Volunteering is a great way for people to learn new skills, gain confidence, and support good causes all at the same time.

*From volunteering to employability* is a new project that helps connect people that are trying to find work with charities that need volunteers.

**How it works**
It works closely with Job Centre Plus, and engages a variety of jobseekers. It starts with a workshop for people interested that looks at the skills they could get from volunteering, how those skills will help them in the workplace, and what type of volunteering might help them find their ideal job.

Volunteering is, by definition, voluntary, and this project is no different. There are no penalties for claimants who do not want to volunteer, so everyone involved will have chosen to take part.

It differs from normal volunteering in that placements on the project are time limited – anything from 2-8 weeks - rather than indefinite, and this guarantees no loss of benefits. If they’re interested we’ll help try and find a volunteering opportunity that suits them and their circumstances, and they can go through your normal volunteer recruitment process so you are sure they’re the right person.

To those claiming Jobseekers’ Allowance the volunteering programme can be a placement of up to 25-30 hours to give them a real taste of the working world; to those that have other issues and that claim other benefits the placement is more flexible, depending on their needs. This project will support both types of volunteering, and will be designed to meet the needs of both the organisation and the individual.
The benefits to the host
- A volunteer, hopefully motivated in order to get new skills and experience.
- The initial volunteering may be time-limited, but the hope is people will continue to volunteer in some way.
- We’ll also help support the host organisation if needed with any policies or additional admin, and the Job Centre can sometimes contribute to travel or other specific costs.

The benefits to the volunteer
- An opportunity to gain new skills and experience, and help a worthwhile cause.
- An introduction to volunteering, which they will hopefully keep up after the project.
- Additional help, such as helping them use volunteer experience on a CV, in job applications and interviews, and how to find volunteering opportunities in the future.

Useful to know
- This is a new project. We’re aware that new ideas don’t always develop as planned, so we have a lot of flexibility built in. If one part of the project works well we can build on it; if there are support needs we haven’t anticipated they can be developed. If the model we’ve described doesn’t suit your organisation, please get in touch – we may be able to help anyway.
- We’re a charity working on behalf of other charities and voluntary groups. For some jobseekers there is still a perception that work experience is “working for free” for businesses. This project is a way of getting over those preconceptions, by using volunteering to support good causes and gain valuable experience.

The project is run by Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN), who also run the local Volunteer Centre.

Are you interested, or want to find out more?
To get involved or to find out more contact Bromsgrove and Redditch Network
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Registered charity number 1122980