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*Opportunities for volunteering and how your benefits may be affected*

## What is Volunteering?

This is when you give your time and energy - often to a charity, other voluntary organisation, or in helping your community - to benefit other people, without being paid for it.

## What is NOT Volunteering

It is not volunteering if you do something for a family member, are given money (apart from your expenses), or are under contract to do it.

Choosing not to be paid is not the same as volunteering. If you are doing something that someone would normally be paid for, such as working in business or for a member of your family, the Department for Work and Pensions will class it as unpaid work and not as volunteering. This classification could affect your benefits.

You must always talk to the Jobcentre Plus before you start volunteering, if you are receiving benefits.

## Expenses and Subsistence Allowances

It is quite usual for volunteers to be reimbursed or be paid a contribution towards the expenses they incur through volunteering. These could be costs incurred in travelling to carry out your volunteering, the cost of meals while you are volunteering, accommodation expenses if you need to be away from home overnight, and the cost of any special clothing or equipment which is not provided for you but which is necessary to carry out your volunteering.

Volunteers working full-time may be given a subsistence allowance, covering food, travel and basic living costs.

## The Effect of Volunteering on your Benefits

If you are receiving any form of benefit, it is essential for you to talk to Jobcentre Plus before you start any volunteering. Except for full-time volunteers in receipt of subsistence allowance, in most cases, your benefits will not be affected. But there are, for example, requirements regarding availability for interview and for work for those who are claiming Jobseeker's Allowance.

### General

If you live with your parents or partner, their benefits could be affected if you get money or anything else on top of expenses.

### **Carer's Allowance**

You can still get this allowance if you do volunteering in the UK and care for a disabled person for at least 35 hours a week and they get the right disability benefit. Your Carer's Allowance could be affected if your volunteering takes you abroad for over 4 weeks.

### **Child Tax Credit**

Being a volunteer will not change how much Child Tax Credit you get.

### **Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

You can still get support if you follow the basic rules for volunteering. You must tell your local authority about any volunteering you do, and any expenses you get. Claimants in Doncaster should contact DMBC Housing Benefits Team on 01302 735336.

### **Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment and Attendance Allowance**

Volunteering in the UK, or volunteering abroad for less than 13 weeks will not affect your Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment or Attendance Allowance. If you want to volunteer abroad, or if your care needs or walking difficulties change you should tell the Disability and Carers Service by contacting 0345 712 34 56.

### **Housing Benefit**

You can continue to get Housing Benefit if you follow the basic rules for volunteering. You must tell your local council about any volunteering you do, and any expenses you get.

### **Employment and Support Allowance/Incapacity Benefit or Income Support**

You can be a volunteer and still get Employment and Support Allowance, Incapacity Benefit or Income Support if you follow the basic rules for volunteering, can still go to a work focused interview when asked to, and you have let Jobcentre Plus know, before you start volunteering, and tell them about any expenses you may get.

### **Jobseeker's Allowance**

You can be a volunteer and still get Jobseeker's Allowance as long as you follow the basic rules, are still actively looking for a full-time paid job, and are available for work or treated as being available for work. You must, also, be able to go to an interview at 48 hours notice and be able to start a job at one week's notice. You must let Jobcentre Plus know, before you start volunteering, and tell them about any expenses you may get.

### **National Insurance Credits**

You won't get National Insurance credits just because you are a volunteer, but you should continue to get them if you are getting a benefit like Employment and Support Allowance or Carer's Allowance. If you are listed as actively looking for, and being free to, work, or if you can't work because of an illness or disability, you may get National Insurance credits whilst you are working as a volunteer.

### **Pension Credit**

If you go abroad as a volunteer for more than 13 weeks at a time, your Pension Credit could be stopped. But payment of Pension Credit should not be affected through being a volunteer in the UK.

### **Working Tax Credit**

If you or your partner are responsible for a child or young person, or a disability makes it harder for you to get a job, you must be working at least 16 hours a week before you can be considered for Working Tax Credit; in other circumstances, you must be 25 or over and working at least 30 hours a week. The hours you volunteer do not count towards your weekly working hours.

**Note** - Universal Credit is gradually being introduced and will replace the following benefits:

- Income-related Employment & Support Allowance
- Income-related Jobseekers Allowance
- Income Support
- Housing Benefit
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit

For further details, contact the Universal Credit Helpline on **0345 6000723**

## Opportunities for Volunteering

To find out more about being a volunteer, you can contact:

### Volunteering England

Society Building  
8 All Saints Street  
London N1 9RL

**Tel:** 020 7713 6161

**Website:** [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)

**Email:** [ncvo@ncvo.org.uk](mailto:ncvo@ncvo.org.uk)

Volunteering England is an independent voluntary agency that works to support and increase the quality, quantity and accessibility of volunteering in England.

### DIAL Doncaster

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We rely on volunteers and actively encourage individuals to offer their valuable support to our organisation and the services we provide; either office-based or within our charity shops. Contact us or visit our website to find out what current opportunities we have available.

## Other Contacts:

### Tax Credits Helpline

**Tel:** 0345 300 3900

**Textphone:** 0345 300 3909

## Useful Websites:

[www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)

This website lists local charities and bodies which are looking for volunteer workers and has information on volunteering overseas and on Employee Volunteering, where some employers actively encourage their workforce to volunteer in their local community.

[www.volunteeringmatters.org.uk](http://www.volunteeringmatters.org.uk)

Volunteering programmes across the country which focus on the needs of four distinct communities; young people, disabled people, families and older people. Provides information on the benefits of volunteering and the facility to search for opportunities in your local area.