

Volunteering while unemployed helps others and can help you



jobcentreplus

Including Jobcentres and social security offices

Volunteering while you are unemployed and looking for paid employment can help you as well as helping to make a difference in society. Volunteering allows you to use your skills and talents in a different way for the benefit of your community.

The information in this leaflet is also available in large print, Braille, audio cassette and the following languages:

- Arabic
- Bengali
- Chinese
- Gujarati
- Punjabi
- Somali
- Urdu, and
- Vietnamese.

You can get these from Jobcentre Plus.

Volunteering – The advantages work both ways

Voluntary work can be anything from being a good neighbour, to working with charities or other non-profit making organisations such as Social Services Department. Applying for jobs can take a lot of time and effort, which you can balance by volunteering to do something that you enjoy. Employers see volunteering as having something to offer, and making a positive contribution is a great way to boost self-confidence. Volunteering gives you the chance to explore your interests. It can help you use and improve your skills. It can also give you the chance to try out jobs that you may not have thought about before. Volunteering can keep you familiar with the work place, giving you knowledge and confidence at job interviews. People volunteering may be reimbursed for travel and any other expenses incurred.



Other ways that voluntary activity may help you is by:

- giving you the chance to pass on skills and experience
- improving your confidence
- letting employers know that you are able to show commitment
- providing a talking point for you and employers at job interviews
- learning new ideas from others
- providing a network of new contacts with information on different job opportunities, and
- keeping you in touch with the daily routine of being out and meeting people.

Volunteering opportunities

A Volunteer Bureau/Volunteer Development Agency is a place where they have information on organisations that need volunteers. You can find out where your nearest Volunteer Bureau/Volunteer Development Agency is by contacting the number on page 10 of this leaflet. You can go in for an informal chat or set up an in-depth interview with one of the staff to talk about what you want to do. Tracking down

the right opportunity may not be easy, or you may not be sure what type of help you want to give. Calling in for a chat may open up possibilities that you had not thought of.

If you know which organisation you want to work for, you can contact them direct. The major organisations have a Volunteer Co-ordinator who will appreciate your enthusiasm. Talking to somebody closely involved can help you to make the best use of your abilities.

Other ways to find out about what you can do are to:

- look in your local library
- log on to the internet, most libraries now provide a free access service
- check your community centre notice boards
- read your local newspapers
- listen to your local radio, and
- ask friends and family.



How voluntary work affects benefits

Jobcentre Plus recognises that volunteering can improve your prospects of finding paid employment.

It is important that you tell Jobcentre Plus about any voluntary activity that you do. This helps the adviser dealing with you to take account of your voluntary activity, and make sure that all the details are recorded. If you are claiming Jobseeker's Allowance you can take part in voluntary activity during the hours that you have agreed to be available on your Jobseeker's Agreement. You must be able to rearrange the hours you do the voluntary activity to attend an interview for employment on being given 48 hours' notice and you must be able to take up paid employment at one week's notice.



You should tell the adviser in the Jobcentre Plus office if:

- you do any voluntary activity
- you receive any payments, including payments in kind, for example meal vouchers, as these may affect your entitlement to benefits, and
- your volunteering involves spending a day or more away from home so that we can contact you about jobs.

Remember that you must:

- look for paid employment as well as doing your voluntary activity
- be willing and able to attend a job interview at 48 hours' notice, and
- be willing and able to take up a job at one week's notice.

You can do as much voluntary work as you like without it affecting your benefit, as long as you do not receive any payments or reward other than the payment of expenses incurred or to be incurred. When you declare your voluntary activity you will be asked to complete a form ES672VJP (ES672VJPW in Wales).

If you want to know more about how volunteering affects your benefit ask Jobcentre Plus.

Case Studies

Here are a few examples of people who were unemployed and now have jobs thanks to their involvement in volunteering.

With little work experience, **Emma** wanted a way to improve her CV. After seeing a poster for her local volunteer bureau, she helped out one day a week at a small local charity, doing administrative work. The experience, and a good reference, helped her find permanent paid work.

It was important for **Noam** to feel that he was doing something useful with his time. When a friend suggested volunteering he contacted his local mental health care centre, which found him a role as a helper. The experience he gained made him want to train as a counsellor, and this is now his full time occupation.

To boost her confidence, **Angela** began to volunteer as a receptionist at an animal rescue centre, something she had never considered before in her working life. Being in a work environment encouraged her to apply for jobs, and she found employment as a receptionist at her local health centre where she could also work towards an NVQ.

Bobby began volunteering, initially to pass the time. He volunteered two days a week in the local hospice's charity shop. Although the work was completely different to his previous career in a car plant, he really enjoyed the interaction with customers and now manages the shop.

Wayne organised a football tournament through Millennium Volunteers, for the residents of 9 hostels. 'I visited all the hostels, researched the FA rules, arranged trophies, certificates, the venue, and the first aid. I never knew I was capable' said Wayne. Millennium Volunteers gives young people choices and provides opportunities for them to set up projects based on their own ideas.



Getting Started

If you would like more information about helping as a volunteer and about organisations in your area which involve volunteers, contact your local Volunteer Bureau/Volunteer Development Agency.

For bureaux in England:

Volunteering England
Regents Wharf
8 All Saints Street
London N1 9RL
Tel: 0845 305 6979
Internet: www.volunteering.org.uk
E-mail: volunteering@volunteeringengland.org

For bureaux in Scotland:

Volunteer Development Scotland
Stirling Enterprise Park
Stirling FK7 7RP
Tel: 01786 479 593
Internet: www.vds.org.uk

For bureaux in Wales

Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Baltic House, Mount Stuart Square
Cardiff CF10 5FH
Tel: 0870 607 1666
Internet: www.wcva.org.uk



For general enquiries on volunteering you may wish to contact some of the following:

Citizens Advice

The Citizens Advice help people resolve their money, legal and other problems. Trained volunteers provide free information and advice from over 3200 locations. Other volunteering opportunities are also available. For more information about volunteering with your local Citizens Advice call: 0845 1264 264
Internet: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

do-it.org.uk

A website devoted to all aspects of volunteering. The database of over 500,000 opportunities to volunteer all around UK, is constantly updated with data from 350 volunteer bureaux and 250 national and regional charities. Email: info@do-it-org.uk
Internet: www.do-it.org.uk

TimeBank

TimeBank was launched in February 2000 and uses BBC TV and radio in particular to encourage people to give time. The TimeBank operates by individuals registering their offers of time and then local agencies such as volunteer bureaux make contact. Tel: 0207 401 5420 Fax: 0207 401 5421
Internet: www.timebank.org.uk

Millennium Volunteers

This is an initiative aimed at giving all young people (aged 16-24) whatever their background a structured approach to voluntary activity.
Internet: www.mv-online.gov.uk

Remember that this leaflet is a guide only. It is not meant to say exactly what your legal rights are. While we have tried to make sure that the information in this leaflet is correct at the date shown on the cover, it is possible that there may be incorrect information or some items may be oversimplified. Also, please remember that the information in this leaflet is likely to become less accurate over time, for example because of changes to the law.

www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

Jobcentre Plus is committed to applying the principles of equal opportunities in its programmes and services.

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Part of the Department for Work and Pensions

Leaflet ref: VFWA5JP ISBN: 1-84388-708-8

April 2006