

We, the undersigned, will not be involved with the Government's Help to Work scheme, including the Community Work Placements programme and its roll out in the Merseyside Region.



The Government has introduced the Help to Work Scheme, which includes the Community Work Placements scheme, as one of three strands, as an organisation we are **unable to support. These are the reasons why.**

The Community Work Placement Programme requires Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) Claimants to be mandated to work for 30 hours a week in a role that will “benefit the community” for a minimum of five months alongside provider-led supported job search. In return for this, they will continue to receive JSA.

Some of the claimants have transferred on to JSA from other benefits and have complex and multiple needs. If they refuse, they run the risk of their JSA being sanctioned, which could be triggered by the host voluntary organisation as part of the placement terms and conditions.

G4s have been appointed as the Prime Contractor to deliver this programme in our region. It is unclear whether there are placements support costs to the host agency or to ensure a participant is provided with suitable and relevant training, development or travel within the placement setting.

The Community Work Placement Programme assumes that voluntary sector organisations welcome this initiative, when there has been no effective dialogue with sector leaders, at the front end, in its design, delivery or proposed implementation.

There is no recognition of the time and resources that voluntary sector groups will need to support claimants (some of whom will be the hardest to help) to fulfil the placement requirements, when the sector itself is pushed to capacity in supporting local people and the wider community.

The Community Work Placements Programme is also wrongly associated with volunteering, which, by its very nature is ‘voluntary’, not forced or mandated. We have joined with other voluntary organisations’ in signing a national campaign entitled Keep Volunteering Voluntary <http://www.kvv.org.uk>

As organisations, we see The Community Work Placements Programme as devaluing or displacing existing and future jobs. We believe this programme does not sit with our organisations’ objectives or our values in working with people with respect and integrity.

Partners and those within the sector may disagree with this stance and we respect your choice whether to engage with this programme or not. However after considerable thought, we are joining in coalition with many other national and local voluntary sector organisations and partners who are unable to do so and we will not be making or accepting referrals or promoting this programme to others.

We will instead seek to advocate and work locally with our partners to create sustainable alternatives to this programme and encourage the Government and all parties to develop a realistic and long term strategy to alleviate worklessness.



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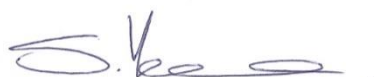
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