

For electronic resources, links to relevant websites, and for further information on this occupational sector, visit the 'I want to work in' section of the Careers Wiki:

[www.st-andrews.ac.uk/careers/wiki](http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/careers/wiki)

## Overview

The voluntary sector is complex and dynamic; ever changing to meet the needs of society, growing at a significant rate and covering almost every conceivable type of interest and activity. Not all voluntary organisations are charities, and definitions of the sector vary, but 'general charities' can be defined as being:

- independent of government and business
- non profit distributing
- providing a wider public benefit that goes beyond any membership
- non-sacramental religious bodies or places of worship

There is a wide variety of roles available in voluntary organisations and, as well as the jobs requiring professional qualifications (such as social work, counselling and finance), they offer opportunities in campaigning, administration and fundraising. Fewer than a quarter employ paid staff however, and of those, only half are full-time. Many small charities have no paid staff, and trustees undertake all the work on a voluntary basis. Those small organisations which can afford to pay a member of staff will need someone who can turn their hand to anything, and who has both the confidence and the flexibility to be a spokesperson, a decision maker and an administrator.



## How do I find out more?

- Use the Careers Wiki to begin an on-line search and find links to voluntary organisations.
- Books at Careers Centre
- Visit the Network With St Andrews Grads link on the Careers Centre website to make contact with ex-students now working in the voluntary sector.

## Is it right for me?

Am I clear about my reasons for choosing the voluntary sector as opposed to the private or public sectors?	✓
Have I considered working in the public or private sectors prior to moving into the voluntary sector with appropriate skills, experience and/or a professional qualification?	
The voluntary sector is huge. Am I clear about the role I would like to have and the charitable area I want to support (can I communicate these and my passion for them easily)?	
Have I been building up voluntary work experience as a student?	

(continued overleaf)

Do I have what it takes?	Evidence
Excellent communication and interpersonal skills	
Flexibility to take on different roles when required	
Project management and leadership abilities	
Dedication and determination in the face of difficulties	
Resourcefulness and initiative	

### Tactics for success

- Get as much relevant experience as you can whilst at university. There are loads of opportunities in and around St Andrews – contact the Student Association, SVS and Volunteer Centre Fife.
- Work towards obtaining Millennium Volunteer (MV) Award certificates
- Attend the Careers Centre’s Public and Not-for-Profit Sectors Careers event in February, and look out for relevant Student Association fairs.
- Consider taking the School of Management module “Managing Voluntary Organisations (MN4266)”
- Find out in good time about closing dates for the few graduate training schemes which exist in the voluntary sector, but prepare to make lots of applications to smaller organisations. Using contacts and making speculative applications will be important.
- Depending on your preferred role, think about gaining experience in the public or private sectors after graduation, then moving into the voluntary sector later on.

### Next Steps

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**Paul Brown is the careers adviser responsible for this occupational area.**

**Visit the Careers Centre website to check when Paul is drop-in adviser.**

**THIS SHEET CAN BE MADE AVAILABLE IN ALTERNATIVE (EG LARGE PRINT) FORMATS  
PLEASE ASK AT RECEPTION**

October 2010

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