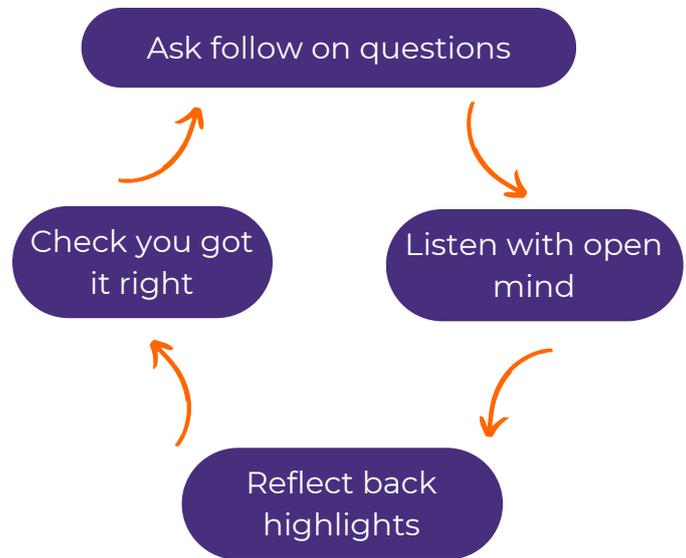
What you gain from being a Heritage Buddy

- Share your passion and interest in heritage and the historic environment with others.
- Share your experiences of volunteering with a heritage organisation.
- Feel part of making a meaningful difference to someone who needs your support.
- Develop new friendships and interpersonal skills.
- Gain experience in the social care sector and /or heritage sector.
- Develop your understanding of and increase your connection to local heritage and historic environments.
- Get training and networking opportunities in health and heritage.

Active Listening

Active listening helps people feel valued and helps build trust and confidence, especially helpful if someone has low self-confidence. Our wellbeing also depends on conversations in which we feel valued for our own sake.

Active Listening and Reflecting Cycle



Active Listening Techniques

- Being fully present in the conversation.
- Noticing (and using) non-verbal cues e.g use non-threatening body language, smiling, not folding arms.
- Showing interest by practicing good eye contact.
- Asking open-ended questions to develop conversation and encourage further responses e.g how was your journey?
- Open ended questions tend to start with: what, why, how, who, when, where
- Closed questions to bring to a close



- Paraphrasing and reflecting back what has been said.
- Being patient - listening to understand rather than to respond.
- Withholding judgment and advice.

It is important that you clearly follow your own organisation's safeguarding procedure.

It is important that you are supported as a volunteer, following any disclosure.

Keeping everyone safe

Safeguarding Adults - Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

It is important to remember that, as a volunteer, it is not your role to deal directly with safeguarding issues. It is, however, your duty to know when and how to report any potential concerns.

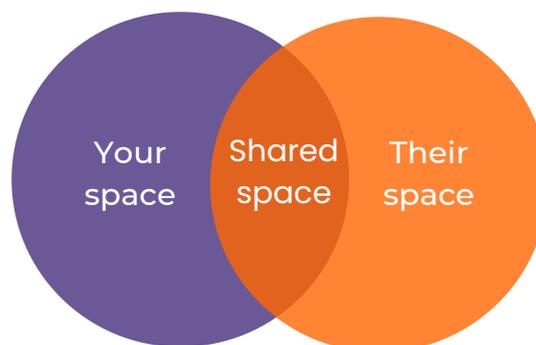
Your responsibility as a volunteer is to pass any concerns on immediately to your supervisor. Your organisation is responsible for ensuring you are supported as a volunteer.

If a person tells you about an abusive situation do not promise to keep this confidential. Explain that you must pass this information on to your staff supervisor for appropriate support and safety.

If information is disclosed to you by the participant, acknowledge this, do not pass judgement and do not ask questions or get involved in the situation.

Write careful notes of what was said and pass this directly to your supervisor.

Personal boundaries are important



- Respect their space – respect your space – manage shared space.
- Keep to your role.
- Don't share personal contact details (e.g phone number / address).
- Don't arrange to meet your buddy outside of your organisational role.
- Only share information about yourself that you're comfortable with.
- Remember the focus of the buddying is to support the participant to engage with and enjoy the heritage activity.
- If in doubt, speak with your supervisor.
- Follow your organisation's procedures.



Managing Expectations

It can be difficult to say no to someone – and important if the request is not appropriate. For example, If asked to help someone beyond your role. e.g. Help call someone/ make an appointment / advise on something personal/ offer a lift / meet someone outside of your volunteering role.

Helpful responses can include:

- Sorry, I'm not able to do that.
- I can check with my manager and point you in the right direction if you like?
- Sorry, I'm a volunteer and not qualified to do that.