

Bournemouth Volunteer Centre

Part of Bournemouth Council for Voluntary Service



Can I volunteer?

Anyone can volunteer, regardless of their age, gender, background or current employment status. Volunteering is for everyone and there are roles available to suit most people!

What are the benefits of Volunteering?

There are numerous benefits to volunteering, which include:

- Develop new skills and experience
- It improves your job prospects and employability
- Transform your CV
- Increase your confidence levels and self-esteem
- Obtain up to date references
- Meet new people and make new friends
- It opens up new challenges and opportunities
- Give something back to the local community

The experiences you gain through volunteering will really help when you come to complete job applications and attending interviews.

How do I know what roles are available?

Why not have a look at our Voluntary Vacancies brochure – this contains details of all the current voluntary roles that we have registered in the Bournemouth area. There are over 300 available roles covering everything from administration and befriending to charity shops and catering! The only thing we are lacking is animal based roles!

One to one interview: if you are unsure about what voluntary work you would like to do, please call us to make an appointment. We can provide you with a confidential one-to-one discussion about your skills, interests, background and what you are looking for in a role. We will then identify some suitable voluntary roles for you.

Volunteering whilst claiming benefits

You can volunteer whilst on benefits and there is no set limit to the number of hours you can do. You must however be able to demonstrate, that you can still meet the conditions for receiving your benefits. On Job Seeker's Allowance this means you are:

- Actively looking for work
- Willing to stop volunteering if you get a job (you must be able to start a job within a week of being offered one)

Expenses: You must not be paid for your volunteering. However you are allowed to claim for any expenses 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.

It is always a good idea to discuss your volunteering with your benefits agency so they are in the picture.

DBS check (formerly known as CRB checks)

Volunteering should be open to everyone, no matter what their background; a criminal record should not necessarily prevent a person from volunteering.

If you volunteer for a role that involves working with vulnerable people, such as children, the elderly or people with mental health issues or disabilities then you may be required to undergo a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check.

This is a government run service that checks whether you have a Criminal Record or are on the DBS barred list. The DBS barred list holds the names of people that the Disclosure and Barring Service have deemed unfit to work or volunteer with children or adults.

Do I have to disclose convictions?

If you are not asked about convictions, you are entitled to withhold this information. However, if you are asked about convictions and choose to withhold the information, you will not be able to volunteer for positions that require the disclosure of convictions such as unsupervised access to children.

What if my conviction is spent?

You do not have to disclose spent convictions, unless the role is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 e.g. roles that include one-to-one unsupervised access with children or young people, or other vulnerable groups. This means that you will have to disclose spent convictions as well as unspent one

Is there a cost involved? The DBS check for volunteers is free for volunteers that require it.

How do I apply for a role?

If you see anything of interest in our booklet, please contact me on 01202 466130 or by email at amy.collins@bournemouthcvs.org.uk. I can then tell you if I have any further information on the role e.g. the hours the role is available, where it is based and what skills they require. I will also give you the contact details for the organisation and you will need to contact them directly to apply for the role.

Depending on the nature of the role, you may be asked to complete an application form, or submit references. If the role entails volunteering with vulnerable people e.g. children or the elderly then you will also need a police check done (DBS check) – the organisation you are volunteering for, will arrange this for you and there will be no charge to you. Some organisations may also invite you in for an informal discussion and this initial meeting gives you, and the organisation, a chance to get to know one another.

The sort of questions the organisation will probably want to ask you will vary from one organisation to another and will depend on the type of voluntary work you are interested in. However, a typical interviewer (formal or informal) may ask any of the following:

- Why you are interested in volunteering at this charity?
- What sort of voluntary roles are you interested in?
- What hours are you available each week?
- Have you got any previous experience that you can bring to this role?
- What new skills you would like to learn through your volunteer work.

An interview also gives you the opportunity to ask them anything that you may feel unsure about e.g.

- How and when will my expenses be reimbursed
- What variety there will be in the voluntary work I do
- What type of training will you provide (and does this lead to any sort of qualification)
- Do you provide regular support and supervision? Who do I speak to if I have any problems?

An informal chat or interview can also give you an opportunity to look at where you will be volunteering and meet some of the other staff and volunteers.

What you can expect from an Organisation

- You have a volunteer agreement or task description outlining your responsibilities
- That you have a named person to report to
- You are covered under the organisations insurance
- Access to support/supervision and an annual review
- Reimbursement of expenses
- That you have training and development opportunities
- Recognition for the voluntary work that you have carried out.

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