

## FAQs

### **Am I allowed to volunteer if I'm claiming state benefits?**

The short answer is yes. People are allowed to volunteer while claiming state benefits, including means-tested benefits such as Job Seekers' Allowance, Incapacity Benefit and Income Support. But, there are some guidelines and rules which claimants should be aware of. Please follow this link for more [information](#) from Volunteering England, the national volunteering development agency for England.

### **Can I apply if I have a criminal conviction?**

Yes, absolutely. We encourage you to declare all convictions that you have and we may ask you to talk about them at interview (depending on the nature of the conviction). In most cases it will not effect your application.

### **When is my voluntary placement likely to start?**

This depends on what sort of voluntary work you'd like to do and what time of year you apply. For adults it typically takes at least 6 weeks (and sometimes a lot more) as we have to check references, hold interviews, and sometimes apply for CRB checks. There are a limited number of placements each term so there are sometimes waiting lists in place.

**Adult placements** and **long term work experience** for Livestock and Stables start in September, January and April. Placements in the garden, café, office and maintenance have no fixed start dates, so it just depends if they need volunteers at the time you apply.

**Junior placements** for Livestock start in January, April, July and October. Placements for Stables start when there is the demand for new volunteers.

**Short term work experience** starts at the beginning of every week during term time.

### **I am an adult; can I help out at weekends?**

As an adult you can volunteer in the café and also for one-off projects, but there is no regular volunteering for adults in Livestock, Stables, Maintenance or Garden at weekends. This is because under 18s get priority at weekends and also because some departments do not operate at weekends.

### **Will my application be weaker if I have a disability/learning difficulty/mental health problem?**

Absolutely not. A lot of our volunteers have a disability of some kind and we definitely don't see this as a bad thing! The only way that your application might be effected is that we might suggest an area of the farm to volunteer where you might get more appropriate support.

### **I don't have any suitable people to provide references; can I still apply?**

Please ring the Volunteer Coordinator on 020 8545 2171 to discuss before submitting your application. We will do everything we can to help you with your application.