



### **Can Volunteering Lead To Paid Employment?**

Can volunteering lead to paid employment? The simple answer is yes but it's not a quick fix!

Sometimes people who are unemployed can think that after volunteering for a short period of time they will get into paid employment, either at the organisation where they volunteer or elsewhere, but this rarely happens. This expectation can lead to frustration and disappointment.

To get the most out of volunteering it helps to have realistic expectations. Volunteering can genuinely improve employment prospects but it can take longer than sometimes expected, especially in today's economic climate.

### **Here's What We Say To Clients That Are Unemployed**

Volunteering can really help you to get a job—but not always as quickly as you'd like.

If you take on a volunteer role and are committed, you will get huge benefits.

For example you can:

- Keep your skills fresh
- Get new skills and experience
- Increase your confidence levels
- Obtain a point of contact for future references
- Socialise and meet new people

The experience you gain through volunteering will really help you when you come to complete job applications and do interviews. Of course you will still have to apply and compete for any job.

You may or may not get the first job you apply for but you will be on the road to getting paid work.



### **Something To Think About**



In a government poll of people in employment 41% reported that volunteering helped them get into paid employment.

Volunteering is a unique opportunity to try out different work-based roles, have regular, hands-on experience, receive training and support and get a reference.

88% of people out of work and looking for a job said that they believed volunteering has a positive effect on job prospects.

**Volunteering does not affect an individuals' entitlement to benefits. Unfortunately, benefits advisors are not always aware of this.**

## Informing Benefits Advisers of Volunteering

It is compulsory for volunteers to tell benefits advisors if they are volunteering. As volunteer managers it is good practice to ensure existing and potential volunteers are aware of this rule.

However if the volunteer decides not to disclose this information, the organisation should not force the issue. Because of negative attitudes and lack of information on the part of advisers, many people feel more comfortable keeping their volunteering secret.

As an organisation you have no duty to inform the benefits office of who is volunteering for you, so leave it up to the individual volunteer to decide.

You can support volunteers who are on benefits by providing a standard letter that they can send to the benefits office. The letter should state that the volunteer:

- Does not get paid, only reimbursed actual out-of-pocket expenses.
- Can be contacted whilst volunteering with you if a job opportunity becomes available.
- Can be available within 1 week to start work and can attend an interview with 48 hour's notice.
- **Standard letter templates for JSA Benefit claimants**

### Standard letter for volunteers claiming JSA

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you regarding (volunteers name) who is currently a volunteer with (organisation name). I would like to reassure you that this does not affect (volunteers name) benefit claim, as he/she is available to attend a job interview at 48 hours notice and can start a new job at one weeks notice.

Our volunteers are unpaid. We reimburse out of pocket expenses in line with the Department of Work and Pensions guidelines.

Although there is no upper limit on the number of hours a claimant can volunteer for each week. (Volunteers name) understands that he/she still needs to actively look for paid work as agreed with his/her personal adviser at JobCentre Plus.

If a job vacancy becomes available whilst (volunteer names) is volunteering, then he/she can be contacted on (telephone number). If he/she is not available, a message will be passed on by a member of staff as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully,

- **Standard letter templates for Incapacity Benefit claimants**

**Standard letter for volunteers claiming incapacity benefit**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you regarding (volunteers name) who is currently a volunteer with (organisation name). I would like to reassure you that this does not affect (volunteer's name) incapacity benefit claim.

In Chapter IV of the Social Security (incapacity for work) Regulations 1995 voluntary work is exempt under regulations 17 (1) (b). In addition there is no upper limit on the number of hours a claimant can volunteer for each week, as stated in DWP publications WK1.

The nature of voluntary work differs from that of paid work in that volunteers give their time voluntarily, rather than for payment. Volunteers are only reimbursed for out of pocket expenses that they incur whilst volunteering.

As a volunteer (volunteers name) undertakes a variety of tasks, including (give brief description of tasks).

Volunteering is flexible and (organisations name) aims to accommodate (volunteer's name) by meeting his/her individual needs. For instance, (volunteer's name) can leave early and is not requested to attend when his/her condition makes volunteering difficult.

Yours faithfully,

Further information is available from JobCentre plus (WK4 booklet)  
<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/volunteering-and-benefits>