



Could you run a Work Club?

jobcentreplus

Department for
Work and Pensions

Contents

Could you run a Work Club?	2
How do I set up a Work Club?	
1. Finding a venue	3
2. Getting started	3
3. Preparing a programme of activity	4
4. Getting help from other organisations and volunteers	6
5. Preparing a local marketing plan	7
6. Sourcing members through other networks	7
7. Sustaining the Work Club	7
Where to get more help	8

Could you run a Work Club?

If you are committed to supporting your community and feel that you could play a role in helping local people who are out of work, the answer could be ‘yes’.

If you think you or your organisation have the relevant skills and experience to help people back into work then you could set up a Work Club. Perhaps you have experienced unemployment yourself and recently returned to the local labour market or maybe your organisation has experience of supporting people who have?

Whatever you feel you might be able to contribute, getting involved in a local Work Club offers the perfect opportunity to share your experience and support your community. Pooling local knowledge and resources is a great way to help people into work.

What is a Work Club?

Work Clubs can come in all shapes and sizes, but they essentially provide unemployed people with a place to meet, exchange skills, share experiences, find opportunities, make contacts and get support to help them in their return to work. No two Work Clubs will be the same as they should reflect the needs of the members and their community.

Why should I set one up?

You would be helping local people find work and could have a really positive impact on their lives and others by helping your local community to become more prosperous. By giving up as little as a couple of hours a week you could help people work towards financial independence by building their confidence and increasing their chances of getting a job.

How do I set up a Work Club?

Work Clubs should address the needs of unemployed people in the community. These needs will vary from one area to another. Combining existing expertise within a community could help identify local needs and lead to the development of a successful Work Club.

Working in partnership with other local groups and organisations could lead to the development of an innovative model for a local Work Club that is able to have a positive impact in the community.

What do I need to do?

This document provides some basic advice on some of the steps you might take to establish an effective local Work Club. Working with other groups and organisations in the community you will be able to determine much of the detail to ensure that the Work Club addresses the needs of local people.

Remember these are only suggestions about how a Work Club might be run.

1 Finding a venue

A venue that's free of charge would be ideal. It should be somewhere that doesn't have too many distractions, such as a public building like a library, community centre or place of worship. Anywhere with a reasonable sized room/area could be suitable.

You might also ask the local council or a local employer to offer the use of a room on their premises to host your meetings. You should stress that Work Clubs are not for profit and aim to provide additional support for local jobseekers, helping them to find work. You might also like to do some research on local employers to identify if any have Corporate Social Responsibility policies or play an active

role in supporting the community already. Supporting a local Work Club might well fit with this type of policy and these employers are likely to be the most receptive to approaches for support.

You might want to consider if you will need any IT equipment when sourcing a venue.

2 Getting started

- At the start regular meetings will be important to members and leaders and will help to build rapport and team working. Once the Work Club is established the group could meet less often and make use of email or telephone to keep in touch
- You might even explore the possibility of setting up an online forum for your Work Club in order to stay in touch.

Co-ordination of the group might involve arranging meetings, promoting the Work Club and keeping things moving. One person in the group could be the co-ordinator or the role could be shared or rotated. For example, a local employer might run a meeting of the Work Club on their premises and would take the lead that particular week.

How do I set up a Work Club?

3 Preparing a programme of activity

Each Work Club will operate in a distinct way according to the needs of the community it supports. Working with local partners and participants will enable you to capitalise on local knowledge and resources when developing a Work Club that meets the needs of the members and the local labour market.

These are just a few ideas on how you might want to run Work Club session but remember it is the needs of the participants and the local community that should drive how they are run.

- The club should meet to enable members to share each other's job-hunting and career experiences, and to encourage each other in their job search. Meetings could be structured as follows:

Beginning: members spend a few minutes sharing the results and achievements of the previous week's job hunting.

Middle: members ask for support from each other in specific areas, which could result in a themed session (e.g. interview skills, CV writing, dress for success, etc.).

End: members each set a goal to be achieved by the next meeting (e.g. add ten contacts to their network list, rewrite CV, do two mock interviews, research three new potential employers).

This is just one example of a possible meeting structure. Individual Work Clubs will develop their own structures that may change over time to reflect the needs of the participants and the wider community.

There are a wide range of events and activities that you may wish to incorporate into your Work Club. Here a number of ideas that you might want to consider:

■ Jobs Fair

Aim: This is a good way to drive local awareness of the Work Club, bring together all of those involved in supporting the Work Club and attract a good number of participants. A range of local organisations including Jobcentre Plus, Further Education establishments, voluntary sector groups and employers amongst others could all be represented. This would provide participants with a range of support and opportunities and the chance to engage with these groups in a relaxed atmosphere. This could prove a useful exercise to gauge the level of support for the Work Club amongst local groups and organisations who may wish to get involved. It could also encourage them to take the lead in the delivery of the Work Club in future or take the lead in delivering sector specific or themed/focused sessions.

■ Job Journey Planning

Aim: A workshop to help people plan and really think through their journey back into work. Members set out a specific goal or focus for their job search to the rest of the group and talk about the kind of job they want. They talk to one another to help them analyse their own skills, abilities and interests and then plan how they will gather knowledge of the employers they want to approach.

Optional: It might be worth approaching a local voluntary organisation with experience in supporting those out of the labour market to help facilitate this session.

■ Interview Skills and Mock Interviews

Aim: To improve soft skills (e.g. presentation and communication). This could include tips on question preparation, displaying a confident attitude, handling difficult questions and presenting yourself positively. Honest but positive feedback is an essential part of the mock interview process. The group could evaluate responses together and try to come up with better ones.

Optional: Local employers have expertise in this area, regularly interviewing candidates for local jobs. It might be worth asking if they might be able to share this expertise with the Work Club. Employers will have a clear idea of what they are looking for in a successful candidate at interview, this insight could prove invaluable to those seeking work and help to build their confidence in an interview situation.

■ CV Workshop

Aim: To provide advice and guidance on the main principles involved in preparing a strong covering letter and CV. Advice could also be offered on filling in application forms. This could be offered to the whole group or as one-to-one help.

Optional: Engage with local employers or voluntary organisations who might be able to help deliver this type of support.

■ IT skills workshop

Aim: To provide IT and job search skills. We live in an increasingly digital age and basic IT skills can be vital tools in helping people back into the labour market. From setting up an email account to learning how to apply for jobs online, many participants could benefit from this type of support.

Many jobs are now only advertised online and some companies only recruit using online systems.

Optional: Building on a CV workshop, support in producing a word processed CV and covering letter which could be attached to online applications might prove useful for jobseekers. Searching for job opportunities online is quick and effective; this workshop could also focus on providing participants with the skills they require to use online jobsearch tools.

■ Career Talks

Aim: To offer an opportunity to hear first hand from guest speakers about what it is like working in various fields. This will help to improve confidence levels and encourage goal setting and could be delivered by anyone who is currently in work. An employer could provide an insight into a particular sector whilst jobseekers might be able to identify with someone who has recently secured employment and can share their experience of returning to the labour market. This might also be a good opportunity to seek advice on salary negotiation, CVs, covering letters, interview techniques and company research.

■ Volunteering Opportunities

Aim: To make people aware of the potential benefits of gaining experience through volunteering, which often provides opportunities to develop basic skills and can help strengthen a CV.

Optional: Local voluntary organisations might welcome the opportunity to showcase their work to the Work Club and to demonstrate the potential benefits of volunteering. You might also like to signpost volunteers to opportunities offered through Jobcentre Plus.

How do I set up a Work Club?

■ Dress for Success

Aim: This represents an opportunity for a more light-hearted session to highlight how what you wear can improve confidence and job prospects. There could be a focus on selecting and sharing ideas on interview attire.

Other suggested Work Club activities include:

- Members could bring in their CV's, both in order to evaluate each others and so they can be exchanged and distributed when opportunities arise.
- Ask each member to research an aspect of job-hunting and share the best ideas with the group.
- Members could explain which career websites they have found useful and why to the group.
- The members could test their knowledge of job hunting techniques by taking online tests for jobseekers.
- There is a wealth of information available on the internet which could be used to support any of the activities outlined above or indeed any others that might be offered to participants. When preparing sessions it might be worthwhile having a look for fresh ideas, expert advice and general guidance.

4 Getting help from other organisations and volunteers

- Fostering links with other organisations, for example the local Citizens Advice Bureau, Chamber of Commerce or other representative groups, could enhance the Work Club offer. You could contact the managers of local organisations to see whether they could be interested in getting involved with the Work Club. You may find that they are very supportive of any social action initiative aimed at getting people back into work.
- Any local people you know with professional or business experience could prove very helpful in setting up the Work Club or by being guest speakers or helping with mock interviews, CV tips and other session themes.
- Local businesses may be keen to support the Work Club by either providing speakers, meeting room space or, if appropriate, company tours. They could provide a valuable insight into the world of work in their sector.
- Other Work Clubs might also be useful sources of information and may well be able to help you in developing one. Sharing best practice will contribute to the development of a strong network of Work Clubs.

5 Preparing a local marketing plan

Alongside this guide there are some templates that might be helpful for promoting the Work Club.

- A positive solution to local unemployment is likely to be very newsworthy. You could talk to a journalist on your local paper, including the free ones, about what you are trying to achieve and give them plenty of advance notice when you are launching a Work Club. It could be worthwhile suggesting that they run the story the same day they carry job vacancy adverts.
- You might want to use the press release template (that we've supplied), and think as widely as possible about where you could send it. Local papers, including the free ones, are a good place to start.
- Target local message boards and websites as they could be a good place to post information about your Work Club for free, as are message boards in local shops and supermarkets.
- You could think about where people who are out of work might go and consider trying to get your publicity materials into those places. Local businesses, libraries, shops and takeaways will often let you put up posters for free if you're running a community venture.

6 Sourcing members through other networks

Losing a job can make even the most confident person feel vulnerable. Joining a Work Club may not be an easy thing for many people to do. Encouraging people through personal and business networks is one of the most effective ways of initially attracting participants.

Jobcentre Plus will also make people who they think could benefit aware of Work Clubs in their area so it will be worthwhile keeping in touch with them about the details such as the venue and times. Even if the Work Club starts with only a few people it could grow steadily through word of mouth and sustained local marketing. Building links with Jobcentre Plus, the Citizens Advice Bureau, and other local organisations could provide a steady stream of Work Club members.

The services offered by local Work Clubs should reflect the demand in the community for this type of support. Work Clubs are intended to provide additional support to that already offered through Jobcentre Plus and other agencies and organisations. The aim is to support the community and meet its needs and these may change over time.

7 Sustaining the Work Club

Once the members of your Work Club have connected, leadership could come from within the group. Natural leaders may shine through and leadership can be passed on when members leave to start new jobs. The role of the organiser might be to maintain momentum and raise continued awareness of the Work Club in order to keep attracting new members.

Where to get more help

If you are interested in setting up a Work Club in your area or feel you could contribute to the development of one and would like further information then please get in touch:

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