

# Volunteer Handbook



Helsinki

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## We look forward to having you volunteer for the City of Helsinki!

Approximately 40% of Finns volunteer (Taloustutkimus, 2018). This indicates that volunteering is considered important – welcome to the ranks of the volunteers!

Helsinki aims to be the most functional city in the world. Our operations are built on equality, parity, a strong sense of community and an open operating method that facilitates participation. First and foremost, Helsinki is a place and a community, not a bureaucratic machine. **Helsinki is for a good life.**

There are many reasons to start volunteering. They are all individual and different. Often, those involved in volunteering say it provides them with feelings of relevance, positive experiences, participation and the joy of giving and receiving (Nylund – Yeung, 2005). Initially, volunteering was born out of the sense of community and the human need to help each other (Harju, 2005). Volunteer activities are closely linked to the Participation and Interaction Model employed in Helsinki. Volunteering is one of the factors that facilitate participation and involvement.

This manual talks you through the basics and guidelines of volunteering for the City of Helsinki. Our staff will be glad to help you and answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for increasing well-being and participation in Helsinki!

*Volunteer activities' development experts,  
City of Helsinki*

## How can I take part?

It is easy to get involved. You can contact the operator that you wish to volunteer for directly. You can also attend the volunteering basics course and/or contact the volunteer activities' development experts for tips on volunteer tasks suitable to you and the related contact details. However, we recommend that everyone attend the volunteering basics course lasting roughly two hours. Some volunteer activities require targeted training. All forms of participation will include familiarisation.

You will be familiarised by a volunteer instructor or some other contact person in charge. They will also provide you with other types of support when necessary. Depending on the activities, volunteers may also participate in meetings, additional training and recreational activities. Your contact person will provide you with further information.

## What types of volunteer activities are available?

The diverse range of volunteer activities offered by the City of Helsinki in various locations differ in content, level of commitment and target group. You can, for example, support people of all age groups as a friend or peer and work in the fields of nature or culture. You can work in playgrounds, family houses or youth centres, with the elderly, in support person or support family activities or in arbitration. Locations vary from assisted living facilities for the elderly, residents' communities, health and well-being centres, family centres, psychiatric and substance abuse services, neighbourhood circles and day and work activities for the disabled to housing units, libraries and museums. You can also think of some volunteer activities yourself and have your say on the content of the activities.

*“One of the best things about volunteering is looking beyond yourself. It forces you to become less self-centred. Being active with others has helped me a lot and it has been easy to get involved: I just didn't say no when asked.”*

Jani, peer group instructor



Photo: Jussi Rekiaro

## Definition of volunteer activities

At the City of Helsinki, we define volunteer work as follows;

Volunteering refers to unpaid activities performed by individuals for the good of individual people, the environment or communities, based on their own free will and motivation. Volunteering promotes participation and living a good life.

Volunteer activities, motivated by the volunteers' own desires, supplement the services offered by the City of Helsinki and promote

- participation
- opportunities to help and be helped
- well-being and joy
- experiences of relevance and agency
- meetings between different residents of Helsinki on an equal ground
- a sense of community and ownership in various neighbourhoods and the city
- caring for the environment.

Volunteering also works to prevent social exclusion, empowers people and alleviates feelings of loneliness.

*"It feels great to be of assistance to someone with little effort. I have received quite a lot in life and it feels nice to give some of that goodness to someone else".*

Julius, media multitasker



Photo: Jussi Rekiaro

## Principles of volunteer activities

- voluntariness and work without pay
- differentiation between the roles of a volunteer and an employee
- confidentiality and the obligation of secrecy
- reliability and commitment
- equality and reciprocity
- tolerance and equality
- participation and communality
- relevance and agency
- commitment to the values, instructions and principles of volunteer activities issued by the City of Helsinki
- commitment to instructions and to respecting those who receive help through volunteer activities
- the right to support and guidance
- the joy of activity.



Photo: Ole Hyvä Helsinki 2017

## Volunteer's rights and obligations

### **Volunteers have the right to choose a task that is suitable for them:**

- They may commit for the time of their choosing.
- They may decline tasks offered.
- They may move on to other tasks.

### **Volunteers have the right to:**

- receive familiarisation and guidance
- receive support and instructions
- receive information on whom to contact in case of problems
- participate in training sessions and meetings
- receive and provide feedback
- be insured
- draw joy and energy from volunteering.

### **Volunteers are obliged to:**

- commit to confidentiality
- adhere to the values, instructions and principles of the City of Helsinki
- act in a tolerant manner and respect everyone's self-determination
- keep appointments and promises
- volunteer, not work as an employee
- be intoxicant-free
- notify staff of any shortcomings, vandalism or other concerns (e.g. customer needing help or vandalism of an environmental site, etc.)
- notify the relevant parties of wanting to stop volunteering.



Photo: Ole Hyvä Helsinki 2017

## Agreement and insurance

Anyone participating in volunteer activities organised by the City of Helsinki must sign a written agreement on participating in volunteer work and thus commit to adhering to any instructions and regulations issued by the party organising the volunteer work and respecting the values of the City of Helsinki. The volunteer work agreement contains a confidentiality and data protection commitment which remains valid even after the volunteer activities have ended.

The City of Helsinki has taken out collective accident insurance for volunteers. The insurance is valid during volunteer work and any travel directly to and from said work. The insurance only covers medical treatment expenses incurred by **public health care**, e.g. health centre, outpatient clinic and hospital fees as well as any medicine expenses connected to accidents and necessary and reasonable travel expenses. Your volunteer work contact person will provide you with further information on the insurance policy.

Please note that you can be issued with a certificate of participating in volunteer work and/or volunteer training upon request.

*“I love playing music and playing as volunteer also makes other people happy.”*

Ali, Musician

## Interpersonal skills in volunteer activities

### The components of pleasant interaction:

- making a good first impression and showing interest
- being kind, calm and patient
- respecting others
- observing the environment and the atmosphere – listening and making eye contact are important
- “two ears and one mouth”.

(Vertaistoiminta kannattaa! 2010)

Good interaction often comprises similar elements whether you are interacting with one or more young people, adults, elderly people, people with disabilities, customers or patients, etc.

### You should bear the following in mind:

- People are individual and multifaceted.
- Interaction may entail special characteristics (e.g. communication tools or aids, different languages, etc.)
- You can and should ask the staff for advice, help and instructions.
- A smile will light up the room!

Photo: Jussi Rekiaro

## Sources

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Nylund, Marianne – Yeung, Anne Birgitta (toim.) 2005. Vapaaehtoistoiminta: anti, arvot ja osallisuus. Tampere: Vastapaino.

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## Contact information

Culture and Leisure Division, Development Services, volunteer activities  
tel. 09 310 64884, 09 310 58485, 09 310 46940, 09 310 79484

**e-mail:** vapaaehtoistoiminta@hel.fi

**Internet:** [www.vapaaehtoistoiminta.hel.fi](http://www.vapaaehtoistoiminta.hel.fi)

 [facebook.com/VapaaehtoistoimintaHelsinki](https://facebook.com/VapaaehtoistoimintaHelsinki)

### Contact details for your dedicated volunteer instructor

Name of contact person:

E-mail address:

Phone number:

***“I am interested in culture, and it is great not to be tied to a certain time or place, but be able to participate in activities flexibly. I can make my own schedule. And I also get to introduce customers to new experiences. Volunteering as a culture friend means interacting with people, it is so much fun!”***

**Iida-Maria, Culture Friend**