

What is Employer Supported Volunteering?

Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) can also be known as or is part of the wider Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) agenda, it can sometimes be because a team of people have requested it.

It's when a business supports staff to take part in volunteering, usually during working hours and paid – as a team or individually. The volunteering opportunities are mutually beneficial for the charity/community group (including those that access those services), staff and business. The business offer needs to match the values, mission and needs of a charity/community group, normally not being an activity created just for the business. It is something that gives valuable support, increased capacity/reach, different skills/knowledge/experience and aides community cohesion for the charity/community group.

For a successful ESV/CSR it is important that staff know about the programme/offer, what to expect, what the charity and community gets out of it, how staff benefit and how to source volunteering. Awareness can be done through recruitment, inductions, team meetings, supervisions etc.

What are the benefits for businesses?

- Share and develop existing skills and experience which a community group/charity couldn't otherwise afford, or may not have expertise within
- Staff learn new skills, experience and knowledge
- Makes a difference to the local community
- Meeting new people from different backgrounds
- Builds connection and relationships with the local community and voluntary sector
- Builds a reputation as a socially responsible business
- Strengthening your corporate social values
- Improves employee morale, motivation and the health and wellbeing of your team
- Builds a sense of pride and satisfaction in the team and business, with a positive impact on recruitment and retention

Thinking about finding an ESV/CSR opportunity

Before a business contacts any charities/community groups or the local Volunteer Centre they should take time to consider what they are able to offer which helps to focus on who to approach and clarity on what the charity/community group could explore with them. Matching the right opportunity is key to the success of the opportunity. Below are questions for a business to consider:

- What is the purpose and aim of your ESV/CSR? Why do you want to offer your staff's time?
- Is it annual, certain times during the year or one-off? Are there particular times of the year?
- What would you like communities/groups/charities to benefit from?
- What are the benefits to the business and staff?
- Are there any particular values/motivations/causes you hold as a team/business?
- Will you be offering time virtually or in person, and if the latter what geographical area?
- What days and times can you offer? Flexibility is important otherwise restricts what is available.
- How many people in the group? Note a large group can be challenging to find opportunities due to time, capacity, location – instead can the volunteering be done as smaller groups and/or individuals to one charity or across a couple of charities.
- What activities you would be interested in? Any activities/causes that do not match your values/interest/motivations?
- If there are no matching opportunities available consider other ways to support e.g. collecting/delivering needed items for a foodbank/clothing bank, fundraising, helping at events/activities, holding an event/fundraiser etc.
- Could you consider volunteering business skills* (for example accountancy, IT) as part of the ESV/CSR offer e.g. one-off, one-one, maybe training or as and when there is a need.

- As part of the ESV/CSR can staff offer their time individually and/or apply independently* from the business e.g. being a Trustee. Trustee opportunities can be found here <https://volunteer.communityworks.org.uk/trustee-opportunities>

**Individuals can offer their time through:*

- Apply through an advertised volunteer opportunity - for Adur, Worthing, Brighton, Hove these can be found on our dedicated volunteer website <https://volunteer.communityworks.org.uk/>
- Skills exchange/pro-bono volunteering - where individual's offer their professional skills to match a charity/community group looking for support with a particular project e.g. marketing, graphic design, website design, legal, social media, fundraising (this list is not exhaustive).

To be aware:

When looking for opportunities a business should give as much lead time as possible, as charities/groups are often not able to offer opportunities at short notice especially for a group. They will need a reasonable amount of time to see if the offer matches their needs/is beneficial to them, their available capacity, number of people and the day(s) as well as considering insurance, safeguarding etc. and then if the offer is taken up to have time to arrange and coordinate the activity.

What works best is the building of an ongoing relationship with a charity/charities for future dates and/or other forms of volunteering e.g. business skills exchange.

What happens when a business is linked to a volunteer opportunity?

The charity/community group will share anything needed before the activity/activities, on the day and after - this could include:

- What are the specific activities, maybe an action plan?
- What are the timeframes? What is the time commitment?
- What are the expectations? Including reasonable notice if can't make it or anything changes
- Any materials needed, and who will pay for them (bearing in mind a charity/community group should not be out of pocket for any activities held just a business volunteering)
- Who has overall responsibility for the volunteering – from both parties
- Who will be present on the day – charity representation.
- Checking of any Insurance cover and risk assessments needed
- Communicating any policies and procedures staff need to be aware of e.g. health and safety, confidentiality, safeguarding
- What will happen on the day, any brief inductions/instructions?
- Both to say thank you to each other afterwards
- After event provide to feedback both ways
- Will there be a continued relationship

Further information/resources

NCVO: <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/involving-volunteers/employer-supported-volunteering/>

Works-4U <https://www.works-4u.com/uk-ev-2022-23-report>

Our website has an ESV guide for the voluntary sector

<https://www.communityworks.org.uk/volunteering/employer-supported-volunteering/>

