



# Employer-supported volunteering guide

**10**

**practical tips for implementation**

At CIPD we believe in the double benefit of volunteering; for the volunteer who develops their skills and the beneficiary who directly benefits from the intervention. Volunteering is a key element of social action, practical action for the benefit of others. As the professional body for HR and people development we are keen to act as a broker of social action opportunities for our members, so that HR professionals can use their unique skills and insights to be a force for good in the world of work. We want every HR professional to get involved in HR social action but also champion this in their own organisations, acting as a catalyst for employee volunteering so it becomes integral to how an organisation is run and managed.



# What is employer-supported volunteering?

Employer-supported volunteering (ESV) is where the employees of an organisation take paid time off to volunteer during work hours. Employees can choose to use their volunteering time to support a charity or community group of their own choice, or to take up an opportunity provided by their company.

This guide brings together practical tips from employers who have successfully embedded volunteering into their organisations.

## Examples of employer-supported volunteering

### Short-term opportunities

Careers talk in schools

Delivering a workshop

Team challenge

Supporting a charity event, for example a local marathon

### Long-term opportunities

Mentoring

School governor

Charity trustee

Befriender



The CIPD brokers social action opportunities for members, enabling them to use and develop their HR skills and expertise to support others. This can involve anything from helping schools develop their careers strategy, to supporting returning parents and carers back into work. CIPD employees are also encouraged to get involved, with many taking part in volunteering programmes including Steps Ahead Mentoring and Enterprise Advisers.

## Steps Ahead Mentoring

Steps Ahead is a nationwide mentoring programme run by the CIPD in partnership with Jobcentre Plus (and other partners). It matches volunteer HR professionals with jobseekers from one of three target categories: young jobseekers (18-24), returning parents and carers, and 50+. Mentors form one-to-one mentoring relationships over six to eight meet-ups, and use their skills and expertise in HR to help individuals gain confidence, improve their employability and ultimately find work.

*'All of my mentees have shown a great deal of improvement from where we started to where we are now. It is a very rewarding experience knowing the difference I have made to their lives. I have also gained and improved on a lot of skills through this programme. I have learnt a lot from my mentees throughout the journey.'*

**Steps Ahead mentor**

## Enterprise Advisers

The CIPD is proud to be working with the Careers and Enterprise Company to recruit volunteers for the Enterprise Adviser network across England. Working directly with schools' leadership teams to develop effective employer engagement plans and careers education strategies, volunteers on the Enterprise Adviser programme help to build connections between schools and local employers, improving the prospects of the young people attending that school. This senior-level volunteering opportunity requires a commitment of one day per month across a full academic year.

*'I am proud to serve as an Enterprise Adviser because I truly believe that empowering young people, unlocking their potential, increasing confidence and improving interpersonal skills can significantly impact their future.'*

**Enterprise Adviser**

# How individuals and organisations benefit



**Individual**  
skills, pride,  
achievement



**Organisation**  
employee engagement,  
brand, reputation



**Society**  
access to skilled support,  
increased productivity

# Volunteering

- ✓ **helps develop skills** – from soft skills such as leadership, communication and presentation skills, to professional skills such as advising businesses and providing *pro bono* support
- ✓ **is a viable alternative to other forms of employee development** – a development opportunity in the community can be more beneficial than classroom learning and is usually cheaper
- ✓ **builds employee engagement** – volunteering fosters a sense of pride and satisfaction, and employees are appreciative of being given time off work to support their community
- ✓ **helps improve brand and reputation** – businesses must contribute to the communities in which they operate in order to be socially responsible
- ✓ **supports access to skills otherwise inaccessible to community organisations** – many charities and community groups could never afford to pay for the skilled support they receive from the business community.



# 10

## practical tips for implementation

### 1

## How will you make an impact?

Consider the charities or community groups you want to support and in which areas you want to focus your volunteering efforts, for example; young people, disability, sports, homelessness, and so on. Many organisations support causes that best align with their vision and values or their core business. This will help you and your employees build a stronger connection with the community. In addition, many organisations recognise that employees have their own preferences and allow them to use their volunteering time to support a charity or community group of their own choice:

*'Our volunteering programme supports social mobility as the majority of departments understand this agenda through their day-to-day work. As a result we attract lots of volunteers from different departments and agencies.'*

**Nita Murphy, Civil Service Local**

### 2

## How much time will you give your employees to volunteer?

Decide how much volunteering time you will allow staff to take during working hours (in addition to their annual leave). Be sure to have a flexible volunteering policy that enables employees from across your entire business to benefit and get involved. In addition, consider how you will manage and record volunteering leave:

*'Our employees are entitled to three days' paid volunteering leave per year - we have about 30% take-up on that.'*

**Barbara Strang, Experian**

### 3 Secure buy-in from the top

Having the genuine and visible support of your leadership or management team for your volunteering programme will help encourage employees to get involved. Get senior employees involved in volunteering and profile their stories:

*'Unless you've got someone championing it higher up in the organisation, it's quite difficult to actually get volunteering off the ground and get it working properly.'*

**Andy Coppins, Nottingham Trent University**

### 4 Use volunteering to boost employee engagement and pride

Having a fantastic volunteering offering is worthless if no one takes part. Boost your participation rates by sharing stories of colleagues who have been involved, outlining the benefits and positive outcomes. Keep communicating about your programme and enlist senior support – if people know it's supported at the top of the organisation, they are more likely to get involved:

*'ESV really boosts our employee engagement. Our staff feel valued, happy and supported as well as having the opportunity to learn and develop new skills. We award prizes and certificates for any outstanding volunteering contributions.'*

**Sofia Michalopoulou, Tata Consultancy Service**





## 5 Provide a wide range of opportunities for employees to consider

Employees should have access to a number of opportunities. If you offer a variety of short- and long-term activities, people are more likely to find one that can fit around their work schedule:

*'We have a number of long-term volunteering opportunities ranging from befriending, becoming a charity trustee or a school governor. Some of our senior leadership team members are either on or applying to become charity trustees on boards. This gives them experience of how operating on a board works.'*

**Peri Thomas, Yorkshire Building Society**

## 6 Align volunteering with your learning and development offering

Volunteering gives people the opportunity to enhance and broaden their skills. It is important to embed these activities into employee development plans so they have a longer-term impact on organisational success. This includes building it into apprenticeships, internships and even work experience placements. Introduce tools that enable staff to understand the link between volunteering and skills development. As a result you will gain a productive and satisfied workforce who are developing new skills on a regular basis:

*'All of our volunteering opportunities are linked to skills development to allow and encourage people to manage their own learning; we have a portal of strategic skills-based volunteering opportunities, so someone looking to develop particular skills such as their presentation skills can search for volunteering opportunities underneath specific areas.'*

**Louise Smith, Linklaters**



## 7 Create a champions network

Setting up and maintaining a network of volunteer or community champions across your organisation is a great way to encourage more take-up for your volunteering programmes. Champions act as ambassadors and help promote your activities, keeping employees up to date with recent developments, and they can help you gather feedback and case studies. Being a champion is also a great development opportunity in itself.

*'Our Charity Champions are members of staff situated in cafes; these people have shown a dedication to volunteering and have put themselves forward. They are the go-to in cafes for any members of staff wanting to know what volunteering opportunities are available. We meet quarterly to share ideas.'*

**Eva Arnaiz, The Breakfast Club**

## 8 Tell the world!

Use a range of communications channels, both internally and externally, to share the successes of your volunteering programmes and stories:

*'At IBM we have a suite of resources, many of which are publicly available. People can record their hours and receive updates and newsletters. They can read about other volunteering stories, to inspire them, or they can get their own story published if they've done something significant.'*

**Mark Wakefield, IBM**



## 9 Include social commitment in your recruitment process

An organisation's social commitment has become an important factor for potential candidates. Weaving volunteering into application and recruitment processes can help organisations attract the best candidates:

*'Volunteering is really popular among our staff and it's one of the main reasons why people come and work for us, so for our business it's great for attracting new staff. We have just completed a colleague survey and scored above 90 for our corporate responsibility activities.'*

**Peri Thomas, Yorkshire Building Society**

## 10 Feedback, report and review

It is important to ensure that volunteers are given the opportunity to feed back on their experience, to enable you to refine and improve the volunteering programme, or activity.

Recording and reporting volunteering allows you to understand uptake in volunteering and the impact it has made, both within your organisation and the community. You can publish the results in your annual report and use them to help set future targets:

*'Understanding if our employees have had a positive experience is essential for us and our community partners. We use survey monkey to evaluate the success of our team challenges and hold one-to-one discussions with individuals aligned to long-term opportunities. We have a data tool which records all of our global social contributions of time, cash, gifts and STEM reach which is now verified by Bureau Veritas.'*

*Through LBG we adopt a global standard for measuring, benchmarking and reporting on our social contributions and we publish this information in DJSI, our Annual Report and on our website.'*

**Debbie Duro, Rolls-Royce**



# Useful resources

For further information on volunteering and opportunities, visit:

[www.cipd.co.uk/volunteering](http://www.cipd.co.uk/volunteering)

[www.do-it.org](http://www.do-it.org)

[www.joininuk.org](http://www.joininuk.org)

[www.ncvo.org.uk](http://www.ncvo.org.uk)

[www.stepuptoserve.org.uk](http://www.stepuptoserve.org.uk)

[www.volunteeringmatters.org.uk](http://www.volunteeringmatters.org.uk)

[www.volunteerteam.london.gov.uk](http://www.volunteerteam.london.gov.uk)

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