

# Paperweight Perspective

## Volunteering



BY ALAN PERRIN, TRUSTEE,  
THE PAPERWEIGHT TRUST

The popular poet Jenny Joseph, who died in 2018, penned "Warning", a piece that was twice voted Britain's Best Loved Poem.

Its opening lines, familiar to many, are "When I am an old woman I shall wear purple, with a red hat that doesn't go, and doesn't suit me".

The sentiments she expressed struck a chord and surprised those who read it that she composed the words not in old age, but in her 20s!

The mood is one of defiance and a disregard for convention. But it also epitomises the feeling that at a certain age we have confidence to do what we would like to.

Many members of the community, from all walks of life, are connected by a spirit of new discovery that, as their work-life balance changes either by design or by compulsory redundancy, that "having nothing to do" is not a leisure activity. They are not happy with this realisation.

Quite the opposite. But how to fill the gap?

One answer, which I will address here is to volunteer. But volunteer for what? There is a vast choice and opportunities galore, but here I am addressing that pool of potential volunteers who need some or all of the following questions answered:

1. I have accumulated skills from business, a profession or parenthood. Are these skills transferable, and if so to what?
2. I need to feel good about the time and energy I will devote to my voluntary work. What role will provide this?
3. I want to see a measurable difference from my efforts. How can I gauge this?
4. I would like to feel I play an important part of a more complex machine - but also to have autonomy

and independence (within necessary guidelines). Where can I fit in?

Let me stop you there. You have set the bar very high and any organisation that takes you on should dance for joy. But before the celebratory champagne let's look at your qualities through the eyes of a volunteer-seeking organisation, say a local, regional or national charity. Perhaps they have some questions of you?

They may be looking for a person who can demonstrate the 3 Ps: Personality, Persistence & Patience.

Personality - outgoing and quietly confident. Not easily intimidated. Can display empathy and sympathy with those in straitened circumstances, but not as a mechanical exercise - no one is looking for actors.

Persistence - Will you approach a

problem with sufficient energy and enthusiasm to "see it through", all the while navigating bureaucratic hurdles and other parties with clashing priorities?

Patience - Will you understand that some processes are painstaking and the desired outcome may be some weeks or even months in coming?

If you have been nodding your head in response to some or all of the above then you may wish to consider a role with Paperweight. Paperweight takes up "the good fight" on behalf of 1000s of clients up and down the country. We advocate on their behalf, we assist and sometimes we make a big noise. But the outcome is fewer sleepless nights for our clients, a clear map of where they can seek continuing help and expert knowledge of how to avoid the pitfalls of the past.

You may wear purple and a mismatched red hat if you wish. And you needn't be so old either. But as a Paperweight volunteer with a successful caseload under your belt, you will know that you have given back to the community something priceless. And for that you are entitled to feel very good indeed.

Paperweight takes up "the good fight" on behalf of 1000s of clients up and down the country.

**Debt-negotiating, court-attending, benefits-advising, law-guiding, tribunal-accompanying, hand-holding, rights-advocating, landlord-challenging and people-empowering.**

Your situation may involve any of these tasks, and more. Whatever your administrative, legal or financial problems, our 200 caseworkers, based in London, Manchester and Gateshead, have the expertise to help. And it's all free of charge.

To access our services or to make a donation to support our work, call 0330 174 4300 or visit [paperweight.org.uk](http://paperweight.org.uk)

[instagram.com/paperweighttrustlondon](https://www.instagram.com/paperweighttrustlondon) [facebook.com/WeArePaperweight](https://www.facebook.com/WeArePaperweight)

**paperweight**

Don't get overwhelmed, get help.

The Paperweight Trust Registered Charity 1146302 Registered Company 07705745 Design: hope.agency