



Medway Volunteer Network's Volunteering With A Criminal Record



A
New
Path



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Volunteering With A Criminal Record

The Benefits Of Volunteering

Many people of all ages and circumstances find great satisfaction in doing voluntary work. For people with convictions, undertaking voluntary work can have particular benefits. Volunteering can:

- Bring you into contact with new people and potentially new friends, at a time when perhaps past social contacts have been disrupted.
- Boost self-confidence and self-esteem, when perhaps these have taken a knock.
- Help provide a stable pattern and routine in life.
- Help develop new skills, knowledge and experience – both social and practical.
- Provide the satisfaction of working as part of a team to make a difference to the lives of others or to the environment.
- Be useful experience to include in a CV that might be attractive to a potential employer.
- Provide a source for a reference that could be invaluable when looking for paid employment.
- Provide an opportunity, with some voluntary organisations, of getting a qualification e.g. an NVQ.
- In some circumstances directly open up paid employment possibilities. If the organisation you are volunteering with also employs paid staff in similar work, a volunteer may make a good applicant for a paid post.





Where To Find Volunteering Opportunities

Opportunities for voluntary work, particularly where the work is of a one off 'work party' nature (for example, a weekend project to renovate a community garden), are often advertised locally e.g. on local council, libraries, social media groups or supermarket notice boards to name but a few.

Medway Volunteer Network has a live volunteer opportunities page where you will find a wide range of volunteer roles available now, by clicking [here](#). You can also sign up for the monthly volunteer bulletin to have opportunities sent to you by clicking [here](#).

You will also find volunteer opportunities at www.do-it.org.uk and www.charityjob.co.uk/volunteer-jobs.

If you are interested in longer term voluntary work, or would like to talk with someone who could advise you about the kind of volunteering work that is available locally, you can get in touch with a member of our Volunteering Team at Medway Voluntary Action either by emailing on volunteering@mva.org.uk or giving us a call **01634 821 850**.

You may want to consider whether or not to disclose your convictions at this point – these considerations are similar to those that apply if you are looking for paid employment – check out Unlock.org's [guide on 'To disclose or not to disclose'](#).

You may find it encouraging that the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) – an umbrella body for volunteer centres – gives very positive guidance on the use of people with criminal records as volunteers:

“There are several reasons for recruiting people with criminal records as volunteers. Firstly, it enables you to recruit from a wider pool of potential volunteers, which should help increase your volunteer base. If organisations exclude people with criminal records they automatically lose access to a significant proportion of potential volunteers. More importantly, by proactively targeting offenders and ex-offenders as part of your recruitment campaign you are demonstrating your organisation's commitment to equal opportunities and diversity. Each individual should be looked at on their own merit.”





Applying For Voluntary Work & The Rehabilitation Of Offenders Act

The [Rehabilitation of Offenders Act](#) (ROA) generally applies in the same way to voluntary work as it does to paid employment. Organisations may only ask about spent convictions or request Standard or Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks if the voluntary work is of a nature that is exempt from the ROA.

If you are on a [barred list](#) you would be committing a criminal offence if you applied for voluntary work involving the relevant [regulated activity](#) with children or vulnerable adults.

If you are on licence or supervision:

It is part of the [standard licence conditions](#) that you “Undertake only such work (including voluntary work) approved by your supervising officer and notify him or her in advance of any proposed change.”

This means that, if you have this as a condition, you will need to keep them up to date of what voluntary work you’re doing. In some situations, they may tell you to disclose your convictions, even if the organisation hasn’t asked. This might influence whether you [choose to disclose or not](#).

Additional Information Links

Prisoners Advice Service: <http://www.prisonersadvice.org.uk>
<https://hacro.org.uk/getting-ex-offenders-into-work>

HACRO Advice For Offenders: <https://hacro.org.uk/advice-for-offenders/>

