

# Voluntary and Community Action

## Including Volunteering in your C.V.

Volunteering not only benefits organisations and individuals in your community but can also boost your employability through the work experience opportunities it offers and enhance your C.V. In this Information Sheet we show you how to include volunteering in your C.V. to the best effect.

Volunteering is choosing to give some of your time, unpaid, to benefit the environment or people in your community. It could be anything from a formal arrangement (e.g. helping in a charity shop or at a hospital every Thursday) to helping with reading at your child's school, running a race for charity or informally helping an elderly neighbour with their shopping.

Whatever kind of volunteering you do, you will, as a result, gain experience, new skills, confidence and often training. It can help you develop a range of skills; such as project management, teamwork, leadership, communication, and help increase your self confidence.

If you have been unemployed for a while, volunteering can also get you used to being back in a workplace and provide you with some more recent and/or relevant work experience. It will demonstrate to potential employers that you are motivated and hard-working and may provide you with a reference. Volunteering can also provide you with some experience to move into a new area of work.

You can include details of what you have achieved through your volunteering in your C.V. just as you would a paid job. In fact, in some cases employers have been shown to value volunteering experience more than paid work.

### Writing a C.V.

A C.V. is your introduction to a potential employer and may be the only means by which they decide whether to invite you to an interview. It is therefore vital that your C.V. presents you and all your experience in the best light.

A C.V. should be typed and set out clearly so that it is easy to read. If possible it should fit on a double-sided sheet of A4 paper.

It should include the following sections:

**Personal Details** - include your full name, address, telephone numbers and e-mail address;

**Personal Profile** - a brief outline of your key qualities and skills; this may need to be tailored to the particular job you are applying for;

### Volunteering Information Sheets

The Volunteer Centre has produced a series of Information Sheets on:

- developing volunteering opportunities
- recruitment and development of volunteers.



They are available to download from our website or by contacting the Volunteer Centre (details on back page).





**“I LEFT MY EMPLOYMENT TO BE AT HOME WITH MY YOUNG CHILDREN. EIGHT YEARS LATER I WAS SEEKING EMPLOYMENT AND INCLUDED IN MY C.V. THE VOLUNTARY WORK I’D DONE DURING MY CAREER BREAK. IT WAS DEFINITELY A FACTOR IN LANDING A GREAT JOB!”**

**Work History** - starting with your most recent work, include dates, job title, who you worked for and a brief description of your tasks and duties. Include any part-time/temporary/voluntary roles that have lasted for six weeks or more, where relevant;

**Education** - senior school and any Higher or Further Education - include dates, name of the place where you studied and any qualifications you gained;

**Training** - include any short courses, qualifications or certificates you may have gained since leaving school or college/university, together with the dates and the training provider;

**Volunteering** - see “*Placing Volunteering in your C.V.*” section;

**Interests and Achievements** - keep this short and include only things that show you in a positive light and which you are prepared to talk about at an interview. It may be appropriate to include volunteering here in some cases;

**Other Information** - this could include anything that may be of interest to an employer (e.g. you speak another language, have a full driving licence or have a First Aid certificate). Do not include this heading if you have nothing to put in it that may be relevant to the employer;

**References** - you can choose to give details of referees or write “references available on request”.

**Remember to look again at your C.V. each time you send it off, as the emphasis of the C.V., especially the Personal Profile, may need to be altered to ensure that it is relevant to that particular job.**

## Your Volunteer Role

Before including your volunteering in your C.V., think about:

- What your role was about, it's title and how your role fitted into the organisation concerned;
- When you undertook the role;
- What your main duties involved;
- What skills you developed e.g. gained experience of customer service or learnt to operate a chainsaw;
- What evidence you can provide e.g. “I was involved in pollarding six trees in the country park” or an example of dealing with a tricky situation involving irate customers.

## Placing Volunteering in your C.V.

There are three main places where you could include your volunteering in your C.V.:

**In your Work History,** particularly to prevent a long gap in your work history or to provide some recent work history if you have been out of work for a while, or where the volunteering is relevant to the job you are applying for. Remember to set out the information in the same way that you would set it out for paid work. The only difference should be that you should add in brackets the words “Voluntary Role” after the Job Title.

**In a separate Volunteering Section,** particularly if you do not have a gap in your employment history but the volunteering is relevant to the job you are applying for.

**In the Interests and Achievements Section,** particularly if the volunteering took place while you were already in work and doesn't relate to the job you are applying for.

### Demonstrating your Volunteering Experiences

A C.V. that lists the most important responsibilities from your volunteering roles reveals not only the skills you have but also highlights your potential for future paid employment. Think about the tasks you undertook and translate these into the skills, knowledge and experience you gained or developed from your volunteering roles.

#### Communications Skills

Have you written news releases, reports or newsletters; prepared or given a presentation; interacted with customers or clients (on the telephone, by email or in person) or had a chance to practice your public speaking? If so, you have gained or developed important communications skills that many jobs require. Being able to express **yourself** clearly, whether in writing or by speaking, and

communicating ideas to others are essential skills in most work places.

#### Information Skills

Collecting and organising information is also important in many work places. Through your volunteering, have you researched information for articles, collected and analysed feedback from clients or prepared information for websites or Facebook? Administrative roles often involve using databases, processing financial information or selecting and communicating information to clients.

#### Technical Skills

Technical skills gained or developed during volunteering can also be valuable. Did you learn how to use a chain saw, pollard trees or lay a path as part of a conservation project? Have you set up a database, developed a website or learnt other ICT skills? Have you learned how to control or display stock, price goods for sale or cashed up in a charity shop? Have you trained others to do a task?



**KARREN BRADY,**  
FORMALLY MANAGING  
DIRECTOR OF  
BIRMINGHAM CITY  
FOOTBALL CLUB,  
SAYS: "ANYBODY  
WHO VOLUNTEERS IS  
TAKING A DECISIVE  
STEP IN THE RIGHT  
DIRECTION AND  
TAKING THEIR  
CAREER AMBITIONS  
INTO THEIR OWN  
HANDS. NOT ONLY  
DOES VOLUNTEERING  
GIVE YOU VALUABLE  
EXPERIENCE, BUT IT  
MAKES YOU  
EMINENTLY MORE  
EMPLOYABLE. AND  
WHO KNOWS, YOU  
MIGHT EVEN HAVE  
SOME FUN TOO! I  
WOULD SERIOUSLY  
CONSIDER A  
CANDIDATE FOR  
INTERVIEW IF THEY  
HAD COMMITTED TO  
VOLUNTEERING"

### Example

**Role:** Café Assistant

**Date:** April to September 2013

**Main Duties:** Assisting with the preparation and serving of food to customers, and ensuring food hygiene standards were met.

**Skills Developed:** I achieved Food Hygiene Certificate (Level 2) and gained skills in menu planning, food preparation and customer service.

**Experience:** I gained extensive experience of customer service through taking customer orders, serving food and talking to customers about their involvement with the activities that took place at the centre. I particularly enjoyed talking to the children and helping out with the 'cooking for Tots' sessions. I also gained experience in preparing a wide range of lunch-time snacks to order.

**Leadership and Teamwork Skills**

Leading a team can be impressive, but your ability to work well within a group can be just as valuable. Have you led or contributed to a project: suggested ideas, planned projects, organised an event, coordinated the work of others, negotiated compromises, worked in partnership with others or involved colleagues in activities? An experienced leader or team player will be able to demonstrate a range of important skills and can reveal your ability to take the initiative and 'get things done'

**References**

A good reference from a volunteer -involving organisation is valuable in supporting your job application, particularly if you do not have any recent paid work experience. It is a good idea to speak to the Volunteer Manager where you are volunteering to ask them for feedback on your performance and whether they would provide you with a reference.

**Covering Letters**

It is usual to send a covering letter with your C.V. when applying for work. This should briefly state the main skills and experience that make you suitable

For further information and advice on preparing a C.V. contact our Work Club Advisers or visit [www.aaction-centralbeds.org.uk](http://www.aaction-centralbeds.org.uk)

to be considered for the particular job you are applying for. The skills and experience you have gained through volunteering can equally be included here.

**Real Examples**

*Mrs N volunteered for a year at her child's school, helping with reading and school trips. Last year when a Teaching Assistant vacancy came up, she felt confident that she had gained enough experience to apply. She did so and was successful.*

*Miss W. volunteered at a local charity shop as a way of gaining confidence and experience after being out of the work place for many years. Whilst she was volunteering she was also able to take NVQ qualifications in Retail and Customer Service. She is now applying for paid work in retail.*

*Mrs H was a H.R. Manager looking for new recruits with I.T. skills. When looking at the C.V.s and application forms of applicants, two that stood out belonged to men in their fifties who had gained I.T. qualifications and a range of experience in voluntary roles. When this was backed up by successful interviews and good references, the men were offered jobs.*

**"I gained skills in CV writing and enjoyed meeting new people"**



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**How can our Work Clubs help?**

The Work Club offers you the chance to meet others, exchange ideas, share experiences, find opportunities, and make contacts in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. In the Work Club, our qualified advisers are available to offer support, information and advice about looking for work, training, further learning or volunteering.