



Continuing professional development to keep ready for work

If you are currently reassessing your career and want to enhance your employable skills, why not volunteer? Not only could this give you an opportunity to utilise your professional skills in a new environment, but you could also receive free training and develop entirely new skills.

Below are a few places you can search for volunteering opportunities:

Volunteer Centres (VCs) are the local agencies that promote and develop volunteering. You can search for your nearest Volunteer Centre by visiting www.volunteering.org.uk/iwanttovolunteer

Do-it.org features a national database of volunteering opportunities, enabling you to search by location, theme your availability. Visit www.do-it.org.uk to access the database.

Volunteering England's website provides links to a diverse range of not-for-profit organisations that involve volunteers. Visit www.volunteering.org.uk/IWantToVolunteer/Volunteering+in+the+UK

Councils for Voluntary Service often act as a volunteer bureau if there is no local bureau. They are sometimes known by a different name, so look in the telephone book or Yellow Pages under "Council", "Volunteers" or "Voluntary". In rural areas the equivalents are **Rural Community Councils**.

Public libraries sometimes have noticeboards or a file of information on voluntary work. There are several published directories of voluntary work, and most libraries will have at least one of these in the reference or careers section. 'The Voluntary Agencies Directory' is particularly useful if you know exactly what you want to do as it has an index of 'types' of organisation.

The Guardian newspaper features an interesting selection of about 100 volunteering opportunities. These appear most Wednesdays in the jobs section.

Ask **colleagues, neighbours and friends** if they know of any voluntary work you could do.

Examples of skills developed through volunteering

Volunteer activity	Activity description	Skills developed
Charity staff mentoring	Providing advice to charity senior management e.g. developing a business plan; financial management; marketing and communication methods etc.	Coaching and mentoring; planning and organising; customer focus
Charity Trustee	Providing advice on employing staff; designing and monitoring adherence to organisational goals and safeguarding resources	Analysis and problem solving; communications and influence; team working
School Governor	Providing strategic and management advice for schools, such as reviewing financial status/ behavioural policy	Managing business performance; persuasion and negotiation; drive and perseverance

This is merely a snapshot of the type of volunteering roles that exist and the skills associated with them. When approaching a charity about their volunteer roles, be sure to ask them about the skills you can develop through volunteering with them.