

# VOLUNTARY WORK & BENEFITS



## WHAT IS IT?

There is a wide variety of types of voluntary work.

Volunteers give their time free and may receive payment for reasonable expenses.

Voluntary work can help develop or improve skills and give you a chance to meet and work with people.

## EFFECT ON BENEFITS

**Incapacity Benefit, Employment & Support Allowance (ESA) or Severe Disablement Allowance or Income Support (due to long-term illness; if first claimed before 27 Oct 2008)**

These benefits are paid to people unable to do a full-time job because of sickness or disability.

However if you want to do voluntary work there is now no limit on the hours you are able to do each week.

Volunteering does not normally call into question your entitlement to benefits but you should inform your local Social Security Office if you are going to do any voluntary work to confirm if that is allowed.

## **Income Support (for lone parents, carers, pensioners)**

Voluntary work will not affect the amount you get unless it would be 'reasonable' to expect payment for the work.

## **Jobseekers Allowance**

- You can do as much voluntary work as you like as long as you remain available for employment and actively seek it. Tell your adviser about any voluntary work because the extent to which it improves your job prospects could count as a step towards finding work.
- In general you still need to be available for a job of at least 40 hours per week and be willing to re-arrange your voluntary work to do paid work within 48 hours.

## **Expenses**

Here's some of the expenses you can claim without affecting your benefit:

- Travel to and from the place you volunteer
- Travel costs whilst volunteering
- Cost of meals whilst volunteering
- Post and telephone costs
- Care of dependants
- The cost of protective clothing

If you are paid more than your 'out of pocket' expenses (e.g. sessional payment or lump sums) this may affect your benefit.

However you can be paid your expenses in advance without your benefits being affected.

## **Notional Earnings**

For both Jobseekers Allowance and Income Support the Social Security Office can treat you as having income you do not get if they think it would be 'reasonable' to expect payment for what you do. You should check this is not the case before you start as it could reduce your benefit.

## **Housing Benefit & Council Tax Benefit**

The Council should be informed of any payments for voluntary work BUT these should not normally affect your benefit.

## **Other Benefits**

Carers Allowance, and Industrial Disablement Benefit are not usually affected by volunteering, as is Disability Living Allowance (unless it indicates that your care or mobility needs have reduced – get advice)

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Following the basic rules and getting advice will help you carry on receiving your benefit. Contact your local Advice Centre for further help.

**The information in this factsheet is correct as of October 2008**

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