

New Leaf Volunteering – Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is volunteering?

A. Volunteering is giving your time freely to help and support society or your community.

Q. What are the benefits of volunteering?

A. There are many benefits to volunteering – for example learn new skills, add to your CV, gain a reference, meet new people, add to your confidence and get into a routine. Many employers look more favourably on people who have spent time volunteering and many of the skills you gain can be transferred to work.

Q. What sort of organisations do you refer volunteers to?

A. We refer volunteers to not for profit organisations, such as charities and community groups.

Q. What can I do?

A. You can get involved with all sorts of things... Retail and customer service, administration, driving, fundraising, buddying, youth work to name just a few.

Think about your action plan and your end goal. What skills you would like to get? Also think about the activities you like doing and whether there is a specific cause or group that you would like to help.

If you would like some ideas - take a look at www.cvsce.org.uk/volunteering/opportunities to see the full range of current opportunities and see which appeal to you most.

Q. How much time do I need to give?

A. Every volunteer role will vary in the time that is required on a weekly basis. Your commitment to volunteering as part of your New Leaf action plan is a total of 20 hours (with a minimum of 2.5 hours per week), however we encourage you to continue to volunteer for as long as possible.

Q. Can I leave if I don't like it?

A. Of course you can. You are not under a contract (like paid staff). However, we would advise you to speak to your mentor and volunteer advisor and we can help you to make changes to the role or find something else.

Q. Do I get paid?

A. No. Volunteering is not about being paid for the task/role that you applied for. However, any expenses incurred whilst you volunteer (e.g. travel, phone calls) should be reimbursed.

Q. Do I need any qualifications?

A. This just depends on the type of volunteering role you are doing. There are lots of roles that don't need qualifications.

Q. Can I get a qualification?

A. This depends on your role as a volunteer. Training may be offered by an organisation if it is relevant to the role.

Q. Will I be interviewed?

A. Most organisations will ask you to go along for an informal chat / interview. This is a great way for you to find out a little more about each other and whether the role is right for you. Your mentor or volunteer advisor can come along with you if you need some support.

Q. Will references be taken up by the organisations I apply to?

A. It depends on the role, but as part of their good practice management, most organisations will require at least two references. To support you through New Leaf we may be able to help provide you with references.

Q. I have a criminal record – can I volunteer?

A. Yes, usually. If you think that your criminal record may prevent you from volunteering please discuss this with your mentor and volunteer advisor as this is not always the case.

Q. Do I have to have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check?

A. It depends on the role, but some groups will carry out a DBS (formerly CRB) check but always with your permission. If this worries you then speak to your mentor or volunteer advisor.

Q. Will my benefits be affected if I volunteer?

A. If you are in receipt of benefits, you should let the Job Centre or Benefits Agency know that you intend to carry out a voluntary role. You can volunteer for as many hours as you want, as long as you still meet the conditions to receive your benefit or tax credit. If not sure look at a copy of the Department for Work and Pensions booklet 'Volunteering While Receiving Benefits' from the Job centre or view online. It is also helpful to keep copies of any expenses claims.

Q. How will I be supported?

A. This depends on how much support you/ your mentor think you need. We will try and match you with an organisation which will provide this support, but your mentor may be willing to come along for the initial meeting or first sessions to help you settle in.

Q. What happens next?

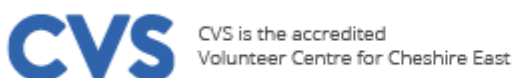
A. If you think volunteering will help you then ask your mentor to refer you to us here at CVS Cheshire East and the volunteer advisor will contact you to arrange an appointment to discuss volunteering and the types of roles available. If you're still not sure and would like more information - ask your mentor to arrange a chat with the volunteer advisor.

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