

Article by Isabel Cockayne as appeared on 14 March 2005

Over-65s blocked from being volunteers

Obstacles stop around 70,000 over-65s in the region from becoming volunteers, a report has revealed.

A new government-funded coalition launched today, the Volunteering Initiative for the Third Age (VITA), claims those missing volunteers cost the East of England's economy nearly £170million each year.

If barriers can be broken down, it could see an 8pc rise in volunteers in understaffed sectors such as emergency services support or helping disabled people and their carers.

An ICM report commissioned by VITA, set up to promote volunteering among the over-65s and encourage more voluntary groups to recruit pensioners, reveals that nearly one in 10 people aged over 65 would like to volunteer, but do not do so.

Some 22pc of those interviewed said age discrimination was a key barrier and 48pc said volunteering opportunities were advertised in the wrong places, such as on the internet.

Around 50pc said mobility issues were a problem, as was cost (36pc), a lack of self confidence (34pc) and failure to make the appropriate approaches to older people (49pc).

When Home Office Minister Fiona Mactaggart launches VITA; it will set out its recommendations for best practice and encourage communities to confront the barriers standing in the way of older volunteers.

For advice on how to volunteer call 0845 305 6979.

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