

EMPLOYER SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING POLICY TEMPLATE

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This document offers a starting point for organisations that are interested in developing a policy around employer supported volunteering. Like any other policy template it should be adapted to suit the circumstances of each individual organisation. The sample statements (*in italics*) are provided as examples of what could be included.

A resource list has been included at the end of this document to support you in developing an Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) policy that is right for your organisation. Planning an ESV Policy should also include consideration of associated procedures / practices that will be required to realise the policy intentions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Employer Supported Volunteering describes when companies actively support and encourage their employees to volunteer. 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. (The volunteering) is unpaid and undertaken freely and by choice (Volunteering Strategy for Northern Ireland, 2012, DSD).

This document sets out XX's policy on promoting and supporting involvement in voluntary activity by its staff. It covers the following areas:

- The support xx can offer*
- Promotion and internal communication*
- Practical arrangements*

i. Statement of commitment to Employer Supported Volunteering

Provide a brief statement of commitment to Employer Supported Volunteering and reasons for offering it to staff. It is important that the values set out in this statement are ratified by senior management, Board of Trustees and Trade Unions.

- XX encourages all staff to consider volunteering because it benefits the community, staff and the organisation. We see the benefits of supporting our staff coming up to retirement to consider volunteering.*
- It offers a personal and professional development opportunity for all staff, i.e. team bonding, developing skills and interests, boosting staff morale.*
- There are many health and wellbeing benefits that volunteering can offer.*
- It raises the profile of XX in the local community and can give staff an opportunity to connect with existing / potential clients.*

2. SUPPORT

Provide guidelines on what type of support the organisation will offer with regards to Employer Supported Volunteering. Some examples of how an organisation could facilitate staff to volunteer are: giving staff work time off; co-ordinating group volunteering days for staff; and offering in-kind support, such as access to organisational facilities or inviting organisations, e.g. Volunteer Now, to provide information sessions to staff about volunteering.

i. Time off:

Give details of the circumstances under which (if any) staff will be given time off to volunteer. It is important to be clear about whether staff will be given 'paid' or 'unpaid' time off. Providing staff with time off during work hours to volunteer is the best way of encouraging staff,

particularly those with no previous experience to try it. You may decide to ask volunteers to match any contribution that you make as an organisation.

Not all organisations can afford to offer paid time off to staff, however, there are other options such as offering flexible working, time off in lieu, access to photocopier or phone to facilitate voluntary work or organising guest speakers to talk about volunteering.

Staff will be allowed up to x days paid leave to participate in voluntary activities during working hours within any 12-month period. Time-off will be approved by line-management. Approvals will be considered on their individual merits taking into account the business needs of xx which will be the determining factor.

ii. All staff ESV days

If your ESV Policy also includes giving staff 'time off', it is important to make it clear whether the ESV day is in addition to other 'time off' entitlements.

In addition to time off listed under number 2(i) above, XX will organise one ESV Team Challenge per annum (approximately one day per year).

iii. Access to facilities:

Staff involved in voluntary activities may be permitted access, within reason, to use of telephones, photocopying, e-mail, notice-boards, meeting room etc. Arrangements should be made by prior agreement with management to ensure there is no conflict with the operation of the business.

iv. Volunteering Information Sessions

It can be useful to offer opportunities for staff to hear about volunteering. For example, arranging a morning session for a guest speaker to come in and talk to staff about volunteering.

XX will arrange 4 volunteering information sessions during the year which will offer all staff the opportunity to find out more about volunteering.

XX will ensure that information on volunteering is included as part of the pre-retiree course.

v. Insurance and Risk:

Provide staff with clear information on who is responsible for insurance and health and safety whilst they are volunteering.

Whilst XX may endorse the chosen volunteering activities of staff, it cannot accept responsibility for insuring them when engaged in activities outside of its premises. Individuals must therefore ensure that they are adequately covered by their chosen voluntary organisation. During events organised by XX, we will take responsibility for checking that adequate insurance cover is provided and a risk assessment has been undertaken and provided. XX will inform and share with staff.

vi. Activities Covered

Make it clear to staff if there are certain types of organisations that you will not support staff to volunteer with because they are deemed to be in conflict with the interests and policies of XX e.g. political groups, groups that promote discrimination or racism.

Support will be provided both to staff becoming involved in new volunteering activities as well as those who may already be actively involved. Volunteering on behalf of political groups will not be supported.

3. PROMOTION AND COMMUNICATION

Outline ways in which XX will promote volunteering and raise awareness of the different ways that staff can get involved.

Targeted Promotion- Pre retirement Employees

You may wish to include a specific section outlining XX's commitment to promoting volunteering for staff coming up to retirement, the benefits of it and how XX can support this.

This ESV Policy is designed to support those staff members who have limited or no experience of volunteering. We also see it as a way of enhancing the experience of those already involved in voluntary work. We would encourage you to view the www.volunteernow.co.uk website if you are interested in volunteering or look on the staff Intranet for more information about how XX supports staff to volunteer.

XX will recognise the volunteering undertaken by staff members during Volunteers Week, the UK Campaign to recognise volunteering (1st week in June).

4. PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

Set out guidance on what steps employees need to go through to avail of the opportunity. This may include asking staff to complete a registration of interest form and provide a small amount of information for monitoring and evaluation purposes. Keeping a record of who volunteers will allow you to feed that achievement back into staff supervision and appraisal. It will also show if there are types of staff, i.e. gender, age, department, job type that are less likely to come forward for volunteering in your organisation. You could then target promotion to these people.

Staff are required to discuss proposals for employer-supported volunteering activities and associated needs for support with their line-managers well in advance of their involvement.

i. Registration of Interest:

A short form to apply for time-off should be submitted to line management, at least 4 weeks in advance, outlining (see registration form on page 7):

- a. The name of the voluntary organisation*
- b. Nature and extent of the involvement*
- c. Time-off required.*

ii. Monitoring and Evaluation:

Individuals who have been granted special leave under these arrangements must provide formal confirmation from the voluntary organisation confirming their participation, covering both the period of special leave and any “own time” element. Failure to provide these details may result in the individual being required to use annual leave or TOIL to cover the period of absence.

The amount of time volunteered by an individual (covering both special leave and matching time) will be passed to the HR Department for recording.

XX may seek further information from staff, to assist in the review or evaluation of this policy.

It is useful to have a contact person that staff can talk to if they need more information. This usually falls to the HR department; it is important that the staff contact knows the full details of the ESV Policy, basic information on sources of support for finding volunteering opportunities (Volunteer Now website, local Volunteer Now office / volunteer centre) and the procedure which staff must follow.

iii. Further Information:

Further information on the ESV policy or clarification of its content can be obtained from XX

5. ESV – REGISTRATION OF INTEREST FORM

Staff Name _____ Date _____

Name of organisation you are volunteering with:

Nature of volunteering:

Total time spent volunteering *(please include matching commitment of your own time if appropriate)*:

Time off required during working hours *(please include date(s)/day(s), as appropriate)*:

Signed (Staff Member): _____

Agreed (line manager): _____ Date: _____

Please forward to the HR Department for recording.

Confirmation received from voluntary organisation:

Date confirmation received:

Special leave records updated:

Staff Member informed of outcome of application:

DISCLAIMER

Reasonable precautions have been taken to ensure information in this publication is accurate. However it is not intended to be legally comprehensive; it is designed to provide guidance in good faith without accepting liability. If relevant, we therefore recommend you take appropriate professional advice before taking any action on the matters covered herein.

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