



Work Experience vs Volunteering. What's the difference?

Work experience is often associated with young people deciding on future career paths. It can also be associated with individuals receiving support around seeking employment or developing work readiness. If you need to develop your skills to prepare you for work, both 'work experience' and 'volunteering' can provide you with the contacts and experience you need. Both can help you assess different areas of work, find out what you like doing and make you more aware of the demands of a particular career.

This information sheet has been informed by discussions with services facilitating work experience in education settings and employment support projects. Although practice will vary slightly across the region, these are some of the practical and legal differences between work experience and volunteering. This information may be useful for young people, parents/carers, education providers and/or participants of employment support projects who are seeking work experience and/or volunteering opportunities.





"I want to work in future as a support worker so am looking for work experience with a charity. I'll contact my local Volunteer Centre."

At the Volunteer Centre, '**volunteering**' and '**work experience**' are two different things.





Here are some key differences...

 Work experience	 Volunteering opportunities that anyone can access
<p>What is Work Experience?</p> <p>According to the National Careers Service, work experience is time spent in a workplace learning about a job role, a company or a career sector.</p> <p>Work experience can be both paid and unpaid.</p> <p>Some work experience may be arranged by education providers and careers services, the Department for work and pensions (DWP) or employment support projects.</p>	<p>What is Volunteering?</p> <p>The Welsh Government Volunteering Policy (2015) defines volunteering as an activity which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is undertaken freely, by choice • is undertaken to be of public/ community benefit • is not undertaken for financial gain. <p>Volunteering can be formal or informal.</p> <p>Those wishing to gain experience of the world of work are more likely to choose a formal volunteering role. The information in this sheet refers to a formal volunteering role.</p>
<p>The host organisation's (where the work experience will take place) public liability insurance could cover work experience, but it depends on the policy – factors that could affect this could be the nature of the duties within the proposed experience and number of staff employed, etc. Costs could incur to increase cover.</p>	<p>Insurance for a volunteer is a cost to the organisation, but is often considerably cheaper (up to 15 times cheaper) than insurance cover for staff. It does not cover all activities that staff insurance covers.</p>
<p>There won't always be a formal signed contract. For young people, paperwork for work experience (including a risk assessment and some details of the proposed experience) could be sent to the school/college by the host organisation.</p>	<p>No formal contract is required for volunteering. A recruitment pathway such as interview, vetting checks and induction training may be followed.</p>





Work experience



Volunteering opportunities that anyone can access

Contracts are more often present when work experiences are paid rather than unpaid. This is true of employment support projects, whereby participants sign a contract with the host organisation.

Some charities may request a volunteer agreement but the relationship between a volunteer and organisation is not contractual.

Best practice in hosting a work experience opportunity states there should be a structured set of identified learning objectives and agreement around how they will be met. This may include practical skills development, training sessions, shadowing and tasks to be carried out.

The volunteer receives training that is specific to carrying out the role. This is usually set out in the role description (e.g. safeguarding, boundaries, confidentiality training, plus project specific elements such as how to complete paperwork).

This can be in the form of a workbook for young people in education.

For employment support projects, this is usually set out by the host organisation.

Formal arrangements for induction, including Health & Safety training, organisational Policies & Procedures, etc. are required for placement paperwork.

Volunteers should be informed about how to keep themselves safe whilst volunteering (e.g. not sharing their personal details with those they support. Volunteer managers should also undertake risk assessments).

The expectations of time and duties are set out by the host organisation and communicated to the education provider. Where the Careers Service is involved, the Business Engagement Advisor agrees this detail when visiting the host organisation.

No formal commitment is required. The organisation usually gives an idea of what they hope a volunteer can offer (e.g. 2-3 hours per week).





Work experience

For employment support projects, expectations are set out by the host organisation possibly with an assigned mentor as a 'sounding board'.

Participants in employment projects usually have help to cover costs of items such as clothing and equipment funded by the project. This is not usually the case in school age work experience.

For employment support projects, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check would be carried out if it is necessary for the role. This is funded by the project.

Best practice for work experience should include formal arrangements for induction, including Health & Safety training, Risk Assessments, organisational Policies & Procedures.

The host organisation will include this as part of the pre-paperwork and discussions with the organisation and the school/education service.

Similarly, employment support projects carry out risk assessments alongside the host organisation. The host organisation has over-arching responsibility for this.



Volunteering opportunities that anyone can access

At this stage, the volunteer may be asked to complete a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, if it is necessary for the role.

Best practice volunteering opportunities will reimburse out of pocket expenses to remove financial barriers around volunteering.

Volunteers may be informed about how to keep themselves safe whilst volunteering e.g. not giving out their personal details to those they support.





Work experience

Best practice work experience opportunities will mean that any additional needs/reasonable adjustments should be identified, agreed and recorded before the commencement of the work experience.

School staff/education services/project participants would discuss any additional needs and processes that would need to be put in place before the commencement of the work experience period. The organisation should be aware of these and agreed to the arrangements (e.g. reasonable adjustments for disabled individuals or those with caring responsibilities).

For paid roles, some individuals may be eligible for the DWP Access to Work scheme for support and/or equipment.

Education providers' best practice usually involves consulting with the host organisation and completing a monitoring form to check how the student is progressing. At the end of work experience there is a section in the work book that the host organisation completes as a review.

Workers as part of employment/support projects carry out monthly monitoring visits to receive feedback. The host organisation would carry out the same supervision as per their employee policies and procedures.



Volunteering opportunities that anyone can access

Best practice volunteer opportunities should initiate discussions around any additional needs/requirements to enable the volunteer to access opportunities in a way that suits them best.

However, potential volunteers can discuss their support needs if it hasn't been brought up.

Regular supervision should be provided. These could be formal or informal, through one-to-one or group sessions.

The organisation can usually provide any of its volunteers with a reference stating the nature of the role undertaken and detailing the number of hours worked, skills demonstrated, etc.





In summary, work experience is outside of the definition of volunteering. Work experience has a set time frame and different legal implications and responsibilities in relation to insurance and can be paid/unpaid.

In relation to best practice for work experience, arrangements are made by education services and employment/support projects. Work experience can be a great way of discovering career pathways, expanding your network and learning new practical skills. The quality of work experiences may vary – our hope is this information sheet may help you to understand what best practice is, and to seek it out!

Volunteering is also a brilliant way of supporting your learning and gaining further experience which will be as useful to you as it is to the organisation. Most organisations that offer quality volunteering opportunities have dedicated volunteer management staff who have developed skills in this area through training and experience.



They will be able to help with your recruitment, induction and support you to enjoy the role and will usually reimburse your out of pocket expenses.

Volunteering can lead to developing amazing experience for your future careers and gaining a reference.

Contact your local CVS, who have volunteer centre teams who can help you further:

Swansea CVS
01792 544000
www.scvs.org.uk

Neath Port Talbot CVS
01639 631246
www.nptcvs.wales



West Glamorgan Volunteering Support is a multi-agency project creating shared resources to develop the knowledge, management and coordination of volunteers and volunteer involving organisations across the Swansea and Neath Port Talbot areas. It has been funded through the Welsh Government Volunteering Recovery Fund.

The project partners are:

Neath Port Talbot Council, Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service, Swansea Bay University Health Board, Swansea Council, Swansea Council for Voluntary Service and West Glamorgan Regional Partnership.

For more information visit:

www.westglamorgan.org.uk/wgvs

