



## Volunteering whilst claiming benefits

### What is volunteering?

This is when you choose to give your time and energy to benefit other people without being paid for it. You could do voluntary work with any kind of organisation, including:

- A charity, voluntary organisation or community group
- A public-sector organisation, like your local council

It's not volunteering if you:

- Help out a family member
- Are given money apart from your expenses

### What if I get State Benefits?

Jobcentre Plus recognises that volunteering can give you a much better chance of finding paid work as it helps you to learn new skills, build on existing skills, become more confident and gain some current volunteering experience to put on your CV.

There is no maximum number of hours that can be spent volunteering while claiming any state benefit, provided that you follow the basic rules:

#### The Basic Rules state that:

- You should still be carrying out all job search activity every week, as agreed with JCP, as well as volunteering
- You must be able to go to an interview at 48 hours' notice
- You can start paid work within one week of any offer
- You must let Jobcentre Plus know before you start, and tell them about any expenses you may get.

**JSA & ESA:** You can still be a volunteer and get JSA or ESA as long as you:

- Follow the basic rules for volunteering (please see above)
- Can still go to a work-focused interview when asked to, and
- Let Jobcentre Plus know before you start, and tell them about any expenses you may get.

#### Expenses:

You must not be paid or receive anything for your volunteering as this could affect your benefits. However you are allowed to claim for any legitimate costs incurred whilst volunteering e.g. travel expenses (bus fare/petrol) or other approved out-of-pocket expenses such as lunch if you are volunteering all day.

You should always keep receipts for these and produce these for JCP if requested.