

Volunteering and DWP Welfare Benefits

Volunteering is a great activity to get involved: you can help make a difference in your community while learning and gaining skills that will help to improve your confidence and employability.

At CVS Falkirk, we can tell you about the range of volunteering opportunities there are available in the Falkirk Council area. We can help you find the right volunteering opportunity and introduce you to the organisation you will be volunteering with.

You can call us on **01324 692000**, or email: info@cvsfalkirk.org.uk or visit our main Volunteering page: www.cvsfalkirk.org.uk/volunteering

We work closely with Jobcentre Plus in Falkirk and Grangemouth to highlight volunteering opportunities that are available and to support their staff in encouraging people to volunteer.

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) has published the following guidance on volunteering while claiming benefits, which is also available on the [UK Government](http://www.gov.uk) website.

Volunteering and Claiming Benefits

(Originally published on the [UK Government](http://www.gov.uk) website on 15/07/2019.)

Volunteering is when you choose to give your time to help others without being paid for it.

Volunteering can help you to develop new skills and try something new. It can help you prepare for paid work by increasing your confidence and experience.

You can volunteer while receiving benefits as long as you continue to meet all the conditions of your benefit.

If you're getting a benefit, you can volunteer for any type of organisation. However, you cannot volunteer for a close relative, for example:

- your parent or parent-in-law
- your grandparent
- your son or daughter
- your son-in-law or daughter-in law
- your grandchild

- your brother or sister

Find out more about [how to volunteer](#).

Tell your benefits office about your volunteering

Tell the office that pays your benefits about any volunteering that you are planning to do before you start. Tell them:

- how many hours a day you will be volunteering for
- how many days a week you will be volunteering for
- whether you will be volunteering for the same hours and days each week, or whether they change
- what you will do in your volunteer role
- whether you will get any expenses
- about any money you get on top of expenses
- anything else you are given – this may not be money

After you have started volunteering, you'll need to tell the office that pays your benefits:

- if you change the hours or days you volunteer for
- if you stop volunteering

You can ask the organisation you're volunteering with to give you a letter with this information.

Contact [your local Jobcentre Plus](#) to report your volunteering.

How many hours you can volunteer for

You can volunteer for as many hours as you like, as long you continue to meet the conditions of the benefit you get.

The conditions for your benefit could include things like:

- attending a job interview with 2 days' notice
- starting work within a week
- rearranging or giving up your volunteering to start a job

If you're looking for paid work, you may agree with Jobcentre Plus to do some volunteering as part of your [activities to prepare for work](#).

Universal Credit and volunteering

If you get Universal Credit, your volunteering can count to up to half the time you agree to spend looking for and preparing for work in your 'Claimant Commitment'.

Example

You volunteer for an organisation for 20 hours a week. Your Claimant Commitment states you are to undertake 30 hours a week work search and work preparation activities. That means 15 hours of voluntary work will count towards your 30 hours work search requirement (50% of 30).

Employment and Support Allowance and volunteering

Read about [how many hours a week you can volunteer for while claiming Employment and Support Allowance](#).

If you get a health or disability benefit

If you have a health condition or disability, you can still volunteer. You will not need to have a Work Capability Assessment, just because you start volunteering, and you don't need to provide evidence from your doctor about your volunteering.

You will still need to let Jobcentre Plus know about any volunteering that you are planning to do before you start.

Expenses

You are not paid for your time as a volunteer, but you may get money to cover reasonable expenses you incur. These can be for things like:

- food and drink
- travel
- childcare costs
- any specialist equipment needed to complete the voluntary work

Any reasonable expenses you are paid by the organisation you volunteer with will not usually affect the amount of benefit you get.

Any money you are paid that is not to cover a reasonable expense may stop your benefit or reduce the amount you get.

Unpaid work

If you choose not be paid for any work you do, this is not the same as volunteering. Any work you do which someone would normally be paid for will be classed as unpaid work, not volunteering. For example, if you're working in a business which would usually pay someone to do the work.

The money you would normally have been paid for this work may be counted as your earnings. This is called 'notional earnings'. It may affect the amount of benefit you receive.

More information

Find more information about [who can volunteer, volunteers' rights and expenses](#).

This guidance applies to welfare benefits that will remain the responsibility of DWP.

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