

Volunteering: A Guide to Eligibility Who is permitted to volunteer?

1. All United Kingdom adult citizens

There are no restrictions on those receiving welfare benefits. However, those receiving Job Seekers Allowance should allow themselves enough time to actively seek paid work as this is a condition of receiving the benefit.

2. United Kingdom citizens under 18 years old.

However, organisations must obtain parental consent in writing before admitting them to a volunteer role. In addition, children under 14 cannot volunteer within school hours and are not allowed to volunteer at profit-making organisations

3. Citizens of the European Union (EU) and European Economic Area (EEA)

The UK is no longer a member of the European Union. But EU nationals can still volunteer in the UK if:

- they have settled or pre-settled status
- they have a visa that allows them to volunteer (See section 6 below)
- they're volunteering with an EU-funded programme like Erasmus + or the European Solidarity Corps.

4. Refugees

People who have official Refugee Status, or have exceptional leave to remain, are allowed to volunteer (this includes their family members, if any).

5. Asylum Seekers

Asylum seekers are allowed to volunteer with registered charities and voluntary organisations (and their fund-raising bodies).

NB. Even if an asylum seeker is at the 'appeal rights exhausted' stage, the UK Border Agency declared (in 2012) that it has no legal power to prevent such person volunteering.

6. Citizens of other countries

a. Someone coming to UK purely to work for a charity on an unpaid basis.

The charity concerned needs to apply to become an official 'sponsor organisation', giving it a licence to issue certificates of sponsorship to its volunteers.

b. If someone is already in this country for some other reason, but also wants to volunteer here.

The person must check their visa or entry clearance conditions to make sure that they are allowed to volunteer here. If that person is in the UK on a **visitor visa** or **student visitor visa/short term study visa** (this visa is for 6 months or 11 months if they are 18 or over and taking an English language course) then he/she is **not allowed** to volunteer.

If that person is in the UK on a **student visa (also called a tier 4 visa)** which is generally the visa they get if they are studying for a full degree or a year of their degree then they **are allowed** to volunteer.

7. 'Voluntary workers'

Most organisations will not normally encounter 'voluntary workers'. In fact, the UK Border Agency does not distinguish between a 'voluntary worker' and a 'volunteer'. However, a voluntary worker is someone who works under contract with no payment. This is a distinct difference to a 'volunteer' (who has no contract).