

If you are looking for a job why not consider volunteering while you continue your job search? looking for a job can be overwhelming and it can take time to find the right opportunity that matches your skills and needs.

Volunteering is a great way keep your skills sharp while making a valuable contribution to your community. It can also help you get a job. Volunteering is for everyone. it doesn't matter where you are from or what you do – anyone can volunteer!

Why Volunteer?

Finding a job can be time consuming and in some cases it can take a long time to find something that's right for you. Volunteering is a unique way to focus on something positive but that also allows you the time you need to look for work. You can volunteer while searching for a job and your jobseekers' payment will not be affected, as long as you remain available to take up paid employment. Some good reasons to volunteer:

Keep your skills sharp – it's important to keep using your valuable skills to ensure they're not rusty when you start a new job.

Develop new skills – volunteering allows you to learn new skills or find ones you never knew you had!

Gain valuable experience for your cV – employers view volunteering as valuable experience and it can be a great addition to your cV. Volunteering also shows that you are proactive about your personal development.

Meet new people – being unemployed, particularly for a long period, can mean less opportunities to socialise or be around other people on a daily basis. Volunteering is a great way to meet new people and be part of a team.

Build your networks – volunteering helps you expand your professional networks and contacts, which will be helpful in your job search.

increase your confidence – if you have been looking for a job for a while, you may feel it's affecting your sense of confidence. Volunteering will remind you of the valuable skills you can offer.

Make a positive contribution – one of the toughest parts of being unemployed is the feeling that you have a lot to contribute but you can't. Volunteering allows you to give back and make a difference to others while also making a difference in your own life.

How to Volunteer

There are 2 easy ways to find a volunteering role in Ireland.

Online

visit www.volunteer.ie and you can browse volunteering roles all over the country. You can search by location, what kind of volunteering you want to do or what kind of organisation you want to volunteer with. You can register and apply for volunteer roles online.

Local Volunteer Centre

there are 29 local Volunteer Centres in Ireland.

They are independent charities who match organisations that need help with people who want to volunteer. You can call or drop in and a member of the team will work with you to find a volunteering opportunity that's right for you. a full list of Volunteer centres can be found at www.volunteer.ie

Types of Volunteering

There are so many different ways to volunteer that there is sure to be a role to suit everyone. The possibilities are endless but examples include administration; IT; campaigning; designing; marketing; and more.

If you want to volunteer while searching for a job, there are a few things to consider:

How much time can you give? – volunteering is a great way to improve your chances of finding work but it's important not to let it interfere with your job search. Think about how much time a week you are willing to commit before searching for a volunteering opportunity.

Do you want to improve certain skills or develop new ones? – think about what skills you have and in what kind of role they can be best put to use. It is also a good opportunity to think about what other skills you might like to develop.

Do you want to try a new career? – volunteering is a great way to try something different and see if you like it. You may have worked in retail for a while but would like to try administration or IT.

Are you passionate about a particular cause? – aside from the benefits it can have for the individual, volunteering is a great way to give something back. If you're passionate about a particular cause, consider volunteering in that area.

Case Study: Barry

Having spent his working life in the hospitality industry, Barry found himself unemployed for a long time following the downturn in the economy. He registered with his local Volunteer Centre and began to volunteer with Care and Repair, a voluntary service that helps elderly people maintain their independence. Through Barry's experience with Care and Repair, he realised what it was he wanted to do and applied to do a course in care skills. Thanks to this, and his commitment to and track record in the voluntary sector, Barry is now in full time employment as a Carer.

Case Study: Deirdre

Deirdre took voluntary redundancy from her job to stay at home and look after her children. After a few years, she then decided to venture out and look for work. She wanted to get into an admin/ accounts type role. After a number of years away from the workforce, she found herself lacking in confidence and decided to volunteer first. She visited her local Volunteer Centre who had a suitable role within the centre itself. Having volunteered for 8 months, she found a part time job as an accounts assistant. She attributed her success to the fact that she had built up confidence in her ability through volunteering and had refreshed her skills.

Volunteering and Your Jobseeker's Allowance

Your jobseeker's allowance will not be affected if you volunteer, as long as you remain available to take up paid employment. Once you have found a suitable volunteering role, you need to fill out a VW1 form in order to retain your jobseeker's allowance. The organisation you want to volunteer with will have to fill out part of the form also. It can be downloaded from www.welfare.ie or found in your local Intreo or Social Welfare office. This is a simple form requiring a few details about the volunteering role. Your Deciding Officer will then review the form and confirm that it is an acceptable voluntary role. This is an important step. Your Deciding Officer must confirm that it is ok for you to take up the voluntary role so that your jobseeker's payment will not be affected.