

A Guide to Volunteering



jobcentreplus

Department for
Work and Pensions

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Introduction to 'A Guide to Volunteering'

This document has been designed in partnership with Volunteering Wales and Jobcentre Plus, part of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

The Guide's main aim is to help inform people claiming state benefits about the advantages of becoming a volunteer. It will help by providing practical information on volunteering, including, DWP Guidance and useful websites. Volunteering can be a useful stepping stone back into employment and develop into a life long vocation.

If, after reading this Guide you have any further questions please contact your local County Voluntary Council or local Jobcentre Plus.



What is Volunteering?

This is when you choose to give your time and energy to benefit other people without being paid for it. You could volunteer with any kind of organisation, including:

- A charity, voluntary organisation or community group;
- A public-sector organisation, like your local authority or hospital;
- A social enterprise supporting your local community, or
- A local business.

It's not volunteering if you:

- Help out a family member;
- Are given money apart from your expenses, or
- Are under contract to do it (this does not include any 'volunteer agreement' you may have).

Why Volunteer?

- Learn new skills which will further enhance your CV;
- Practice the skills you already have;
- Become more confident;
- Make new friendships and connect with your local community;
- Pick up new ideas from other people;
- Demonstrate to employers that you are committed and reliable;
- Meet people who can help you find paid work (networking);
- Provides things to talk about in a job interview;
- Get references; and have fun doing something new!

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What do employers think?

70% of employers stated they would hire someone with volunteering experience over someone who has never volunteered.

94% of employers believe that volunteering can add to skills.

Some quotes from employers:

Craig started up his own business five years ago selling children's books based on Scottish history. He says, "Volunteering on a prospective employee's CV is something I absolutely look for and value extremely highly. I have always volunteered. I am currently a Commissioned Officer in the, Royal Air Force Air Cadets and have been involved since I was 13."

Craig Johnstone, Founder and CEO, Giglets Ltd.

Highlighting volunteering shows individuals as being well rounded and interested in other people. Unemployed candidates who volunteer are displaying a wish to get involved and help people. These are all valuable and transferrable

Rona Cargill, Harper Macleod Law Firm both taken from <http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/content/what-employers-think-about-volunteering>

Having a criminal record does not necessarily prevent you from volunteering.

Most volunteering will be undertaken with organisations whose activities are not for profit, but it can also be carried out within the public and private sectors.

DBS checks for eligible volunteers are usually free of charge.

Mythbusters!

Claimants can volunteer for as many hours as they wish, provided they can prove they are actively seeking and available for work.

In nearly all cases State benefits are not affected by volunteering but you must inform us of any volunteering you are doing.

Not all volunteering is in charity shops. Volunteering covers a wide spectrum of roles.

DWP Guidance on volunteering and claiming benefits

If you're getting benefits please talk to your Work Coach or another employee of Jobcentre Plus before starting.

We know that volunteering can give you a much better chance of finding paid work. So you can volunteer as many hours as you like while you're getting benefits as long as you keep to the conditions for getting them.

If you are claiming Jobseekers Allowance/Universal Credit:

- You will still need to be actively looking for paid work in accordance with your Jobseekers Agreement or Claimant Commitment;
- You will still need to be available for work in accordance with your Jobseekers Agreements or Claimant Commitment;
- You must be free to attend an interview with 48 hours notice; and
- You may receive reimbursement of your expenses (such as for travel costs); but no other payment for volunteering. The Jobcentre will need to be informed of expenses received.

If you are claiming Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support and Incapacity Benefit:

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- You may receive reimbursement of your expenses (such as for travel costs); but no other payment for volunteering. The Jobcentre will need to be informed of expenses received; and
- You will still need to be available to attend Work Focused Interviews when we ask you to.

If you are claiming Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment and Attendance Allowance

- Volunteering in the UK will not affect your benefit;
- Volunteering abroad for less than 6 months will not affect your benefit; and
- If you want to volunteer abroad, notify your relevant benefit service.

Carers Allowance

- You may still get Carers Allowance if you volunteer in the UK, provided you have caring responsibilities for a disabled person of at least 35 hours a week and they receive the appropriate benefit; and
- If you volunteer abroad it could affect your Carers Allowance.

National Insurance Credits

- Volunteering does not usually affect your National Insurance Credits provided you comply with the rules of the relevant benefit.

Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit

If you are in receipt of Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit you must inform your local authority of any volunteering you do and any expenses you get.

Working Tax Credits

You have to be in paid work for at least a set minimum number of hours a week to get Working Tax Credits; the hours you volunteer do not count towards your weekly working hours.

Child Tax Credits

Being a volunteer will not change the amount of child tax credit you get.

Unpaid Work

You are not permitted to do unpaid work: this is where you are performing a job which someone would normally be being paid for and is different to volunteering.

For Further Information

If you require further information on the rules around volunteering and benefits please see:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/volunteering-while-getting-benefits-leaflet

Or ask at your local Jobcentre.

If you are unsure about how volunteering will affect your benefits please contact your local Jobcentre for advice.

If you are unsure of the difference between volunteering and unpaid work please contact your local Jobcentre for advice.

The benefits of volunteering are unending. It is a great way to meet new and like minded people, it enhances team work and there are opportunities to take on more responsibilities - this obviously looks very good on a CV. It also allows you to give something back. It's a great way to get into the habit of doing a full day's work and is a great stepping stone between unemployment and employment. Many people continue to volunteer once they get a job, as it really is a satisfying experience, and great fun!

Volunteering is one of the best things I have ever done!

It has been a real confidence boost and has helped me to bond with new people.

It was a great way to recharge your batteries with nice people and outside activities.

What Volunteers Say!

It was a great advantage to gain practical skills.

Through volunteering I have the opportunity to expand my skills, and use the knowledge I have gained in my working life to benefit others. I find it really rewarding.

I wanted to do something different outside of work, put something back into the community and meet new friends – all of which I have achieved.

I have gained experience of working in a shop and how a shop is run, working with other volunteers and meeting different types of people every week.

A great experience. I have had the opportunity to participate in events (and) to expand and develop new skill.

Your Next Steps:

Considering Volunteering?

You can go for an informal chat with your local Volunteer Centre (please see page 10);

or

You can book an appointment with your Work Coach to discuss your options;

or

If you know where you want to volunteer you can contact the organisation directly;

or

You can look for volunteering opportunities by:

- Looking on the Internet;
- Asking family and friends; and
- Checking local papers.

Ready to Volunteer?

It is vital that if you are on benefits and you are planning to volunteer that you let your local Jobcentre Plus know. **This must be done before you start volunteering** in order to make sure that the volunteering does not impact your benefits and that the relevant forms are completed.

If you receive Jobseekers Allowance/Universal Credit, continue to actively seek work and remain contactable for job opportunities.

If you claim Incapacity Benefit/Employment Support Allowance volunteering should **not** trigger a 'none routine assessment'.

Please remember that if you are receiving benefits you should speak to Jobcentre Plus before you start volunteering.

Volunteering Opportunities

Volunteering Wales – Volunteering Opportunities



www.volunteering-wales.net

Visit the website opportunities database for Wales, where you can search for opportunities in your area. You can register on the site to receive updates on opportunities that match your particular interests and requirements.

Get in touch with your local volunteer Centre for one to one volunteering advice and guidance.

They are as follows:

Anglesey – Medrwn Mon

(Llangefni)

www.medrwnmon.org

01248 724944

Blaenau Gwent/Caerphilly/Monmouthshire/Newport – Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO)

(Newport)

www.gavowales.org.uk

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01633 241550

Bridgend – Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO)

(Bridgend)

www.bavo.org.uk

01656 810400

Cardiff – Cardiff Third Sector Council

(Cardiff)

www.c3sc.org.uk

02920 485722

Carmarthenshire – Carmarthenshire Association of Voluntary Services (CAVS)

(Carmarthen)

www.cavs.org.uk

01267 245555

Ceredigion – Ceredigion Association of Voluntary Organisations (CAVO)

(Lampeter)

www.cavo.org.uk

01570 423232

Conwy – Community and Voluntary Support Conwy

(CVSC)  

(Colwyn Bay)

www.cvsc.org.uk

01492 534091

Denbighshire – Denbighshire Voluntary Services

Council (DVSC) 

(Ruthin)

www.dvsc.co.uk

01824 702441

Flintshire – Flintshire Local Voluntary Council (FLVC)



(Mold)

www.flvc.org.uk

01352 744000

Gwynedd – Mantell Gwynedd  

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(Caernarfon and Dolgellau)

www.mantellgwynedd.com

Caernarfon – 01286 672626

Dolgellau – 01341 422575

Merthyr Tydfil – Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil



(VAMT)  

(Pontmorlais)

www.vamt.net

01685 353900

Neath Port Talbot – Neath Port Talbot Council for

Voluntary Service (NPTCVS)  

(Neath)

www.nptcvs.com

01639 631246

Pembrokeshire – Pembrokeshire Association of

Voluntary Services (PAVS)  

(Haverfordwest)

www.pavs.org.uk

01437 769422

Powys – Powys Association of Voluntary

Organisations (PAVO)  

(Llandrindod Wells)

www.pavo.org.uk

01597 822191

Rhondda Cynon Taff – Interlink RCT  

(Pontypridd)

www.interlinkrct.org.uk

01443 846200

Swansea – Swansea Council for Voluntary Service
(SCVS)  

(Swansea)

www.scvs.org.uk

01792 544000

Torfaen – Torfaen Voluntary Alliance (TVA)  

(Pontypool)

www.tvawales.org.uk

01495 742420

Vale of Glamorgan – Glamorgan Voluntary Services
(GVS)  

(Barry)

www.gvs.wales

01446 741706

Wrexham – Association of Voluntary Organisations in
Wrexham (AVOW)  

(Wrexham)

www.avow.org

01978 312556

The above links are not exhaustive - there are numerous other charities and voluntary organisations in Wales.

If you receive benefits, you should always talk to Jobcentre Plus before starting any volunteering.

If you are unsure about how the DWP rules of volunteering will affect you please contact your local Jobcentre plus for advice.

If you are unsure of the difference between volunteering and unpaid work please contact your local Jobcentre Plus for advice.