



**Volunteer Centre**  
Maidstone



**9.00 am to 4.00 pm**

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# Volunteering

An introduction

## **What is volunteering?**

**Volunteering** is an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives.

Volunteering covers a huge range of activities but it essentially means doing something that you have freely chosen to do to help others, not because of any financial reward but because you want to make a difference.

## **How much time do I need?**

This is really up to you. You can find volunteering that only takes an hour a month, though the less time you have the harder it can be to find something that's right for you. You can volunteer at any time of the week, day or night. While much volunteering takes place in office hours, you can volunteer at evenings and weekends too, again depending on what you want to do. Typical flexible volunteering includes befriending, campaigning, fundraising and events.

## **What about expenses?**

We ask that voluntary organisations cover your full expenses, such as bus fares, in a simple way. Unfortunately not all organisations do, they may not have enough funds or simply not realise how important it is. Before starting, ask about your expenses. If you need any advice, we can help.

## **What about qualifications?**

Usually you don't need any specific qualifications, though you may need certain skills depending on the role, for example administration. Some organisations offer accredited qualifications as you volunteer, particularly in areas such as mentoring or youth work. You may well learn a lot and gain valuable experience, skills and a reference as a volunteer.

## **I'm working full-time. Will I still be able to volunteer?**

Yes, there are many opportunities to volunteer that do not require you to be available Monday to Friday during the day. Don't be put off volunteering because you work full-time! Many organisations would love to find volunteers that are able to volunteer evenings, nights and/or weekends. Some examples of out of office hours volunteering include: campaigning, the Samaritans or other helplines, working with homeless people, befriending, environmental and sports activities.

## **Will I get training?**

Training can vary a lot. Some organisations offer substantial training and support, but others don't and expect you to learn on the job or contribute existing skills. It also depends on the type of work you will be doing. So if you're spending one day clearing overgrowth from paths, expect about 15 minutes at the start being told what to do, how to use the tools and what health and safety precautions to take. But if you volunteer to give welfare benefits advice you should get much more training. You might get 10 two-hour training sessions spread over several weeks before you see a client, plus ongoing training to keep you up-to-date.

## **Can I still claim benefits?**

Yes you can. The regulations are clear that you can volunteer whilst on benefits, though we recommend that you tell your benefits office. If you have any specific questions please get in touch as we can provide up to date information for you.

**Please contact us for more information or to answer any questions**