

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 volunteering opportunities. More specifically, it can be a useful way for employers to prepare an employee for retirement. Employers can support this in a range of ways, including releasing staff to volunteer 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.

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 morale, encouraging team bonding, and 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.

For example:

- Hold specific information sessions on volunteering opportunities, the benefits and how to get involved for those considering or coming close to retirement age. Volunteer Now can provide examples of a range of short- and long-term opportunities that are available.
- Most organisations that decide to offer ESV tend to offer it to all staff but may carry out more targeted promotion with specific groups, including those groups where take-up is lower. It is unlikely to be discriminatory to specifically target promotional efforts to your pre-retiree workforce. Under the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern

Ireland) 2006, it is stated that discrimination on the grounds of age cannot be made if it can be argued that “..*criterion or practice to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.*” In the case of promoting ESV to pre-retirees it can be argued that it is a reasonable activity to prepare employees for retirement. However, ultimately, only Tribunal/Courts can decide whether or not unlawful discrimination has occurred. It all hinges on the specific circumstances of each individual case.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2006/261/regulation/3/made>

- Develop a policy for ESV (using our [ESV Policy Template](#) - new link to be added) which is supported by senior management. This policy can have 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.
- Use employee payslips, intranet, noticeboards 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 database ([Be Collective Volunteer Impact Portal](#)) provides a search facility for individuals to obtain information on volunteering opportunities, based on area of interest and geographical location.
- Consider a placement organisation for staff to volunteer with, 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 (Investing in Volunteers) for employers and get recognised for your commitment to best practice in employee volunteering management. To access the quality standard, use the link:

[Standards and Practice - Volunteer Now](#)

Tips and Hints

- Talk to your pre-retirees and ask them what they would like to do, if there are charities that they already support or ones that they would like to get involved with.
- Make links with non-profit organisations who you know involve volunteers 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.
- 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 let attend. Ensure that you share with them what the organisation does and what the role entails. Think about what you would like the opportunity to achieve beforehand – it could be team bonding, awareness raising or ensuring that you make a difference for the group you are supporting. Make sure you share the risk assessment so that they are adequately prepared before they attend and take the time to debrief either at the end of the day or soon after.
- Have someone at the day to take pictures and share with the wider organisation what occurred and the positive experiences that were had. Perhaps take before and after pictures and get a quote from the organisation as well as one of the team members about the experience.
- Also have a think about the skills that your pre-retirees have. Many of these skills could be shared with organisations to make a huge difference, e.g. finance skills to support a volunteer treasurer; IT skills to support a group maximise their use of Microsoft products; someone with great administration skills to support the organisation of grant materials.

Ensuring that a good experience is had by the employees as well as the volunteer involving organisation will ensure positive relations are developed, repeat support can be offered and volunteers see the benefits of giving their time to an organisation.

If you have any other questions regarding developing an ESV programme or getting involved contact us on info@volunteernow.co.uk

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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