

Volunteering

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Why Volunteer?

Whether you are in or out of work, volunteering can always be a wonderfully fulfilling and worthwhile experience. You can gain valuable experience while offering a great social good, and you may find some sort of direction or focus in volunteer roles. This article will look at what opportunities are available and which ones would suit you best; I will also look at how volunteering may affect benefits.

How to Find Opportunities

Many people will look at volunteering when they are out of work. It is a great way to keep busy and to show future employers that you were productive when you were not in full-time employment. However, it can be difficult to find a position that you would like to do. For basic retail experience, many people will work in charity shops, but there are other forms of volunteering.

If you live in the capital, [Team London](#) has a vast range of opportunities, including mentoring, working with young people or the homeless, providing financial assistance to charities and volunteer groups, working in community parks and gardens, and many more. There also exists [The London Wildlife Trust](#), which organises a variety of events and challenges.

You can also search for volunteer positions the same way you look for jobs. [The Guardian](#) has an extensive list of positions available across the country, and the [do-it](#) organisation provides a vat of inspiration; you can search according to your interests and your location, and they have a great guide to looking at [volunteering abroad](#), a favourite among students and graduates.

Benefits and Volunteering

Of course, it can be highly discouraging if your volunteering clashes with your benefits payments. Peter Smith of [STV News](#) has reported on this very concern in Glasgow, where some "who claim disability benefits say

they're under pressure to either give up volunteering, or get back to work". He goes on to note that the government guidelines suggest that "you must keep looking for paid work; you have to be free to go to an interview with 48 hours' notice and to start a job with a week's notice; you'll also need to tell the Jobcentre before you start volunteering".

The problem comes with the issue of facing the capability for work assessment. [Volunteering England](#) has provided some details about volunteering and benefits, and some factsheets addressing the most pressing concerns.