

Involving Pre-Retirees in Volunteering

INFORMATION SHEET

This information sheet includes guidance for employers who want to encourage their staff who are approaching retirement to volunteer. It is also a resource for groups or organisations that have suitable volunteering opportunities.

Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) involves organisations actively encouraging and facilitating their employees to participate in voluntary work. More specifically, it can be a useful way for employers to prepare an employee for retirement. Employers can support this type of voluntary work in a range of ways, including releasing staff to do voluntary work during work time, offering flexi-time / time off in lieu, or giving unpaid time off. Not all organisations have the capacity to give staff time off, however organisations can promote volunteering to employees who are reaching retirement. ESV tends to happen as a group half day / full day event and so does not involve long term commitment. However, there are examples of ESV initiatives which are longer term, for example staff with a professional or technical skill sharing their talent for a few hours a week over a specific project time frame.

During 2010-2011, approximately 800 employees gave 4,600 hours to charitable causes in NI. There are many benefits of ESV for both employers and their staff. Employers Supported Volunteering is recognised as a great way for organisations to raise their profile and reputation by supporting local community initiatives whilst at the same time boosting staff moral, encouraging team bonding, developing new skills and interests. For pre-retirees it can be a good opportunity to 'sow a seed' or 'spark an interest' in volunteering which can become a valuable lifestyle choice once people move into retirement.

There are a number of good practice points for both employers and organisations who would wish to support their pre-retiree employees to volunteer.

Organisations who wish to support volunteering within their pre-retiree workforce

- All sizes of organisations can go some way to support their pre-retiree staff to consider volunteering. This can be as much or as little as you are able to support and can include releasing staff to carry out short or longer term volunteering work or encouraging staff to consider volunteering as an option in their retirement.

- Take part in ESV Action Days by arranging one yourself or by linking in to other annual ESV days i.e. 16th March - 'Be A Saint Day' (for all age groups) and the 'One Good Reason' Action Day- 30th September (for 50+ year olds).
- Develop a policy for ESV which includes the fact that the programme is supported by senior management and has a specific objective to encourage pre-retirees to consider volunteering. This could consist of outlining your efforts to include information on volunteering as part of the pre-retiree programme of events. The Unlocking Potential Project is available to give a talk and / or provide information that you can use.
- Use employee payslips, intranet, notice-boards or company newsletters as a mechanism for promoting volunteering and the ways they can try it out. Utilise the experience and enthusiasm of older volunteers. Ask pre-retiree staff and retired staff that you are still in contact with to talk about the benefits of volunteering to their peers or include their experiences as a case study in promotional leaflets.
- If you have a policy of offering *x* number of hours of ESV per year, make sure that your organisation does all they can to get them used. Maybe a smaller number of staff are keen to do a short project with one organisation that requires more than 1 day. This may be particularly suitable for pre-retirees who are cutting their workload and reducing their hours gradually.
- Resources are available to support employers who wish to raise awareness of volunteering opportunities to their staff. Our website www.volunteernow.co.uk provides a search facility for individuals to obtain information on the volunteering opportunities based on area of interest and geographical location.
- Consider a placement organisation for staff to volunteer which can maximise their enjoyment and learning. However, give volunteer involving organisations time to plan how to effectively involve your staff.
- Consider benchmarking yourself against the quality standard in Investing in Volunteer for Employers and get recognised for your commitment to best practice in employee volunteering management
<http://iive.investinginvolunteers.org.uk/Introduction>

Volunteer Involving Organisations who wish to involve Pre-Retirees through Employer Supported Volunteering initiatives

- Make links with private and public organisations who you know support volunteering and who you can rely on to build a strong partnership. Once you have a successful ESV event, you may wish to build on this by making it a long-term partnership.

Alternatively sign up for the Annual 'Be A Saint' Action day or the 'One Good Reason' Action Day for 50+ year olds. Organisers will help you to find a suitable partner organisation.

- It is important to plan for volunteer involvement as having a good experience can determine whether someone will consider volunteering in the future. Be realistic about the number of people you can accommodate. If there is a group of people, think about briefing them before and after the event, this can give you the opportunity to give out any necessary equipment, health and safety information, welcome them and thank them before they leave!. Volunteer Now has produced an information sheet which focuses on best practice in involving volunteers on an occasional basis. You can view this at www.volunteernow.co.uk/publications
- Try to offer a range of activities which require different types of skills. Alongside offering paid time off, other key factors in facilitating people taking part in ESV include, giving a choice of activities and having activities where ones contribution can be seen.
- Painting and decorating can be of valuable help to organisations but don't be afraid to think outside of the box. Do you require technical type skills, like computer skills or database management or accountancy? This generation of 55+ yr olds are an active and motivated group who will be seeking out meaningful, interesting roles which allow them to learn new skills as well as sharing existing ones.
- Involving people as volunteers on a short-term basis through ESV may encourage some to get involved on a more regular basis, if they have had a good experience. Have a look at the 'Involving Older People and Volunteering Checklist', this provides useful information on involving older people as volunteers on a more regular basis. You can view this at www.volunteernow.co.uk/publications

If you have any other questions regarding developing an ESV programme or getting involved contact Julie Cusick on Julie.cusick@volunteernow.co.uk 028 9020 0850.

If you are interested in good practice in involving older people as volunteers including the One Good Reason Action Day, go to www.volunteernow.co.uk/volunteering/volunteering-for-the-over-50s-unlocking-potential
This page also contains the contact details for the team members.

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