

The Perils of Participation in ‘Workfare’ – 14th July in Manchester



The Perils of Participation: Voluntary Groups, ‘Workfare’ and Benefits Sanctions – Manchester 14th July 1-4pm

The Government’s ‘Help to Work Programme’ is specifically designed to attract the involvement of charities and voluntary groups.

Has your voluntary group received offers of ‘too-good-to-be-true’ 6 month long ‘volunteer’ placements? Have you been put under pressure as more and more people experience the devastating impact of benefit sanctions and turn to the voluntary sector for help or support? Perhaps you have lost genuine volunteers when they were required to attend a compulsory ‘workfare’ scheme compelling disabled and unemployed people to work without pay or lose their benefits?

The ‘Help to Work Programme’ sends claimants on mandatory ‘Community Work Placements’ where they are required to work full time for JSA. If they refuse they will be sanctioned, which means non-payment of all benefits for 4 weeks, 13 weeks or for up to 3 years. The use of sanctions is a major reason behind the upsurge in the use of food banks.

Widespread concern about voluntary sector involvement in this scheme led to the formation of the *Keep Volunteering Voluntary* campaign (KVV – www.kvv.org.uk) which has now attracted a pledge from nearly 600 groups not to take part in workfare programmes.

This meeting will provide an opportunity to:

- Spread information about the Help to Work Programme and the ways in which it is being rolled out by the DWP, prime contractors and their subcontractors (including testimony from claimants who have been affected).
- Share information and experiences between participants who have had contact with the Programme.
- Gain greater understanding and awareness about the effects of workfare and benefits sanctions.

- Help to decide what further action can be taken.

This event will be of particular relevance for volunteer centres, advice agencies, food banks, employment support projects, youth agencies, those operating charity shops and local Councils for Voluntary Services.

The event is **free**; please arrive promptly for a 1pm start. **You can register for the event [here](#)**

Room 2.16, Brooks Building, Birley Campus

Manchester Metropolitan University M16 6GX

More information on Help to Work and Workfare can be found on the Keep Volunteering Voluntary (www.kvv.org.uk) and Boycott Workfare (<http://www.boycottworkfare.org/>) websites.

This meeting is organised by Keep Volunteering Voluntary, Community Audit and Education Centre (Manchester Metropolitan University), Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit, MACC, Manchester Advice Alliance, Manchester Unemployed Workers Centre, 42nd Street and the National Coalition for Independent Action.