

## Volunteering and Time Banking



An individual donates their time and skills to an organisation or, in the case of time banks, to their local community. Opportunities are widely available in the public, private and third sectors. Jobcentre Plus will be working with local employers to agree a range of volunteering options and internships as part of back-to-work activities for the unemployed.



For individuals, volunteering can be a much-valued and rewarding end in itself, or it can help them to develop or brush up their employability skills, offer a chance to gain a reference and provide a supportive, flexible and personalised route to open employment. Some volunteer placements offer training, travel and/or other expenses. Time banking involves people trading time in their local community, giving and getting support, and recreating the networks once provided by extended families and neighbours. Time bank members are rewarded with time credits: one credit for an hour of help can 'buy' an hour of another member's time.



Volunteering: <http://www.do-it.org.uk> to search and apply for vacancies online and find local volunteer centre contact details. Time Banking information can be accessed from: <http://www.timebanking.org.uk>.



- Applying to be a volunteer to some organisations has become very competitive. An application, interview and selection process is now common, as are ongoing support and training opportunities. Whilst this might be 'good practice' for future open employment there is a danger that it can recreate some of the barriers that have led to people with mental health problems being excluded from employment, excluding them from volunteering too.
- Permitted work rules apply for people in receipt of Incapacity Benefit or Employment and Support Allowance.
- Volunteering is a culturally constructed concept and is not necessarily always valued in the same way by different social groups.

