

Vale Centre for Voluntary Services (VCVS)

Your local county voluntary council



6. Employing and managing people

6.1 Working in the voluntary sector

The voluntary sector in the UK is complex and dynamic, ever changing to meet the needs of society and growing at a significant rate as an employer and provider of services.

It's an exciting and demanding environment and the individuals who work within it, whether paid and unpaid, know that they can have a real impact on the world and the lives of the people their organisations exist to help.

There are approximately 30,000 voluntary and community organisations in Wales. The voluntary sector in Wales employs at least 30,000 people which represents 2.4% of the number of people employed in Wales. It is estimated that 944,000 adults volunteer in an organisation, where they contribute an average of 2 hours per week. This is equivalent to 99 million hours per year or 54,600 full time workers. Together, these figures indicate that 188 million hours of voluntary effort is given in a year, which is worth £2.0 billion.

The scope is therefore enormous and the sector is a significant employer within the Welsh economy. With new organisations and initiatives a constant feature of the sector, the need for new people, talent and skills is set to continue.

Jobs in the voluntary sector - which ones are right for you?

Once you begin to explore the world of charities and to look out for the type of job that will suit you, you will be encouraged and perhaps a little overwhelmed by the range of job descriptions and job titles which are out there.

The voluntary sector has developed its own jargon and ways of working and it is useful to think about how your skills might match a charity's needs.

The sector has much to gain from individuals transferring their skills and experience from other backgrounds and charities will always be keen to recruit people who **can communicate well, learn quickly, and manage effectively** on limited resources. Many small charities have no paid staff and all the work is undertaken on a voluntary basis by the trustees. Those small organisations which can afford to pay need someone, often part time, who can turn their hand to anything and have both the flexibility and confidence to be spokesperson and decision maker as well organise the admin systems.

As organisations grow so do the jobs, and because of the unique nature of each charity the parts of the organisation which grow first will depend on where the organisational priorities lie.

Broadly speaking the first key jobs to be added may be a fundraiser, a project manager, a finance/admin worker and an information / PR post.

The largest charities have highly complex structures with very specific and specialist job functions comparable with those found in the commercial and public sectors.

What skills do you need to work in the sector?

Competition will be fierce for jobs in the better known charities and for those paying reasonable salaries, so be prepared to make a good case for why you are the right candidate. When considering whether you have the right mix of skills for a particular job it would be useful to have identified which skills you have already and whether you can learn the others with reasonable speed. The types of skills each job requires should be summarised in the advertisement and spelled out in detail in the person specification which accompanies the application form and job description. When completing your application ensure that you demonstrate, by giving examples, that you have the skills and attributes listed as essential in the person specification. To help you prepare, try this five step exercise:

Choose 5 skills that you have (and that you value).

Think of specific examples of situations where you have used each of these skills (these may be work or home related).

Think about the skills you might need to do a particular job or type of work. Have you got them? If not, how are you going to develop them?

Once you have identified your transferable skills make sure your CV is geared to the voluntary sector and include any experience of the sector which you may have. Remember it doesn't have to be paid experience.

Practical tips to finding the right job

Get involved in voluntary work and become a member of a charity you are particularly interested in. Volunteering can provide you with new skills and a better understanding of the ways in which the charity operates. Think very carefully about the type of organisation you will be joining and whether you are temperamentally suited to it. Make sure you are wholly in sympathy with the aims and objectives of the charity you plan to work for. Meet as many people as you can who work in the voluntary sector and ask their advice.

Where to look

1. Job advertisements

Network Jobs – Weekly
(available by registering at networkjobs@wcva.org.uk)

Western Mail - Thursdays

Daily Post - Thursdays

South Wales Echo – Wednesdays

Also, check your local weekly newspaper.

2. Charity recruitment agencies

You may want to call them first to check which particular areas or levels of experience they require - and whether your skills mix is of interest to avoid wasting CVs and postage. Often they recruit for a charity by placing an advertisement as well as trawling their own database. In addition to those listed below some individual consultants offer recruitment advice to their clients and some of the major recruitment consultancies operating in the commercial sector will also occasionally have briefs from charities - usually the big ones.

Action Planning
Tel: 020 8642 4122
www.actionplanning.co.uk

Adept Recruitment
Tel: 020 72402390
www.adept-recruitment.co.uk

Aquilas
Tel: 01727 375 361
www.aquilas.co.uk

CF Appointments
Tel: 020 79531190
www.cfappointments.com

Charity Action Recruitment
Tel: 020 7378 5441
www.c-a-r.org.uk

Charity Connections
Tel: 020 7202 9000
www.charityconnections.com

Charity futures
Tel: 02920 706999
enquiries@charityfutures.com

Charity People
Tel: 020 7299 8700
www.charitypeople.co.uk

3. Websites

Recruit3
www.recruit3.org.uk

Charity Job
www.charityjob.co.uk

One Job
www.1job.co.uk

ic Wales
www.icwales.co.uk

Jobs Wales
www.jobswales.co.uk

Charity Sector Jobs.
www.charitysectorjobs.com

Guardian Jobs
www.jobs.guardian.co.uk

Jobsgopublic
www.jobsgopublic.com

Jobs in Charities
www.jobsincharities.co.uk

Voluntary Sector Jobs
www.voluntarysectorjobs.co.uk

4. Direct approach

You can also select a few of your favourite charities and write to them or email them directly. Always send a covering letter with your CV in which you outline clearly what your skills are (don't forget to include word processing and any other IT skills) and the type of work you feel you can do for them.

Find out the name of the person to write to rather than use Dear Sir /Madam and do enclose a stamped address envelope as it tends to ensure a speedier reply and shows you are sensitive to the limited resources of your chosen charity.

5. Publications

Working for a better world

An informative guide to paid careers in the charity sector. The guide outlines what the charity sector is, what roles there are available, what the jobs are like and, most importantly, how to get involved.

www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

Disclaimer

The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.

For further information contact

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