



## Industry insight – Charity and development work

### In a nutshell

The charity and development sector is also known as the voluntary sector, the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and the third sector.

There is no set career path to enter the sector as a vast range of opportunities are available, each requiring different skills.

- There are over 163,000 registered charities in the UK with a combined income of around £52 billion ([The Charity Commission for England and Wales](#), 2012).
- Over a third of the sector's workforce holds a degree ([The UK Civil Society Almanac, National Council for Voluntary Organisations \(NCVO\)](#), 2012).
- The current economic climate and the high risk of funding cuts are key issues currently affecting the VCS.

### What kind of work can I do?

Areas of work within the sector include:

- administration;
- community development;
- finance;
- fundraising;
- human resources;
- campaigning, communications and public relations - organisations rely on communicating their key messages to the target audiences using different methods such as major public events, media and celebrity endorsements;
- policy and research;
- volunteer management and coordination.

The following profiles are examples of key jobs that exist in the charity and development work sector:

- [Advice worker](#)
- [Charity fundraiser](#)
- [Charity officer](#)
- [Community development worker](#)
- [Information officer](#)
- [International aid/development worker](#)
- [Marketing executive](#)
- [Public relations officer](#)
- [Volunteer coordinator](#)
- [Youth worker](#)

## What's it like working in this sector?

- Individuals working in this sector are expected to be highly committed to their employers and the organisation's cause. Working in this sector seems to inspire high levels of motivation and pride.
- As a sector, it can be one of the most progressive and fulfilling workplaces, offering opportunities for part-time employment, volunteering, flexibility and a good worklife balance.
- The average graduate starting salary in London is around £18,000. Starting salaries may be lower in other parts of the UK. With several years' experience or in specialist positions, salaries can increase to around £33,500+.
- However, staff working in the charity sector are generally paid less than those employed in the private sector. The pay for CEOs within the sector is generally 20% lower than their counterparts in other sectors (CharityJob, 2012).
- Salaries will vary depending on the organisation as well as the nature of the role and responsibilities. Those in larger organisations may earn more than those employed within a much smaller organisation, although salary increases are not necessarily greater in larger organisations.
- Positions in the charity and development sector are often advertised as 35-40 hours per week. However, heavy workloads, limited staff resources and budget constraints can increase the working day considerably. Being paid overtime is rare. Some positions and organisations may sometimes require weekend and evening work. To counteract this, organisations may offer time off in lieu.
- There are many part-time positions in the sector at all levels. Job-sharing is also offered at many charity and development organisations.
- Due to increased funding constraints, many jobs within charity and development work are offered under a temporary contract. This can be from six months or a year, to two or three years. The lack of job security can have financial and lifestyle implications.
- Charities employed 765,000 paid staff in 2010, which is more than 2% of the total UK workforce. This figure is up from 721,000 in 2009 (The UK Civil Society Almanac, NCVO, 2012).
- Volunteering is a major part of the charity and development sector. Almost 40% of the UK population volunteers at least once a year and a quarter volunteers at least once a month (Communities and Local Government, Citizenship Survey 2010-2011).
- Over two-thirds of the sector's workforce is female, although women are still underrepresented at the highest levels. 20% of the voluntary sector workforce has a disability, a higher proportion than in the public and private sectors (The UK Civil Society Almanac, NCVO, 2012).
- The majority of national/international charities and development organisations have their headquarters in London and the South East of England, so a vast proportion of

jobs are based in this area. Scotland and the South West of England have the next highest concentrations of VCS workers.

- Many organisations also have regional offices based around the UK, resulting in some regional opportunities.

## Entry and progression

### How do I find a job?

Many larger organisations advertise in national newspapers and specialist trade press.

These include:

- [Charity Action Recruitment](#)
- [CharityJOB](#)
- [Charity People](#)
- [DevNetJobs](#)
- [Forum 3](#)
- [Goodmoves](#)
- [HarrisHill](#)

An increasing amount of organisations only advertise jobs on their own websites to save money, so check the relevant sites if you're interested in specific charities.

Graduate training schemes are not that common but some charities offer paid and unpaid schemes, including:

- [Barnardo's](#) runs a 12-week voluntary internship scheme;
- [Cancer Research UK](#) offers a graduate training programme in areas including fundraising, marketing and communications, corporate services and science. The charity also offers a 12-week voluntary internship scheme;
- [MAG \(Mines Advisory Group\)](#) offers an unpaid internship scheme;
- [Oxfam](#) offers a voluntary internship scheme based in the UK;
- [Charities Advisory Trust](#) offers paid graduate internships.

It is important to note that entry to the sector is increasingly competitive with some organisations receiving around 300 applications for entry-level positions. It is therefore important that you follow all the application procedures correctly and make your application as interesting as possible to help you stand out from the crowd. Due to limited resources, many organisations are unable to respond to speculative applications.

### What skills do I need?

A diverse range of skills is often required, including:

- excellent communication and interpersonal skills;
- strong planning, organisation and time management skills;
- flexibility, to deal with the uncertainty that can sometimes go hand in hand with working in the charity/development sector;
- a good understanding of the sector and how it relates to other sectors;
- skills sharing and mentoring;
- an understanding of the importance of volunteers within an organisation;

- ability to be resourceful and show initiative;
- good IT and web-based skills;
- leadership skills, which can be developed through work experience, voluntary work, being an active member of a student society and through your academic studies.

As well as generic skills such as strong administration skills and teamworking, charities expect candidates to be highly motivated and committed. Some specialist skills that are specific to particular roles within the sector may also be required, such as:

- fundraising skills and experience;
- campaigning;
- volunteer management;
- languages;
- capacity building and the ability to work within communities.

### **Where can I find work experience?**

Volunteering is an excellent way to gain relevant experience. It helps you develop key skills and shows potential employees that you have a good understanding and commitment to the organisation and/or sector. However, some charities make it clear that volunteering does not necessarily lead to a job within the organisation.

Many charities allow volunteers access to their internal vacancy listings and also have volunteer sections on their websites.

Some charities offer the opportunity to work as an intern.

### **Is postgraduate study useful?**

Postgraduate study is not always necessary. For some jobs, however, it is very useful and in some cases essential, such as science roles in medical research charities.

Undertaking postgraduate research in an area of particular relevance to a charity will give you specialist knowledge and experience which can be attractive to potential employers.

In certain areas, such as international development, successful applicants to entry-level positions often have relevant postgraduate qualifications.

### **How can my career develop?**

Career paths can be less vertical than in the private sector. Developing your career may mean moving sideways rather than upwards. Organisations are increasingly allowing employees to pursue secondment opportunities within a different part of the organisation or within similar organisations to enable them to develop their career. Alternatively, you may have to move to a different charity to gain promotion.

Charities often advertise vacancies internally, where an existing understanding of the way the organisation operates is an advantage.

## Typical employers

### Big players

[Charities Direct](#) has an extensive directory of charities, where it is possible to find basic information on the income, expenditure and funds of the top 500 charities.

Some of the top 25 charities according to income include:

- The Arts Council England;
- Barnardo's;
- The British Council;
- The British Heart Foundation;
- The British Red Cross Society;
- Cancer Research UK;
- The National Trust;
- Oxfam;
- Royal Mencap Society;
- Royal National Lifeboat Institution;
- Wellcome Trust.

### Small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

Working for a smaller charity can be rewarding because you are more likely to forge a path for yourself within the organisation. It can provide you with the opportunity to experience all aspects of charity work.

Your university careers service should have listings of jobs within small charities. See also the [Department for Business, Innovation and Skills \(BIS\)](#).

### Self-employment

Charities are set up by individuals with an entrepreneurial vision who see a need in society and wish to do something about it. [The Charity Commission for England and Wales](#) provides guidance on how to set up a charity. This includes factors to think about before setting up a charity and understanding how a charity must operate.

It is possible to work as a consultant in this sector, often for infrastructure organisations.

Having significant experience and knowledge plus a network of contacts will be essential. Opportunities exist for consultants to work in a variety of different fields including fundraising, strategic review and finance.

### Opportunities abroad

Many charity and development work organisations identify their missions on a global scale and operate offices and projects overseas. For example, Oxfam GB operates in 92 countries and Christian Aid in around 50. MAG (Mines Advisory Group) has operated in over 40 countries.

The UK is the world's fourth-largest international development donor and the [Department for International Development \(DFID\)](#) provides support to developing countries, working directly with 27 countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

There are specialist job roles that exist in international development. For example, health professionals may work in feeding stations or mother and child clinics, teachers may work in rural village schools, and scientists and technical experts in areas such as crops, water resource management and sanitation.

Although overseas opportunities do exist for UK-based candidates, many organisations are increasingly committed to employing local staff on international projects. For this reason, competition is tough for positions overseas.

International charities may offer UK-based employees secondment opportunities to visit international projects which can last several weeks or months. Some organisations may allow staff to undertake voluntary work overseas to help them develop their skills and experience.

There are opportunities to work in:

- capacity building;
- human rights;
- peace and conflict;
- refugees;
- humanitarian crisis relief;
- environment;
- education;
- health;
- enterprise development;
- rural livelihoods;
- governance;
- infrastructure and urban development;
- social development.

Charities including Christian Aid, MAG (Mines Advisory Group), Oxfam and WaterAid offer international opportunities. Other non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including voluntary and religious organisations, offer international development opportunities. [BOND \(British Overseas NGOs for Development\)](#) is the UK membership body of NGOs and its website includes a directory of members. The Careers Group at London University has a guide to [Getting into International Development](#).

### **Will my qualifications be recognised?**

Overseas opportunities are available, but these often require specialist postgraduate qualifications, relevant skills and experience of working in other countries. Many opportunities will require language skills.

Having a postgraduate qualification in international development is desirable to employers as it shows a commitment to the sector. The [Development Studies Association \(DSA\)](#) lists relevant undergraduate and postgraduate courses in development. It also lists postgraduate research opportunities.

A qualification plus previous paid or unpaid work experience in development will prove to potential employers that you have a good understanding of the context you will be working in.

More generic or vocational skills such as first aid and mechanical skills will also be useful. Employers look for candidates that demonstrate resourcefulness, resilience, independence and can show evidence that they can deal with uncertainty and change.

## Future trends

### Communications and the possible impact of technology

The popularity of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter has made it possible for charities and development organisations to reach and enable their target audiences in new and effective ways. It allows them to offer a more mobile form of communication and support, and as social media and micro-blogging are cost-effective and can potentially reach a large audience, this trend is likely to increase.

Over the next decade, however, charities want to provide more personal communication to their target audiences rather than relying on mass communications. To do this, the sector needs to find more effective ways of analysing data about its supporters and communicating messages more suited to the individual supporter's needs.

### Social enterprises

Social enterprises, which use business principles to create and manage projects to enable social change, are on the rise and may provide opportunities. Examples of social enterprises include Cafédirect, The Big Issue, the Eden Project and Jamie Oliver's Fifteen restaurant group.

### Government and policy

In 2010, the coalition government announced plans for the [Big Society](#), an agenda to enable citizens to achieve change in their local area. The agenda is designed to give voluntary and community organisations a greater role in public services. It also aims to support the voluntary and community sector. One of the key parts of the agenda is 'social action', whereby people are encouraged to volunteer and play a more active part in society. Schemes such as National Citizen Service, Community Organisers and Community.

First will enable people to get more involved in their local communities.

A new taskforce, run by the Cabinet Office and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), aims to reduce bureaucracy imposed on charities, social enterprises and voluntary organisations. In April 2012 the government also launched Big Society Capital, a £600million institution which will use money from dormant bank accounts in England to increase the funding available to charitable organisations, as well as helping to attract more private sector investment.

### The economy

As part of its austerity measures, the UK government has stopped funding local authority grant programmes, including many programmes that fund local charities. This means that many local authorities have made cuts to the voluntary sector.

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) predicts that the charity sector will experience a £1.3 billion drop in income from statutory sources by 2015-16. In 'Beyond the Cuts', the [National Children's Bureau \(NCB\)](#) estimates that 34,000 charities in England who work primarily with children and young people will lose £405 million in statutory funding between 2011 and 2016. Because of the way children's charities are generally funded, they are more vulnerable than the voluntary and community sector as a whole.

The current economic climate is likely to make fundraising more difficult over the next few years. This will be particularly difficult for smaller organisations that rely heavily on fundraising.

### **Volunteering**

Recent unemployment rises have resulted in more people seeking volunteering opportunities. This has resulted in an increase in paid volunteering management roles within organisations.

### **Jargon buster**

- **Advocacy** - is about helping people to say what they want, to represent their interests and gain the services they need and/or are entitled to.
- **The Big Society** - a government agenda designed to shift power and opportunity from politicians to people. The policy aims to give voluntary and community organisations a greater role in public services. It also aims to support the voluntary and community sector.
- **Civil society** - includes voluntary and non-profit organisations of many different kinds, philanthropic institutions, social and political movements and other forms of social participation and engagement.
- **Community interest company (CIC)** - limited companies with special additional features for people who want to create businesses that pursue profits alongside social and/or environmental change, but without the regulation associated with having charitable status.
- **The Compact** - a voluntary agreement between government and the third sector to work together to improve outcomes for the whole community.
- **Do-it** - an online database of volunteering opportunities across the UK.
- **Gift aid** - increases the value of donations by allowing charities to reclaim the basic tax rate on gifts from UK taxpayers.
- **NGO** - non-governmental organisation.
- **Quangos** - a semi-public, government-financed administrative body whose members are appointed by government.
- **Social enterprises** - profit-driven businesses with social and/or environmental aims.
- **Third sector** - alternative name for the voluntary sector.



- **TimeBank** - a national charity inspiring people to volunteer in their communities.
- **vInspired** - a charity set up to connect 14-25 year-olds with volunteering opportunities in England.
- **VCS** - voluntary and community sector.
- **VSO (Voluntary Services Overseas)** - a leading development charity that sends volunteers to work abroad, supporting them throughout the volunteer placement.

Written by AGCAS editors, July 2012

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