

once you're on it, it's compulsory to stay on it and do the things you're asked to do.

Other places you can go for advice and support include drug and alcohol treatment providers – many will run an education, training or employment (ETE) project or will be able to refer you to a local service – some local authorities also offer employment support.

### Six steps you can take now

- If you're in treatment, discuss your options with your treatment provider. They can help you weigh up whether it's the right time to consider employment, and help you consider the best way ahead.
- The National Careers Service has advice and information about careers, training and education, including face to face advice and information about funding: <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/Pages/Home.aspx>
- Think about adult education or training as a step towards employment. Putting effort into training and education now can broaden your future career options.
- Jobcentre Plus and your local Volunteer

Centre can advise you about ways to proceed and might be able to offer training or volunteering opportunities. You can often volunteer whilst on benefits, but you should always talk to your JCP adviser to make sure you stay within the JSA, Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit rules.

- If you're interested in volunteering rather than paid work, many places have a volunteer centre – you can find the nearest one to you at Volunteering England's website: <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/where-do-i-start>
- If you start work on a low wage, you might still be entitled to Housing Benefit, Tax Credits or Universal Credit. Speak to a welfare benefits adviser who will be able to provide reliable information.
- Have realistic expectations. Particularly right now, most people have to apply for a lot of vacancies before they find paid employment. This can be disheartening, but remember – most people go through this. Practice can make perfect, so practice applications and mock interviews can help you to perform when you really need to.

*This leaflet has been developed in consultation with drug and alcohol service users.*

### Contact information

<b>Address</b>	DrugScope/LDAN Asra House, 1 Long Lane, London SE1 4PG
<b>Phone</b>	020 7234 9730
<b>Fax</b>	020 7234 9773
<b>Email</b>	<a href="mailto:info@drugscope.org.uk">info@drugscope.org.uk</a>
<b>Web</b>	<a href="http://www.drugscope.org.uk">www.drugscope.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.ldan.org.uk">www.ldan.org.uk</a>

LDAN is not able to provide individual advice and support to service users on employment issues. We suggest you begin by talking to a key worker or someone else who you are working closely with in your local drug or alcohol service

The London Drug and Alcohol Network (LDAN) is a London-wide membership network representing providers of drug and alcohol service in London. The network was merged into DrugScope in 2009, combining expertise and resources while retaining LDAN's distinct identity and position in London.

The LDAN 'Pathways to Employment' project is funded and supported by Trust for London. Trust for London is the largest independent charitable foundation funding work which tackles poverty and inequality in the capital.

**DrugScope charity no: 255030. DrugScope is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England no: 926 236.**

Images (C) John Birdsall/Photofusion and iStockPhoto.



# GETTING INTO EMPLOYMENT

## Information for service users



Getting into volunteering, employment or involved in other kinds of structured activity can have a lot of positives. Importantly, for people looking to achieve recovery from substance dependency, at a suitable stage in their journey, it is known to be one of the key steps on the way. Initially that may mean doing some training, work experience or volunteering - although you may want to move directly into full-time paid work if you can.

Volunteering and employment not only act to protect against lapsing or relapsing, they can also be a clear and visible commitment, a way to show yourself and others that you are determined to address your substance dependency. Most people also find work satisfying - you can learn new skills and discover new talents, which can make you feel like you are growing and developing as a person. This can really improve your self-esteem. You may get involved in supporting other people who have substance misuse histories or other problems in their lives, where personal experience can be a real asset – although, equally, you may want to take another route.

Having a voluntary or paid job can also give you the confidence to change the way you interact with other people, so you might be able to have better relationships with your family and friends. The friends you can make at work may also help you to feel more a part of your community, and to broaden your social horizons - it can be helpful to have a set of relationships that are not from a background of drug or alcohol use or dependency.

‘I don’t want to live on benefits, I want to be able to pay my rent. I want to be able to do this and go to work and earn my own money. It’s time I put back into society.’

Service User

‘Getting a job is good for your mental health. Just getting out there, doing something. Whether it’s a paid job or a voluntary job, it doesn’t matter, because you’re out there doing something. You’re not bored, sat at home, like you used to be with your drug use. So it’s healthy to get a job.’

Service Provider

However whilst volunteering or paid employment can be good for your health and wellbeing, there may be times in your life when it’s better to focus on other things, like ensuring you’re getting the most out of treatment or dealing with health problems.

### What kinds of employment are there?

As well as the traditional type of job, there are other options that can provide some flexibility, or can be useful steps on the path to full time, paid employment.

Volunteering can offer a routine and allow you to fill your time in a productive way, and help you to build up your confidence and feel more positively about yourself. Your energy, skills and experiences benefit other people in the community too of course. Volunteering is a widely recognised stepping stone towards employment, and it can also play an important role in preventing lapse or relapse back to substance dependency. It can be a good way of easing back into the routine of employment in a more supportive and less demanding

environment than the paid workplace. There are opportunities to volunteer in a wide range of different areas of interest and locations, and you can often choose the times of volunteering to fit around the rest of your lifestyle.

Apprenticeships are paid jobs that include training, aimed at people starting out in a new field. These can be in many different areas, from agriculture and construction to business and retail. Competition for apprenticeships can be strong, however and you may need to brush up on key skills before applying.

Internships or work experience can also ease the path into paid work, and whilst they are often unpaid, they can sometimes lead to paid work after the internship or work experience has been completed. Your treatment provider or Jobcentre Plus may be able to assist you to find work experience.

One of the advantages of all these forms of unpaid employment is that you get the opportunity to prove to an employer that you are committed to working, and that you can be reliable and dependable. They also help to

build your CV and can be a source of positive employer references that will help to widen your opportunities.

‘From what I hear, a lot of people in recovery get voluntary work first and, there’s a natural progression into work from there, so the Jobcentre’s not even involved. It seems more like a gateway thing that they do through voluntary work.’

Service User

‘Voluntary work has been another way we move people towards the jobs market. Developing those skills, building their confidence and enabling them to do references and building a reputation for themselves.’

Treatment Provider

### What do you have to offer an employer?

If you have been through a difficult time but made a decision to change your life, this shows a level of commitment and determination that many other people may not have: employers often say that people with a history of drug or alcohol dependency make motivated and loyal employees

- they can be more productive, miss fewer days of work, and get on with colleagues just as well as anybody else.

Everybody is an individual, with different skills, experiences and characteristics, and anybody can have problems in their past. The right employer will be able to recognise your potential; your past history will only be one out of many aspects they consider.

### Who can I go to for advice?

If you are currently unemployed and looking for work, you will probably already be going to Jobcentre Plus. They can help you to look for and apply for jobs or work experience, and can offer support to build up your CV and practice for interviews.

Jobcentre Plus can also refer you to the Work Programme or Work Choice. If you are claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), you may well be given a mandatory referral to the Work Programme after 3 or 12 months in any case, but if your adviser knows and understands your circumstances, you might be able to volunteer early. Remember though, even if you volunteer for the Work Programme,