



# Employer Supported Volunteering

an employers guide

In partnership with



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## Volunteer Now

Volunteer Now works to promote, enhance and support volunteering across Northern Ireland. Volunteer Now is about connecting with individuals and organisations to build healthy communities and create positive change.

Volunteer Now enhances recognition for the contribution volunteers make, provides access to opportunities and encourages people to volunteer.

We provide training, information, guidance and support to volunteer-involving organisations on issues of good practice and policy regarding volunteering, volunteer management, child protection, safeguarding vulnerable adults and governance.

### Registered charity no. XT22896

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## Business in the Community

Business in the Community is a unique movement of companies across the UK and Ireland committed to continually improving their positive impact on society. This growing and powerful movement which recognises that social and economic responsibilities are central to business competitiveness.

The Business in the Community Cares programme is a dedicated campaign aimed at increasing the uptake of Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) for the benefit of employers and community groups.

Through the programme, Business in the Community is working with others to create a culture of ESV in Northern Ireland workplaces.

### Registered charity no. 297716

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## Introduction

Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) occurs when companies actively support and encourage their employees in volunteering within the local community. It provides significant community impact, employee development opportunities and corporate profile as well as many other benefits.

Research carried out by Business in the Community in 2009, on behalf of the Department for Social Development indicated that employers are supportive of employees' voluntary activities but would appreciate assistance in establishing a policy to maximise the benefits to employees, the community and the business.

This guide was produced to assist employers and employees to set up a manageable and lasting ESV programme. This guide provides information on the benefits of ESV and the essentials of getting started and maintaining momentum. It includes a number of case studies to illustrate the existing work already being undertaken by Northern Ireland companies.



## Types of Employee Volunteering

Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society and the community, the environment, or individuals outside (or in addition to) one's immediate family. It is unpaid and undertaken freely and by choice. ESV is successful when the employer's community investment objectives, the employee's interests and the community's needs are met.

The range of opportunities available to employees is diverse and includes:

### Team opportunities

- Refurbishing community facilities
- Developing outdoor activity areas
- Organising special events for a range of client groups
- Bringing business skills for community benefit, ie strategic planning, marketing/communication skills
- Mentoring or coaching for local schools/community groups
- Participating in paired reading or numeracy programmes
- Representing your employer on governing bodies and statutory forums
- Utilising business skills for community benefit

### Organisations

Many employers achieve business Corporate Responsibility (CR) objectives by developing strategic alliances with specific voluntary organisations. This can influence the support provided and the employer's choice of activity.



## Why should your company get involved?

ESV develops a mutually beneficial relationship between employers and voluntary organisations.

It increases the capacity of voluntary sector organisations to meet their objectives through the sharing of skills, expertise, and resources. It provides a mechanism to engage employers in tackling specific local issues of common concern such as education, employability and regeneration.



## Benefits to the workplace

In 2009, Business in the Community commissioned Deloitte to conduct a survey of over 200 public and private sector employers, including small to medium sized enterprises to better understand the baseline position of ESV in Northern Ireland. The findings of the survey indicated that there was clear evidence of the benefits to be derived for employers with 88% of employers participating in ESV activity reported that it was a positive experience. In addition the majority of respondents considered that ESV had met their expectations in terms of the benefits to the workplace and the community.

A significant finding was that 82% of respondents believed that morale and motivation of employees were enhanced as a result of participating in ESV activity.

The research also indicated significant additional business benefits to be derived from ESV including improved corporate profile, staff recruitment and retention and enhanced customer relations.

## Benefits in the marketplace

There is clear evidence that ESV and corporate responsibility in general can play a significant part in giving businesses a competitive edge and enhancing corporate reputation. The following are some key examples:

84% of the public think that knowing a company's activities within society are important when forming an opinion about that company (Ipsos MORI 1999)

82% of the public felt it was important that a company shows a high degree of social responsibility (Ipsos MORI 1999)

Those companies consistently managing and measuring their corporate responsibility outperformed the FTSE 350 on total shareholder return 2002-2007 by between 3.3% and 7.7% per year (Ipsos MORI 2008)

“The research shows that those companies with strong environmental, social and governance standards have bounced back quicker post recession.”

**Tim Breedon, CEO, Legal & General Group plc**







## Benefits to employees

Employees volunteer to make an impact on a cause or issue that they care about. However, there are also significant personal benefits to be gained, including:

### Training and Development

- Development of competencies
- Creative thinking
- Problem-solving
- Project management skills

### Team building

- Networking with new and existing teams
- Relationship building and team working skills development
- Developing more effective and cohesive teams
- Shared sense of achievement and the potential to leave a lasting legacy

### Personal achievement

- Sense of pride and achievement in giving something back
- Increased understanding of social issue or cause
- Opportunity for developing a leadership role
- Enhanced pride in a socially responsible organisation

# Getting started

To ensure the objectives of the company and the community group are achieved, it is important that ESV is effectively managed. This requires:

- Senior management commitment and buy-in
- Someone with responsibility to coordinate activity
- An effective monitoring and measuring process
- Company investment of skills, time and resources where appropriate

Company support can range from providing access to a meeting room for a voluntary organisation, to allowing employees time off during working hours to volunteer.

The diagram below provides a step-by-step guide to getting started. Business in the Community and Volunteer Now can provide assistance in each of these areas.

## 1 Assess what's already happening in your organisation

Do you have:

- Give as you earn
- Employee charity committees
- Adopted charity
- School links
- Fundraising

## 2 Establish corporate objectives for ESV

- Evidence towards EFQM
- Skills development (liP)
- Improved customer facing
- Increase corporate profile
- Team building

## 3 Communicate your intentions

- Team briefings
- Email and Intranet
- Staff magazine
- Noticeboard
- Staff handbook

### Getting Started

## 6 Starting volunteering

- Have a launch event
- Adopt a charity
- Organise a road show
- Team challenge
- Designate a day for action
- Contact Volunteer Now or Business in the Community to get started!

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## 5 Tips for success

- Start small and build
- Involve management
- Allocate some financial support
- Check insurance
- Have a coordinator or committee

## 4 Ways to support involvement

- Provide time off to volunteer
- Recognise skills developed in appraisals
- Circulate opportunities
- Develop and communicate an ESV policy
- Develop an ESV action plan



## Maintaining the momentum

It is important to continually recognise the activity that is taking place and evaluate it against objectives to maintain the momentum of an ESV programme.

Recognising success can help encourage further involvement from more employees. Evaluating the impact employee involvement programmes have on their objectives can justify the resources invested and expand the case for further investment.

Despite providing a substantial amount of investment, most employers do not monitor the number of employees volunteering or the resources invested. This makes evaluating the programme's success difficult.

Essential monitoring criteria include:

- Number of activities the company supported in the period
- Number of employees involved
- Number of hours taken during working hours (and if they were paid or unpaid)
- Amount of financial support provided
- Amount of publicity attained

It is equally important to record employee feedback on particular opportunities. Ideally this should be linked to appraisal systems.

- What competencies were impacted upon?
- Did everyone enjoy the task?
- What were the benefits of the involvement?
- What lessons have been learned that will benefit future volunteering events?

## Finding the right opportunities

There are many voluntary organisations requiring assistance. Best practice ESV programmes align the available opportunities with corporate and human resource objectives.

There are many ways to source volunteering opportunities:

- Contact your charity of the year (if you have one)
- Ask employees
- Contact Volunteer Now at [www.volunteernow.co.uk](http://www.volunteernow.co.uk)
- Contact Business in the Community at [www.bitcni.org.uk](http://www.bitcni.org.uk)

Be prepared to answer questions such as:

- Is it an individual or team opportunity (for how many employees)?
- Is it one-off or ongoing?
- Would you like administration based activity?
- Do you want indoor or outdoor activity?
- When do you want to carry out the activity?
- Can your company provide some assistance to get materials?
- How will risk management and insurance issues be addressed?





## Communicating with Voluntary Organisations

Appoint one person to liaise with a voluntary organisation to avoid any potential duplication or mixed messages. This person should agree all of the project details with the organisation including dates, times, the provision of materials required and their availability on the day. It is important to clearly document agreed tasks and give a copy to the voluntary organisation.

### **Meeting objectives**

Draw up an action plan to meet employer and voluntary organisation objectives and allocate to individuals or groups of team members and ensure each action has a deadline. It is important that you do not undertake any tasks outside the original plan unless agreed by the coordinators from both organisations.

### **Health & Safety**

Everyone involved in team volunteering activity is responsible for their own health and safety. It is important that all appropriate safety guidelines are followed and risks are managed effectively. Be prepared for adverse weather and have contingency plans in place or check that both organisations are prepared to reschedule the project. Check the position regarding insurance cover and liability. You may wish to seek advice and guidance from organisations experienced in organising team volunteering events such as Business in the Community or Volunteer Now.



## Best practice checklist

To ensure your ESV activity is an enjoyable, safe and rewarding experience the following points will help:

-  Secure senior management support and consent
-  Set objectives, guidelines and an action plan explaining what is needed from ESV involvement
-  Identify dedicated personnel to work with partner organisations to coordinate and manage activities
-  Consult and involve employees so that they have ownership of the programme
-  Celebrate and recognise employees' efforts and achievements
-  Communicate community involvement messages internally and externally
-  Develop community relationships that meet business and community needs
-  Start small - a small but successful programme will grow and inspire others to become involved
-  Review activity to ensure successful growth of programme, and to assess impact
-  Have fun!

# Case study of ESV

## 'Be a Saint Day' of action 16th March 2011

19 community, environmental and educational facilities improved by 17 organisations, 400 caring crusaders volunteered across Northern Ireland and over 3,000 volunteering hours

Now in its third year, the Be a Saint Day, a joint initiative between Business in the Community and Volunteer Now, mobilises hundreds of business volunteers to complete practical team challenges to help community groups and schools to improve their facilities and the environment.

Chief Constable, Matt Baggott, welcomed 170 volunteers to the Police College at Garnerville, where they received a hearty breakfast, provided by SPAR, before heading out to the various challenges.

He said; "I was delighted that so many business volunteers gathered with us this morning. With 400 volunteers on the go today, we see a real commitment from businesses to the communities in which we live and work."



The event, breakfast and the Cares volunteering series is sponsored by SPAR. To boost sustenance levels throughout the day, SPAR also contributed lunch packs, providing much needed energy to get the job done! Sam Davidson, HR Director, SPAR, got the volunteers motivated saying: "The importance of volunteering and the ethos of collective action is a powerful way to create a better society for all in Northern Ireland and I would encourage employers of all sizes to get involved." Comedian Tim McGarry brought a smile to everyone's faces as he cracked a few jokes before the teams set off.



### Businesses who participated in the day..

Allstate NI, Belfast City Council, City & Guilds, Civil Service Welfare Department, Copelands, Department of Education, Department of Finance & Personnel (CED), Department of Finance & Personnel (Enterprise Shared Services), Department of Finance & Personnel (Government Accounts Branch), Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety (BSO Department), Department of Justice, Department of Social Development, First Trust Bank, Gilbert-Ash Ltd, Invest NI, INVISTA Textiles UK Ltd, IPSOS, Legal-Island, Marks & Spencer plc, Michelin Tyre plc, Mills Selig, NI Housing Executive, NI Statistics & Research Agency (DFP), RSA Insurance, Seagate Technology, South West College

### Organisations assisted on the day..

Assisi Animal Sanctuary Conlig, Ballymagroarty & Hazelbank Community Group, Cats Protection Dundonald, Creggan Country Park, ECOS Centre, Fleming Fulton Special School, Florence Court National Trust, Giant's Causeway National Trust, Kiltonga Wildlife, Knocknagoney Primary School, Lisnasharragh Primary School, Lorne Girl Guides Centre, Minnowburn National Trust, Mount Stewart National Trust, Murlough Bay National Trust, Sacred Heart Primary School, Secret Garden — Praxis Health Care Shiels House, Springhill National Trust



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Business in the Community is a unique movement in the UK and Ireland of over 800 member companies (250 of which are in Northern Ireland), with a further 2,000+ engaged through our programmes and campaigns. We operate through a local network of more than 100 business led partnerships and 60 global partners.