

Visas and volunteering

This information sheet contains detailed information on how the visa someone has affects their ability to volunteer. It therefore covers who can and can't volunteer or undertake voluntary work in the UK.

For more general information on volunteering in the UK, and advice on the different types of visas and managing volunteers from overseas, please see our complementary Information Sheet [Accepting volunteers from outside the UK](#)¹.

This document has been checked with the UK Border Agency (UKBA) and is factually correct as at 26 January 2011. For further information, or specific advice on individual situations please [contact UKBA directly](#)².

Please note that the UKBA makes no distinction between 'volunteering' and 'voluntary work'. A 'voluntary worker' is defined in the 1998 National Minimum Wage Act as a type of unpaid full time worker employed by charities, voluntary organisations, associated fund-raising bodies and statutory bodies.

¹ http://www.volunteering.org.uk/NR/exeres/:81/NR/ronlyres/2B85E15B-82CA-4EFA-B68C-3ECD8CD5FBEC/0/information_sheet_accepting_volunteers_from_outside_the_uk_2011.pdf

² <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/contact/contactspage/contactcentres>

European nationals

Country	Can I volunteer?	Notes
<p>People from European Union member countries (pre-2005)</p> <p>Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.</p>	Yes	
<p>People from the European Economic Area (EEA)</p> <p>Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland.</p>	Yes	
<p>People from recent European Union accession countries (post- 2005)</p> <p>Romania and Bulgaria</p>	In some circumstances	<p>Free movement has not been extended to people from Romania and Bulgaria. People from these countries are likely to need a Registration Certificate to volunteer in the UK. There are several conditions upon this including the type of organisation someone can volunteer with.</p> <p>For further information see pages 27 and 113 in Chapter 7, Accession State Nationals of the European Casework Instructions.</p>

Asylum seekers and refugees

Status	Can I volunteer?	Notes
Asylum seeker (person in the process of applying for refugee status)	With some types of organisation	<p>Asylum seekers are only allowed to volunteer with:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. registered charity; 2. voluntary organisation; or 3. body that raises funds for either. <p>Any voluntary activity undertaken should not amount to employment.</p> <p>For more information see page 66 of the Comprehensive Guidance for Employers on Preventing Illegal Working</p>
Refugee	Yes	

Non- European nationals

Guidance from UK Border Agency online here:

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/policyandlaw/immigrationlaw/immigrationrules/>

Type of visa	Can I volunteer?	Notes
Tier 1: Highly skilled workers, investors, entrepreneurs or post-study workers	Yes, unless classified as 'entrepreneur'	<p>Entrepreneurs are only allowed to volunteer/do voluntary work for the business they have established, joined or taken over. Other Tier 1 migrants are free to volunteer/do any voluntary work they want (other than some restrictions on doctors/dentists in training and sportspeople).</p> <p>For more information see Section 1 Points-based system Tier 1 settlement guidance (5.2, iii) in Chapter 6A of the Immigration Rules</p>
Tier 2: sponsored skilled workers with a job offer	Yes	For more information see Tier 2 guidance .
Tier 4: student	Yes	<p>Students following a course of degree level study or a foundation degree course can do no more than a total 20 hours per week of paid or unpaid work in term time.</p> <p>Students following a course of study below degree level study (excluding a foundation degree course) can do no more than a total 10 hours per week of paid or unpaid work in term time.</p> <p>For more information see page 1 of Tier 4 Migrant Guidance Questions and Answers.</p>
Tier 5 (Temporary worker): Sponsored temporary worker	In some circumstances	<p>Volunteering/voluntary work is permitted if it meets the definition of 'supplementary employment'. It must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be in the same sector; • be at the same level as the work for which the certificate of sponsorship was issued; • be no more than 20 hours per week; and • takes place outside of the applicant's normal working hours for which his/her certificate of sponsorship was issued. <p>The migrant must remain working for the sponsor in the employment for which the Certificate of Sponsorship.</p> <p>For more information see Immigration Rules Part 6A.</p>
Tier 5 (Temporary worker): Unpaid charity worker	Yes	The individual must be sponsored by an A or B-rated licensed charity with whom they will be volunteering.

		They are allowed to do up to a total of 20 hours supplementary work, paid or unpaid, but it must be in the same profession and field.
Tier 5 (Youth Mobility Scheme)	Yes	For more information see the UK Border Agency website .
Dependant of a Tier 1, 2 or 5 migrant	Yes	For more information see PBE dependants policy guidance .
Dependant of a Tier 4 migrant	In some circumstances	<p>If a Tier 4 dependant is not permitted to work they are not permitted to volunteer either.</p> <p>If they are subject to minimal restrictions on employment they can volunteer.</p> <p>For more information see paragraphs 319D and 319i of Immigration Rules, set out in PBE dependants policy guidance.</p>
Student Visitor	No	For more information see rule 56K in http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/policyandlaw/immigrationrules/part2/
General Visitor	No	For more information see rules 40 and 41 in http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/policyandlaw/immigrationrules/part2/
Sports Visitor	No	For more information see rule 46M in http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/policyandlaw/immigrationrules/part2/
Entertainer Visitor	No	For more information see rule 46S in http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/policyandlaw/immigrationrules/part2/
Spouse	Yes, other than fiancé(e)s and proposed civil partners	<p>Migrants in the UK as the spouse or civil partner of a British citizen or a person settled here are permitted to work and therefore volunteer.</p> <p>Fiancé(e)s and proposed civil partners are not permitted to work or therefore volunteer.</p> <p>For more information see http://www.ukvisas.gov.uk/en/howtoapply/infos/settlementguide#22393572.</p>