

Volunteering While On Benefits

A range of measures to change the welfare benefits system in the UK are underway. Volunteers, and organisations that involve volunteers in their work, are concerned about the impact of these changes on volunteering.

Frequently asked questions from volunteers:

- **How many hours can I volunteer?** There is no limit on how many hours you can volunteer each week as long as you are available on your signing day, are available and actively seeking work and comply with requests from Job Centre Plus regarding your job-seeking.
- **Can I use my volunteering placement as a “work placement” to comply with Job Centre Plus requirements?** This depends on your Job Centre Plus advisor and the organisation you volunteer with. Some volunteers tell us that they have been able to negotiate a work placement within the organisation where they volunteer (in agreement with their JCP advisor). This is for a defined period, sometimes in addition to their existing voluntary work. Others have been unable to do this – their JCP advisor has stipulated that work placements must be organised through them, or the organisation has been unable to accommodate the requirements of a work placement.
- **I am unable to pay “upfront” out-of-pocket expenses for my voluntary work. What should I do?** The organisation you volunteer with may be able to provide some expenses in advance e.g. pre-paid bus tickets for travel expenses. It is unlikely, however, that they will be able to pay other expenses (such as lunches) in advance.

Frequently asked questions from organisations:

- **The economic situation means that we are swamped with people who want to volunteer with us. What should we do?** Be clear about how many volunteers you can realistically involve. If you are unable to consider a new applicant inform them as soon as possible so they can search for other opportunities. Direct to KDVC if they do not know of us. Also – ensure that the opportunities you advertise with KDVC are accurate and up-to-date. If you no longer require volunteers for a particular opportunity let us know and we will archive it. This means it will be taken off our website (but is easily put back on when/if your requirements change, without you having to complete a new registration).
- **Some of our volunteers are in panic about impending changes to welfare benefits, and how it may affect them. What should we do?** There is clearly reason for many volunteers to be concerned about their situation. However, there is also a lot of misinformation and partial information in the public domain. Organisations should ensure that their volunteers have access to expert and accurate advice rather than attempting to give information or guidance themselves.
- **Some of our volunteers are unable to pay “upfront” out-of-pocket expenses for their voluntary work. What should we do?** Many organisations use pre-paid bus tickets to cover travel expenses in advance. However, organisations should exercise caution in paying other expenses in advance e.g. for lunches, as this could be viewed as payment and put organisations in breach of legislation regarding National Minimum Wage. See good practice guide from KDVC.
- **Pressure to find paid work is having a serious impact on our volunteers’ motivation and morale. What should we do?** Effective volunteer management structures are vital to support and inspire volunteers’ motivation and morale. Look at our [Good practice guides](#) for more information