**GLOUCESTERSHIRE VOLUNTEERING PROGRAMME:**

**DISCOVERY AREA REPORT - EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES**

1. **Process We Adopted**
	1. Involvement in work-supported volunteering within Gloucestershire is a mixed picture with different employers participating to a greater or less extent. While some employers have established Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) schemes, a proportion of which have staff with dedicated responsibility for managing them, others do not currently support their employees to participate in volunteering.
	2. Working on behalf of health, care, community and voluntary organisations across the county, under the auspices of the Enabling Active Communities and Individuals (EACI) Board, the Gloucestershire Volunteering Partnership Project Managers met a group of local business and employer representatives. This group consisted of representatives from Gloucestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), GCHQ, Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (GHFT), Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust (GHC), VTues, Gloucestershire County Council (GCC), Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), and Gloucestershire Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Alliance to agree the best approach to seek the views of local employers and employees related to their experiences of work-supported volunteering.
	3. It was decided that two bespoke surveys for employers and (separately) employees would be undertaken (recognising the importance of understanding both perspectives, which may differ); the surveys were designed in partnership with the LEP and GCHQ colleagues. The process was supported by a comprehensive communications and engagement plan in order to raise awareness and encourage completion of the surveys; this included being on the agenda of existing employers’ groups known to the Gloucestershire LEP. Following the meeting, further conversations took place with the CCG’s Workplace Wellbeing Consultant, the Healthy Workplaces Gloucestershire Workplace Wellbeing Lead, and the Deputy Chief Executive of the Gloucestershire LEP. Due to confidentiality issues, a separate bespoke design process was undertaken to allow GCHQ employees to participate in the survey. The surveys were sent directly to a wide range of individual organisations, larger employers. They were also sent to a number of business networking organisations, including Circle to Success and the Business and Innovation Magazine, asking them to promote and distribute the surveys on behalf of the Gloucestershire Volunteering Partnership Programme.
	4. Having gathered and analysed all the data from the surveys, an engagement meeting was held with a number of the partners who supported the initial process to review the findings and develop an agreed set of draft recommendations. All the draft recommendations from each of the six discovery area engagement meetings were then presented to the Working Group for consideration as a whole and formed into a final set of recommendations (as set out in Appendix 7 of the ‘Final Discovery Report to EACI Board – 6 July 21’).
	5. Before looking at key findings, it is vital to note the wider context within which Employer Supported Volunteering can take place. Volunteering generally can encompass everything from facilitating very informal civil society through to more formal longer term traditionally recognised volunteering. However, work-supported volunteering is more often focused on one-off team building exercises (for example, painting a village hall and fundraising for a nominated charity). These terms have been fully defined in a local context and are set out in Appendix One below. It is vital to remember any form of volunteering needs to be adequately resourced: volunteering is not free and within the context of work-supported volunteering there are direct costs for the organisation associated with managing any related processes, as well as significant indirect costs associated with the time off taken by employees.
2. **Key Findings**

2.1 Despite a comprehensive and far-reaching communications and engagement approach supported by many individuals and organisations, there were not as many responses to the surveys as had been hoped. However, it is expected this may have been a result of, at least in part, a timing issue i.e. that the survey needed to be released in the period including Christmas and New Year in order to meet project deadlines; a feeling at the time of general survey fatigue in that a good number were being circulated related to Covid-19; and finally, recognising the extreme pressure many businesses were under due to the impact of the pandemic. Of course, it is possible the limited number of responses may have been related to lack of interest in the subject.

2.2 Nevertheless, there were 36 individual responses to the employers survey and 66 to the employee survey; an adequate number from which to draw some good conclusions. However, it should be noted that only 31% of employers who completing the survey had employees who also responded; conversely there were also 11% of employees who responded whose employer did not return a survey. This is noteworthy because it limits the ability to meet one of the goals of the surveys i.e. to fully contrast the employers and employees’ perspectives of work-supported volunteering.

2.3 ***Overview of Survey Respondents***

2.3.1. **EMPLOYERS:** Of the 36 employers who responded to the survey, 22 were from

public sector organisations (including education and GCHQ) along with 4 private sector organisations and 10 Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector organisations; the majority were Gloucestershire-focused organisations, with two national and four international organisations. These organisations vary in size from less than 10 to over 500 employers, with an equal spread of responses in each category. The surveys were completed by a range of people with varying job roles, of these four people were volunteering lead managers. 16 out of the 36 employers have formal ESVs, with another two who have informal arrangements in place to support staff participating in work-supported volunteering.

2.3.2 **EMPLOYEES:** There were a total of 66 employee responses from individuals working

for 19 different public sector organisations (including education and GCHQ), as well as private and VCSE sector organisations; the majority are Gloucestershire-focused organisations, with 22 national and two international organisations. 80% of responses were from females, with 85% of the total respondents aged over 31; 68% worked full-time. It is important to understand whether the disproportionate gender breakdown of respondents is an accurate reflection of significantly fewer male volunteers participating in work-supported volunteering and if so devise an approach to address this. The 66 respondents were also asked whether they regularly volunteered in their own time with 53% saying yes.

When considering their work-supported volunteering arrangements, 42% of respondents stated they believed their organisation had a formal ESV scheme, with a further 11% saying they have informal arrangements in place. The remaining 47% either thought their employer did not have an ESV scheme or they did not know if they did. It was notable that employees from each organisation did not always have the same understanding of their organisations’ work-supported volunteering arrangements, i.e. they gave different answers to the same question where there should have been a single answer. From this, it is possible to conclude even where formal ESV schemes are in place they are not always communicated clearly enough to employees and this is lack of awareness should be addressed if the schemes are to be utilised more effectively.

2.3.3 Reviewing both surveys it can be concluded that having a larger number of

responses would have been advantageous, particularly from private sector organisations and their employees. Furthermore, it would be interesting to explore whether the lack responses from men (only 20% of survey respondents) was an accurate reflection of the gender split of people actually participating in work-supported volunteering. If so, then it is proposed greater effort would need to be made to attract more men into work-supported volunteering.

2.4 ***Volunteering During the Pandemic***

While the Covid-19 pandemic obviously had an impact on work-supported volunteering, particularly due to furlough and social distancing requirements, it has not been possible to fully capture this impact through the surveys. However, the following was discovered:

* 44% of the responding employers further supported their employees during the pandemic over and above any existing work-supported volunteering scheme or arrangement, with examples including:
	+ Organisations extending their volunteering leave limits and helping co-ordinate activities;
	+ Promoting and linking staff into local initiatives, including the Gloucestershire Help Hub;
	+ Promoting and encouraging employees to support local neighbours and communities, e.g. helping with shopping and collecting prescriptions.
* 59% of responding employees volunteered, or wanted to, during the pandemic. Of those that were part of an organisation with an ESV this figure was nearly double the levels seen in organisations with either informal arrangements or no ESV. There was a wide range of involvement, everything from leaflet distribution to making scrubs and face masks, delivering food and medication, through to establishing a new not-for-profit organisation.

As exemplified above, from the level of interest demonstrated by survey respondents in volunteering during the pandemic , it is speculated that the huge new wave of interest in volunteering as a whole population is likely to help fuel greater interest in ESV schemes or similar going forward.

2.5 ***Work-Supported Volunteering Schemes and Arrangements – the Details***

2.5.1 **Purpose of having work-supported volunteering schemes and arrangements**

The main reasons employers stated for having or planning to develop an ESV were wanting to:

1. Give back to and support the local community (50%);
2. Improve employees’ wellbeing/job satisfaction (44%);
3. Support their employees Continuing Professional Development (38%);
4. Link into their corporate social responsibility strategy (25%).

There was notable mirroring between the employers and employees’ responses when employees were asked what the most important factors were when thinking about volunteering through their employer:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Making a difference to the local community | 74% |
| Making a difference to a specific cause or organisation | 61% |
| Bonding further with work colleagues | 61% |
| Feeling valued by the organisation the employee volunteers for  | 52% |
| Being part of a team  | 44% |
| Using existing skills  | 38% |
| Gaining new skills  | 36% |

Individual employees also commented the following were important too:

* *“To help others, including achieving something important to them”;*
* *“Making a difference, however small, for those without a voice”*
* *“The feel-good factor of helping others”;*
* *“Ensuring that my time is used well and that I'm adding value”;*
* *“Having a clear purpose to the work beyond simply being well-meaning”;*
* *“Doing things I am passionate about”;*
* *“It's also selfish as I get to shape and maintain a number of different green spaces, brilliant for my mental health”;*
* *“It helps us understand the communities and people around us, knowledge and understanding of your working area”.*

Additionally, there was a particularly interesting observation from one employee who believed her organisation did not have an ESV scheme despite the fact it did: *“I think it really comes down to the difference between ticking a box for the company sending staff in as volunteers (as in, letting them look good) and actually offering something meaningful and with purpose to the organisation the volunteers are contributing to”*. This comment points to how a good ESV scheme needs to meet the goals of the organisation as well as supporting the development of individual employees.

2.5.2 In further analysing the responses, the data has been grouped under three key categories based on how respondents identified their work-supported volunteering arrangements;

 A) Organisations with an ESV scheme;

 B) Organisations with informal arrangements for work-supported volunteering;

 C) Organisations without an ESV scheme.

It was notable that a number of employees did not have the same understanding of the status of their work-supported volunteering arrangements as their employers did.

1. **ORGANISATIONS WITH AN ESV SCHEME**

2.5.3 ***Employees experiences of involvement in an ESV scheme***

When describing their experiences of work-supported volunteering within an ESV scheme the majority, 64%, of the employee respondents rated their experiences as being good. In considering this figure, it should be noted a number hadn’t undertaken any work-supported volunteering over the last few years so their responses were discounted, resulting in the number rating their experience as good increasing to 78%. When considering the elements that had impacted on their experience, the following were observed:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **GOOD** | **NEITHER GOOD NOR POOR** | **POOR** | **N/A OR DIDN’T ANSWER** |
| **VOLUNTEER CO-ORDINATOR/MANAGER CONTACT** | 54% | 4% | 0% | 42% |
| **COMMUNICATION** | 36% | 21% | 4% | 39% |
| **MATCH OF AVAILABILITY TO ACTIVITIES** | 36% | 18% | 0% | 46% |
| **EASE OF FINDING VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES** | 32% | 21% | 11% | 36% |
| **SUPPORT AVAILABLE IF NEEDED** | 32% | 14% | 0% | 54% |
| **MATCH OF SKILLS TO ACTIVITIES** | 29% | 18% | 0% | 53% |

2.5.4 ***Specifics of the ESV Scheme***

LENGTH OF TIME SCHEME IN PLACE: When employers were asked how long their ESV schemes have been in place, 38% did not know and for the remainder there was no clear trend with an even distribution between less than one year and up to 11 years or more.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING: Employers reported this ranges from working with no specific partners through to working with multiple partners. Some organisations encourage their employees to identify their own volunteering opportunities, whilst others having a nominated 'charity of the year'.

PARTICIPATION: All the ESV schemes were based on optional participation.

It was notable that a high proportion of the employers completing the survey, 69%, did not record and were not aware what percentage of their employees participated in their ESV scheme; where this information was collected the majority had a participation rate of less than 34%. Looking further into this, in considering how many staff used their entire allowance, 82% did not know and where they did have this information the majority had used less than 11% of their allowance. In contrast, 57% of employees said they had participated in their organisations’ ESV schemes over the last 2-3 years, however only 25% had used their full allocation of time. Even taking into account the general lack of monitoring, it is easy to see many of the existing schemes are not being well utilised.

TIME ALLOWED: As stated by employers the time allowed for volunteering per employee per year across the different ESV schemes varied significantly from 1 day up to 7 days per year (with an exception for Gloucestershire Constabulary through national policy being up to 12 days), although the majority (44%) of respondents offered 2 days per year. One organisation provided the flexibility for employees to have up to three additional days donated from colleagues’ unused allowance. Another stated that their allowance could be split into hours at the managers’ discretion. Conversely, there were though restrictions on some schemes: *“Employees are allowed paid time off to engage in some public volunteering arrangements - for example as a governor on school governing body”; “Volunteering being undertaken must either benefit the residents of the local district and/or enhance the skills of the employee in a way that provides direct benefit to the employer.”* Restrictions such as these may impact on whether employees want to or are able to utilise their ESV scheme. In contrast to the employers’ responses, employees understanding of the time they are allowed per year differed with a variance from 2 days up to 7 days. 36% of the respondents stated they are offered 3 days per year with a further 29% offered 2 days per year. Overall, the most common time allowance is 2 or 3 days per year. Again, these findings point to the fact although schemes may have been clearly set up they may not have been well communicated to employees.

ESV MANAGEMENT: Only 25% of ESV schemes have a named employee responsible for managing it as all or part of their role. Even where there was a named employee their input per week varied from less than half a day (66%) up to 3 days (33%). Those without a named employee to manage their scheme do so mainly through line management arrangements; the lack of a named employee is significant when considering how important a co-ordinator is to the volunteers experience.

EMPLOYEE INPUT: Employers reported that only 44% of their ESV schemes allowed employees an input into which voluntary organisation/community group/charity(s) their employees can volunteer with. When contrasted with the employees’ responses to the same question almost 80% of respondents stated they could choose their own eligible organisation of their personal choice. It seems likely this large discrepancy in responses is due to a mismatch between the employers and the employees responding from different organisations to the survey.

MONITORING: Only 19% of the organisations monitor and/or evaluate the impact of their ESV schemes again a set of goals. Those that did had varied methods from utilising the usual performance management and appraisal processes through to informal post volunteering feedback via a form (logged with HR) to discuss with line manager; one organisation had a ‘Bank-It’ scheme where employees can log their volunteering activity. However, a number of organisations recorded the information, but did nothing with it. Improving the monitoring and evaluation of schemes would allow organisations to better understand and improve utilisation, understand if they are meeting their goals, and support employees’ development.

A further way to improve utilisation could be to formally recognise individuals contribution to work-supported volunteering. This can be done on an organisation-wide basis through sharing volunteering experiences in internal newsletters, through annual staff awards and individually through the employee appraisal process. One employee noted “*If employers want to have credit for having community engaged volunteering, they need to support it in some way beyond certificates and generating themselves good press coverage.”*

2.5.5 ***What could be improved about current ESV schemes?***

The majority of employees who participate in their organisations’ ESV schemes have found the experience to be a positive one. However, responses from both employers and employees still included a number of suggested improvements.

Employers’ perspective:

* Further promote the ESV scheme internally so that all employees take up their allowance;
* Enable ease of access to, and matching to, volunteering opportunities, for example availability of an online platform that pulls together local opportunities;
* Increase the pool of volunteering opportunities;
* More senior leadership support, leading by example to encourage more uptake of the ESV scheme by their staff;
* Widen the reach so staff can volunteer in their own local communities and not just in the locality of the employer.

Employees’ perspective:

* Have someone with responsibility and dedicated time to organise and increase the number of volunteering opportunities; these opportunities should then be easily accessible via a database;
* Reminding staff that the ESV scheme exists and undertake more advertising of the volunteering opportunities offered;
* Highlight how different and transferable skills can be developed in volunteering roles and encourage use of these in annual reporting, promotion etc.;
* Line managers to proactively encourage utilisation of the ESV scheme allowance;
* Allow employees to volunteer in their own community, even if it is outside the employers local area;
* Put in place a system where employees can donate any unused entitlement per employee back to a ‘pool’ for others employees to utilise instead.
1. **WITH INFORMAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR WORK-SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING**

2.5.6 A small group of employees reported that although their organisations did not have a formal ESV scheme there were various arrangements in place to allow for some volunteering to be undertaken within work time. By the very nature of their informality it is difficult to find much commonality in this category. However, some useful information has been gleaned.

2.5.7 ***Employees experiences of involvement in an informal arrangement for work-supported volunteering***

When describing their experiences of work-supported volunteering the majority,57%, of the respondents rated their experiences of being a volunteer through their organisation’s informal arrangements as good. However, it should be noted a number of them hadn’t undertaken any work-supported volunteering over the last few years so their responses were discounted, resulting in the number rating their experience as good increasing to 80%. When considering the elements that had impacted on their experience, the following were observed:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **GOOD** | **NEITHER GOOD NOR POOR** | **POOR** | **N/A OR DIDN’T ANSWER** |
| **EASE OF FINDING VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES** | 57% | 0% | 7% | 36% |
| **VOLUNTEER CO-ORDINATOR/MANAGER CONTACT** | 57% | 14% | 0% | 29% |
| **COMMUNICATION** | 43% | 29% | 0% | 28% |
| **SUPPORT AVAILABLE IF NEEDED** | 43% | 29% | 0% | 28% |
| **MATCH OF AVAILABILITY TO ACTIVITIES** | 43% | 14% | 14% | 29% |
| **MATCH OF SKILLS TO ACTIVITIES** | 29% | 29% | 14% | 28% |

Comparing the data in this table to employee respondents working in an organisation with an ESV scheme, whilst there is agreement about the importance of having a volunteer manager, employees in organisations with only informal arrangements also put far more importance on the ease of finding volunteering opportunities as a major factor in determining whether their experience was good.

2.5.8 ***Specifics of the Informal Arrangements***

TIME ALLOWED: For the 57% of employee respondents who took part in work-supported volunteering the time allowed by their employers varied from 1 to 4 days per year. It is though hard to draw any absolute conclusions from this as the arrangements will be on an organisation-by-organisation basis and there will be no fixed arrangements that would ensure consistency of time allowed even within the same organisation. When reporting on their informal arrangements, individual employees also separately noted:

* They can take time back or have flexibility within working hours to accommodate their volunteering;
* Most of their volunteering is undertaken during working hours if possible;
* If volunteering is outside working hours then they are offered time in lieu or any time off is unpaid and/or part of annual leave and very much agreed on an individual basis;
* Their whole team spend a day a year, normally doing some form of physical activity.

EMPLOYEE INPUT: Where employees are allowed to take time off to volunteer, 71% of employers did not based their decision to authorise the time off on the voluntary organisation/charity for which the employee wanted to volunteer.

2.5.9 ***What could be improved about current informal arrangements?***

EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVE:

* *“Implement an ESV scheme!”;*
* *“We need to think about formalising our volunteering arrangements”.*

EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE:

When asked what would be the most important factors that would encourage them to use an ESV scheme if one were introduced, the following were shared:

* Have a clear ESV policy with defined number of days per year to volunteer;
* Have the opportunity to align the volunteering experience with employees own personal and career development needs;
* Have a clear understanding of how to access volunteering opportunities.
1. **WITHOUT AN ESV SCHEME**

2.5.10 Twenty organisations reported they do not have an ESV scheme; of those three are currently in the process of developing a scheme. It is noteworthy that some organisations still take part in volunteering initiatives for charitable causes, for example seasonal specific activities and connecting with local charities and then interacting when they need help.

2.5.11 When looking at why organisations do not have an ESV scheme, 29% stated the most significant reason was they did not currently have the resources to support one, with a further 24% adding it was not currently a priority for them. Further reasons stated by individual organisations included:

* The practicalities (financial and otherwise) of releasing staff, especially clinical staff, and finding and funding any back-fill cover;
* The organisation doesn’t have the capacity to allow staff time-off during work hours, paid or otherwise;
* Many of the paid staff already volunteer for their own organisations (noted by two charities);
* *“As a charity, there is no obvious overall advantage in releasing staff within their paid hours for us to support another charity”.*

2.5.12 When asked whether they would consider establishing an ESV scheme 45% of the organisations said yes or maybe. However, only 30% felt they understood the benefits of an ESV scheme for their organisation and their employees. This lack of understanding may be a contributory factor for those organisations that see a lack of capacity and/or resources as a barrier to implementing an ESV scheme.

2.5.13 ***Encouraging Participation***

EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVE: Exploring further what might encourage organisations without an ESV scheme to establish one, the highest rated factors were:

* More information on ESVs schemes and their benefits;
* More information about volunteering within local voluntary organisations/charities and easier links into these organisations;
* Being able to raise the profile of their organisation within their local community.

EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE: A considerable number of respondents, 71%, said they would participate in an ESV scheme if their employer had one. Only 6% categorically said they would not participate because they either volunteered in their own time or they did not have enough time during their working hours. The following were identified as the key motivators that would encourage employees to participate:

* + - * + Having a clear organisational policy with a defined number of days;
				+ Having an input into which organisation employees volunteer for;
				+ The opportunity to align the volunteering experience with the employees own personal and career development needs;
				+ The opportunity to develop additional skills outside the scope of the employees’ current role;
				+ Having a clear understanding of how to access volunteering opportunities.

2.6 ***Final Thoughts***

In reviewing the findings, it was observed by the group of local business and employer representatives that existing involvement in employer supported volunteering, whether through a formal scheme or informal arrangements, maybe limited due to employers’ concerns over risk, i.e. what the volunteer is and is not ‘permitted’ to do.

All the employees responding to the survey, regardless of whether their organisation had an ESV scheme or not, were asked if they felt it is important for employers to provide schemes that allow employees to volunteer during work-time - an overwhelming 80% of responding employees said yes. Interesting responses from individuals included:

* *“Should be viewed as development/training time;”*
* *“It can be difficult to find the time to do it”;*
* *“As long as volunteering did not mean that leave or pay had to be sacrificed.”*

Finally, digging deeper, when given four different approaches to work-supported volunteering, respondents stated:

* No preference, i.e. they are fully flexible (41%);
* They would prefer to volunteer as a work-based team (33%);
* They would prefer to volunteer as an individual (27%);
* They would prefer to volunteer with people from organisations other than their own (15%).
1. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 Allowing staff to participate in work-supported volunteering can bring many benefits to an organisation, for instance helping to raise their profile or supporting workforce development through allowing employees to develop additional skills. However, the survey findings reveal there is a general lack of understanding and awareness of ESV schemes and their benefits to both the organisation and employees. Even in those organisations that have a formal scheme, there is a spectrum of how schemes are utilised, with some being limited due to concerns related to risks around the type of activities volunteers are ‘permitted’ to do. More information and promotion of the benefits, sharing of case studies and the impact of the positive effects of being involved in an ESV scheme may help to reduce some of the barriers and/or concerns about any cost/resource implications. Therefore, undertaking awareness raising and activities to promote the benefits of ESV schemes are considered to be a good first step in the process.

3.2 Traditionally, work-supported volunteering has tended to focus on one-off team-building exercises; however, it is clear from the employees’ responses to the survey that they want to and can offer so much more – this would add considerable value to an organisations’ ESV scheme. Having said this, it is still important to ensure there is not a mismatch between what businesses may want and what the voluntary sector may want and/or can offer.

3.3 Given the huge interest in volunteering during the pandemic, including from many employees and employers in the surveys, this is a once in a generation opportunity to capitalise on this increased interest and so it is suggested now would be a good time for organisations to review their position and/or policy on work-supported volunteering. However, the difficulty remains that there is not a person/body responsible for facilitating and leading any system-wide working in relation to employer supported volunteering. This is therefore an urgent issue that ideally needs to be overcome. If this could be overcome, together with some form of shared online platform where, at the very least, work-supported volunteers can be matched to opportunities, this would provide significant value to the employer, the employee and the voluntary sector organisations they are supporting.

* For system partners to come together and:
* Decide how best to lead and facilitate collaborative working;
* Consider how best, collectively, to promote the benefits of ESV schemes as well as addressing any concerns, for example related to cost and/or time. This should include a media campaign, utilising case studies, and holding a county-wide promotional/advice event;
* Consider the creation of a shared online platform where, at the very least, volunteers can be matched opportunities;
	+ Establish a system whereby organisations can link together so that those who are more experienced in operating ESV schemes can support/’buddy’ less experienced organisations or those entirely new to employer supported volunteering, helping address any barriers and challenges;
* As the respected voice, business sector representatives to lead on promoting employer supported volunteering and providing support to interest organisations, for example through training the business navigators who work in the six Growth Hubs;
* Organisations interested in work-supported volunteering or who already have informal arrangements in place should consider introducing a formal ESV scheme in order to ensure consistency of approach and therefore equity to all employees, supported by a clear written policy. The following helps to make a good work-supported volunteering experience for those with an ESV scheme or wishing to improve an existing formal or informal scheme:
	+ Having a clear purpose of the ESV scheme that aligns to the Corporate Social Responsibility or other defined organisational goals, acknowledging different organisations may have different reasons for having an ESV scheme, for example a desire to raise their profile in the local community or support employees to develop specific new skills;
	+ Recording, monitoring and evaluating take-up and impact of schemes in order to measure the value and success against the stated goals;
	+ When designing a scheme, work with employees to understand what the most important factors to them would be (such as making a difference in the local community). Also, regularly review schemes to ensure they still meet the objectives and take account of any changing employee profile;
	+ Ensuring the EVS scheme is well promoted so that all employees know about the scheme, how much time is allowed, what the process is and how to find volunteering opportunities;
	+ A system should be in place that allows employees to easily find and access a wide range of different volunteering opportunities supporting matching between the individual and the opportunity;
	+ Employees should have some input into which voluntary organisation they can volunteer for. Where the organisation selects voluntary sector partners/charity partners it is important to undertake due diligence to ensure their values are aligned to the ESV schemes’ objectives and they value the contribution of employee volunteers;
	+ Having a volunteer manager (or other nominated person) with dedicated time to manage the scheme, as well a responsibility for organising and increasing the number of volunteering opportunities -these opportunities should then be easily accessible via a database;
	+ Develop relationships and volunteering opportunities with voluntary sector partners/charity partners that can support employees to align the volunteering experience with their own personal and career development needs, utilising existing skills and/or developing new skills;
	+ Design ESV schemes that maximise flexibility of approach, including:
		- Clearly define the time allowed per year, supported by a system where individual employees can donate any unused entitlement back to a ‘pool’ for other employees to utilise instead. It is recommended that an hours-based allowance is preferable to a days-based allowance as a key way to enable a move away from ‘just’ undertaking one-off events towards more skills-based volunteering, giving flexibility in how employees use their time;
	+ Allow employees to volunteer in their own communities, even if this is outside the locality of the employer;
* Proactively encourage utilisation of the ESV scheme allowance through one-to-one line management meetings, highlighting how different and transferable skills can be developed in volunteering roles;
* Consider if it is desirable to in some way recognise the employees input into work-supported volunteering:
	+ Link to annual performance appraisal; and
	+ Highlight these in annual organisation-wide reporting;
	+ Senior leadership should actively support schemes, leading by example to encourage more uptake of the ESV scheme by their staff.

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**APPENDIX ONE – Definitions Related to Volunteering in Gloucestershire**

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