

Starting Points: Volunteering

Why volunteer?

'A graduate needs more than just academic achievements to stand-out from the crowd. Student volunteering can have a positive impact upon an individual's employability. It can provide access to a network of people and challenging opportunities; aids personal development; enhances academic learning - most of all it fosters a proactive attitude,' Group Graduate Programme Manager, The Co-operative Group

Volunteering is a way to gain experience, skills and contacts whilst contributing to your local community. In many career areas, volunteering is essential for entry into the field. Recommended and credible sources of voluntary opportunities are listed below, along with advice on making the most of opportunities.

Volunteering with Sheffield Hallam Students' Union

hallamstudentsunion.org/volunteering

- Hallam Union offers a huge range of volunteering opportunities in wide-ranging organisations. You can volunteer in an area linked to your studies or try something completely new.
- Whatever time you have available, there will be something for you. You can get involved in one-off projects for a couple of hours each semester, volunteer weekly or take on responsibility for leading a project.
- They have a range of Arts & Culture opportunities, from organising exhibitions to delivering community arts projects. You can also take part in the Hallam Award, focusing on your career development and leadership skills.

For more information, visit the HUBS or Students' Union Office, Heart of the Campus, Collegiate or email volunteering@shu.ac.uk /phone 0114 225 5005

Sheffield Volunteer Centre

sheffieldvolunteercentre.org.uk

The Circle, Rockingham Lane (off Division Street), Sheffield, S1 4FW,
0114 2536649 / vc@vas.org.uk

Advertises vacancies on behalf of local charities, which are all checked to ensure they offer expenses and appropriate training for volunteers. You can visit their drop-in to find out more about the opportunities available, Monday to Wednesday, 10am-4pm. See bulletin for latest vacancies - sheffieldvolunteercentre.org.uk/Bulletin

Volunteering outside of Sheffield

do-it.org.uk - search and apply online for a wide range of vacancies nationally. Find and visit your local Volunteer Centre, by searching on the following link - ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/find-a-volunteer-centre

Approaching organisations speculatively

- Use a local directory, such as sheffielddirectory.org.uk to identify organisations, related to your areas of interest, which you could approach to find out about opportunities.
- Begin by looking on the organisation's website; check to see if volunteering is mentioned and if there is a specific application process. If not, contact the organisation and ask.
- If no opportunities are available at present, there can still be benefits to the conversation. Ask if you can be added to a mailing list, visit the centre to find out more or arrange work shadowing.

Making the most of volunteering

What experience is required for the career you are interested in? Look at person specifications for graduate roles and seek volunteering to help you fulfil these requirements.

- Apply well in advance of when you would like to start volunteering, as some organisations will only recruit at certain times of the year.
- The organisation will usually provide travel costs and a lunch allowance if volunteering for a full day. Opportunities through Hallam Union and Sheffield Volunteer Centre are checked to ensure this is the case.
- It is the organisation's responsibility to provide training and support to volunteers and this can include accredited training. Check what is provided when you apply and take up any training you are offered.
- Some organisations will ask for a minimum time commitment. This is most commonly found in organisations offering a substantial training programme. If you are unable to commit to this period ask about one-off events or short term opportunities instead.
- Make the most of your volunteering when you do start; show enthusiasm and willingness to learn. Keep a diary so that you can reflect upon the skills and experience you have developed.

Additional useful resources

- vinspired.com Volunteering opportunities aimed at young people.
- volunteerics.org/what-ics International opportunities for young people.

Want to talk it through?

Contact Careers and Employability for further advice and support via the below contact details. This information is available in alternative formats on request.