**Voluntary Work**

JCP recognises that volunteering can give people a better chance of finding paid work.

For customers who have been on long term benefits, have health problems etc it can be a way to gain confidence, new skills etc.

JCP Work coaches actively promote when appropriate as an option- JCP internal Provision Directory has volunteering opportunities & advice.

. A volunteer is defined as a person who:

* is engaged in voluntary activity for someone who is not a member of the claimant’s [family](http://intralink.link2.gpn.gov.uk/1/jcp/guidance/bus_del/a-z/jobseekers%20allowance/labour%20market%20instructions/labour%20market%20conditions/dwp_m176612-11.asp#P226_25948); and
* receives only payments to refund expenses reasonably incurred by them in connection with their volunteering.

Most volunteering will be undertaken with organisations whose activities are not for profit, for example national and local charities, but it can also be carried out in any business including the public sector.

**Volunteerin****g and avai****lability**

A claimant who wishes to undertake volunteering must be available for work of at least 40 hours each week, unless they have restricted their availability for some other reason, for example caring responsibilities. Availability can be accepted providing the claimant is willing and able to:

* attend a job interview on being given 48 hours notice
* start work on being given a weeks notice
* rearrange or give up their volunteering to start a job if it overlaps with their pattern of availability
* attend an interview in connection with their jobsearch.

**Key Principles**

You must tell JCP before you start.

You must not be paid any money or anything else for volunteering. However you can receive refunds for reasonable expenses

* Travel expenses to the venue of your volunteering
* The cost of your meals whilst you are volunteering
* The cost of any special clothing or equipment you need to carry out your volunteering

It must not be for a member of your family.

Voluntary work will not affect ESA. Claimants can do unlimited, unpaid work providing the above principles apply- **its important again**, any voluntary work is declared **before** claimants start.

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### Volunteering and actively seeking employment- JSA

Claimants must take steps to seek work in any benefit week in which they are undertaking volunteering. The activity undertaken through volunteering can enhance a claimant’s prospects of securing suitable employment although, by itself, it may not constitute an actively seeking ‘step’ into paid work.

For example, a claimant who has undertaken volunteering on 3 days every alternate week must take sufficient steps to find work in each week. However, it would be acceptable for them to take fewer steps during the weeks in which they are engaged in volunteering than during weeks when they are not.

Volunteering and actively seeking employment **- Universal Credit**

Voluntary work agreed under the claimant commitment can count towards the claimants work search requirement. The time agreed for the voluntary work 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 commitment states they have to undertake 30 hours per week for work search and work preparation, 15 hours (50% of 30) will count towards their work search requirement