

Voluntary work

Contents

[Volunteers](#)

[Volunteering](#)

[Voluntary work or activity](#)

[Notional earnings](#)

DWP recognises the value of voluntary activity in both developing skills which can be transferred into the world of paid work and in terms of benefits for local communities and the wider society.

Volunteering is particularly useful for someone who has been out of the labour market for some time and is looking to build up their confidence and their CV at the same time. This is why claimants who are expected to look for work can have their weekly work search hours reduced by up to 50% to accommodate voluntary activity.

Claimants are not prevented from spending more time volunteering, but similar to those who are working, they need to manage combining voluntary activity with other work-related activities. This will give claimants the best chance of moving into sustainable employment more quickly.

Volunteers

A volunteer is engaged to support the services of a charity, voluntary organisation or someone who is not a relative and any payment due or received is for reasonable expenses incurred.

When the work is remunerative and the claimant declares no payment, or a payment that is less than would normally be paid for the work, a Decision Maker (DM) will consider notional earnings.

Volunteering

There are several organisations that can help people find volunteering opportunities in their area:

- [Do-it.org](#) is an internet database of over one million UK volunteering opportunities
- other online resources include [Volunteering England](#), [Volunteer Scotland](#), [Volunteering Wales](#) and [Volunteering Matters](#)
- young people in England aged 15 to 17 can take part in the [National Citizen Service](#)

Claimants can volunteer, but need to manage combining voluntary activity with any work-related activities which are agreed in their commitments. See Voluntary work or activity.

If a claimant has a health or disability condition, volunteering should not trigger a Work Capability Assessment.

Voluntary work or activity

Voluntary work or activity agreed in the claimant's commitments can count towards their work search requirement. The time agreed for the voluntary work or activity must not exceed 50% of the claimant's expected number of hours per week for work search.

If the claimant volunteers for a charity organisation for 20 hours a week and their commitments are to undertake 30 hours per week for work search and work preparation, 15 hours (50% of 30) will count towards their work search requirement.

Notional earnings

Notional earnings are earnings that a claimant is treated as receiving for the work they have provided. The DM determines if:

- the claimant has deprived themselves of earnings; or
- an employer has arranged for them to be deprived of earned income for the purpose of receiving Universal Credit or increasing the amount of Universal Credit.

The DM determines the amount taken into account as earned income.

If the claimant works as a cleaner voluntarily, but someone else is doing the same job for the same employer and receiving the national minimum wage, notional earnings may be applicable.

[Back to contents](#)