

The Volunteering Offer – Information for placement providers

Why has the Government introduced this new support?

The Government recognises that the current economic climate is making it more challenging for some people to find work and is providing a range of extra support to help Jobseeker's Allowance customers move into employment.

Volunteering can help jobseekers develop and maintain useful skills for work, so the Government is providing access to work-focused volunteering placements for up to 40,000 jobseekers in England, Scotland and Wales over the next two years. Jobseeker's Allowance customers who have been claiming for six months will be eligible to take up this support.

jobcentreplus

Part of the Department
for Work and Pensions

How will jobseekers access this scheme?

Customers who have been claiming Jobseeker's Allowance for six months or more and are interested in volunteering to develop or maintain their skills for work will be referred to a specially assigned broker by their Jobcentre Plus personal adviser. With this broker, they will discuss what skills for work they would like to develop, and the broker will find them a work-focused volunteering placement in the local area. This is not a mandatory programme.

What sort of placements will these be?

That will depend on the needs of the individual jobseeker and the placements available where they live. Jobseekers will be provided with a wide variety of opportunities in many different areas to help them to develop or maintain work-related skills and work habits whilst they continue to search for work. For example, if a jobseeker has experience of working in IT, they may want to take up a placement doing website design to help them continue to maintain and improve their computing skills. We have appointed third sector partners to deliver this service because we value their expertise in providing access to the right placements in their local area.

Who are these third sector partners and how much funding is being provided for them to deliver this service?

£8 million has been divided between BTCV in England, Volunteer Development Scotland (VDS) in Scotland and Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) in Wales based on the number of jobseekers expected to reach six months' unemployment in each country. The third sector partners will be responsible for managing a network of brokers across the three countries to locate work-focused placements for Jobseeker's Allowance customers over the next two years.

Will our organisation be able to access some of this £8 million?

The funding is provided for the purpose of establishing a volunteering brokerage

service aimed at jobseekers and Jobcentre Plus personal advisers, rather than funding volunteering activities. We anticipate that many of these volunteering placements will already exist. Organisations will not be paid for taking on jobseekers, but because this is not a mandatory programme, jobseekers who choose to take up this offer are likely to be keen to improve their skills and experience, so we expect them to be an asset to an organisation they take up a placement with.

How do we get in touch with our local brokering service?

To find out more information about the offer in England, please contact BTCV on dwp-volunteering@btcv.org.uk

To find out more information about the offer in Scotland, please contact Volunteer Development Scotland on **01786 479593**.

To find out more information about the offer in Wales, please contact Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) Helpdesk on **0800 2888 329** and ask for Nicola Nicholls.

Will the offer apply in Northern Ireland?

The offer does not apply in Northern Ireland, which administers its own social security system.

Will jobseekers lose their benefit if they don't volunteer?

No. Jobseekers will be able to choose whether they would like to take up the opportunity of a work-focused volunteering placement. They will not lose their entitlement to Jobseeker's Allowance if they decide not to take advantage of this offer, or if they start a placement but fail to complete it.

Will you be changing the benefit rules?

No. Jobseeker's Allowance customers may already do as much voluntary work as they like, provided they continue to fulfil benefit entitlement conditions. This offer of support will run alongside the current Jobseeker's Allowance regime.

Call charges. Calls to 0800 numbers are free from BT land lines, but you may have to pay if you use another phone company, a mobile phone, or if you are calling from abroad. Calls from mobile phones can cost up to 40p a minute, so check the cost of calls with your service provider.