

Employee Volunteering: A best practice guide

Practical tips and guidance for voluntary organisations who want to benefit from a business partnership and support a successful Employee Volunteering Scheme.



Welcome

Shaun Delaney
Volunteering Development Manager, National Centre for Voluntary Organisation:

"Volunteering is an activity where everyone wins.

That's one of the fundamental greats about volunteering. And that's why one in five adults regularly give their time to good causes in the UK.

NCVO is a big fan of high quality volunteering, and especially when employers can support their staff to volunteer. Employers can make a big difference by giving their staff time, flexibility and access to undertake voluntary roles, unlocking all the benefits of volunteering.

Benefits like improving connections with communities, improved wellbeing, and generating skills and experience for both individuals, businesses and voluntary organisations. These, and the many other gains listed in this guide can only be unlocked through quality volunteering.

That's why this guide is so important - quality. By using the information in this guide, you'll see how by working together, we can create some great quality opportunities for everyone involved."



As Shaun Delaney, NCVO touches on in this foreword, volunteering can unlock real benefits for both businesses and voluntary organisations. The two parties seem like an ideal fit for one another.

Despite this, statistics and anecdotal feedback tell us that there is a disconnect between businesses and voluntary organisations. Why?

In this guide, we will:

- Explore your barriers to employee volunteering and what you can do to address them.
- ✓ Lift the lid on the barriers faced by businesses.
- Outline what businesses really want from a voluntary partner.
- ✓ Provide tips for finding, approaching and learning the language of a potential business partner.
- ✓ Offer advice on how to maintain your business partnerships and convert volunteer placements into longer term relationships

This guide has been supported by:















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Who is this guide for?

This guide has been written for voluntary organisations who want to attract and engage with businesses, establish a mutually successful partnership and progress an Employee Volunteering Scheme (EVS).

This document is focused on voluntary organisations who have some form of voluntary leadership (trustees). Voluntary organisations can include charities, community interest companies and un-registered voluntary and community groups.

Who are we?

This guide is brought to you by Bournemouth and Poole Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) and Hireserve.

Bournemouth and Poole CVS is a charity which provides advice and support to 1,500 local voluntary organisations.

Hireserve is a recruitment software provider. Hireserve ATS is used by a number of not-for-profit organisations for both staff and volunteer recruitment, including the RNLI and MND Association.

Bournemouth and Poole CVS and Hireserve have worked together on a number of initiatives to support and promote employee volunteering.

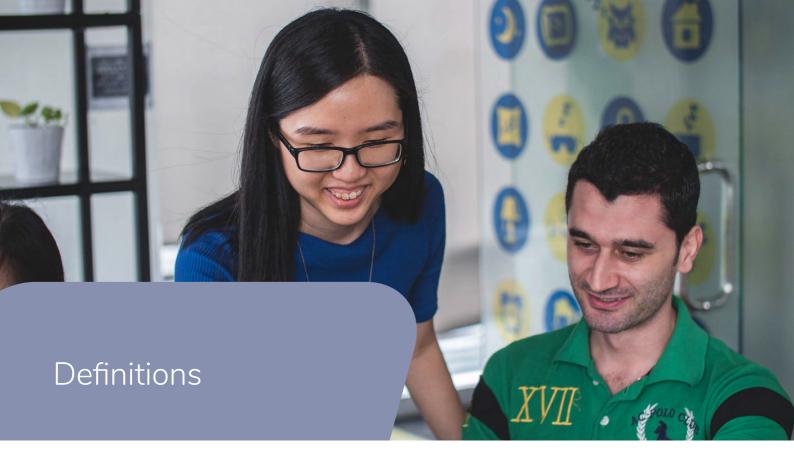
What are the benefits of employee volunteering?

For voluntary organisations:

- Benefit from new skills and specialist support you may not otherwise be able to afford or prioritise
- Enhanced capacity
- A diverse range of activities can be supported by employee volunteers
- Enhanced awareness of your cause amongst business partners
- ✓ Ongoing support from a business

For businesses:

- Enhanced staff morale
- ✓ Team building
- Skills development
- Enhanced reputation with customers and partners
- May support the organisation's wider approach to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)



How do we define employee volunteering?

In the context of this guide, 'employee volunteering' is where there is some form of partnership between a business and a voluntary organisation, and where one of the following takes place:

- ✓ The business supports its employee(s), whether individually or in teams, to take up volunteering opportunities either during or outside of work time.
- ✓ The business organises one-off team challenges for employees to support voluntary organisations.
- ✓ The business involves employees in ongoing programmes of support for voluntary organisations.

Often, there is a disconnect between what businesses think voluntary organisations need and what is of real value to you.

Similarly, voluntary organisations may not fully understand what objectives a business wants to achieve from employee volunteering.

Examples of employee volunteering:

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but below are just some of the ways that businesses and employees can donate their time, skills and resources to voluntary organisations like you:

- ✓ Taking part in one-day team building activities.
- Engaging with specific projects, where employees can use their skills to develop something for the voluntary organisation over a period of time, such as launching a new website or providing financial guidance.
- Participating in ongoing opportunities or regular activities such as a befriending programme for older people or supporting a food bank.
- ✓ Taking part in a mentoring scheme.
- ✓ Being a trustee or committee member.
- Offering pro bono support such as legal advice or in-kind support like providing a meeting space.

Welcome

lan Girling
Chief Executive. Dorset Chamber of Commerce and Industry

"In Dorset Chamber of Commerce and Industry, we've been long-term advocates of employee volunteering schemes...

... and the benefits that this can bring to voluntary organisations (which includes charities) but also employees and businesses.

This guide is dedicated to helping Voluntary Organisations engage and develop partnerships with businesses, so I have a few words to offer here about why business leaders seek employee volunteering opportunities for their team, and some of the misconceptions businesses may hold about employee volunteering.

The potential contribution of volunteers with business skills to voluntary organisations cannot be overestimated; we know that the expertise and experience of business colleagues makes voluntary organisations more effective.

At a time of low unemployment and recruitment challenges, businesses know they need to position themselves as desirable employers to attract the right staff.

This isn't just about pay and hours. Many potential employees will seek out businesses with a strong sense of social responsibility and businesses that support volunteering schemes are often seen as highly desirable and attractive employers



Supporting volunteering can help businesses recruit high quality, committed individuals.

Many will often think of volunteering as helping clear woodland or clean a beach.

Of course these are worthy activities but volunteering encompasses so much more - and through guides like these and widening the conversation, we can help voluntary organisations to enhance business' perceptions of volunteering.

Business leaders need to understand that employee volunteering is often about offering voluntary organisations key business and professional expertise in areas such as finance, law and marketing that are essential in any organisation. Often this can be through participation on boards and panels and time required can be quite minimal.

Of course, there can be challenges in creating links between the voluntary sector and businesses and this guide details some excellent advice in helping facilitate these relationships.

Volunteering is highly rewarding and enables individuals and businesses to make a real difference and brings huge benefits to both voluntary organisations and businesses alike "





Common challenges

In this section, we're going to take some of the challenges and barriers you might face ahead of securing a corporate partnership and supporting Employee Volunteering in your organisation.

Crucially, we're also going to explore how you can overcome these issues...

1. You try to accommodate the needs of the business first

Securing the support of a business is something to be valued – but it does not mean that your needs and aims should come second to the business in question.

How to address this:

- During your first meeting or call with a business partner, ask what their objectives are and share yours too.
- ✓ Firmly establish a level of mutual respect for one another's requirements and offering. Yes, your organisation could benefit greatly from a corporate partner's support – but the business itself will benefit too, whether from increased brand awareness to skills development for their team.
- ✓ Be direct acknowledge how you will help a business partner meet their aims from an EVS and ask how they think they could help you achieve yours. If this is going to develop into a long term corporate partnership, suggest a review of objectives and achievements in, say, 6 months.

2. Cost

Some potential corporate partners may have a limited understanding of the costs associated with employee volunteering, from providing volunteer training to the additional administration of risk assessments or inductions.

How to address this:

- Scope out the cost of the proposed volunteering activities before committing to a programme with your potential business partner.
- Be open with your business partner and break down costs so they can understand where, if at all, they could support with some of that spend.
- ✓ If a volunteering initiative is not going to be financially viable, suggest a more cost-effective alternative to your business partner. If you do this, be sure to still emphasise the benefit this alternative would bring to you and to the business.

"47% of charities agreed that taking on employee volunteers costs them significantly."

- Three Hands Research





3. You (or your business partner) struggle to identify sufficient activity for team volunteering

There are only so many walls you need painted! Some businesses come with fixed ideas of what employee volunteering looks like.

How to address this:

- Before you meet with your potential business partner, consider the skills and activities you really need. How can these translate into both one-off and ongoing voluntary placements?
- Make it easy for your business partner. Try to 'package' volunteering placements of all shapes and sizes, each with clearly defined time commitments and skills, and outline how each placement will benefit you and the business.
- Be open to a potential business partner's feedback and shape a volunteering activity together, where possible, to achieve both of your objectives.

4. Your partner's outcomes are not clear

You and your business partner operate in different worlds, so be clear on your benefits, barriers and objectives.

How to address this:

✓ Outline objectives and perception of 'success' early on.

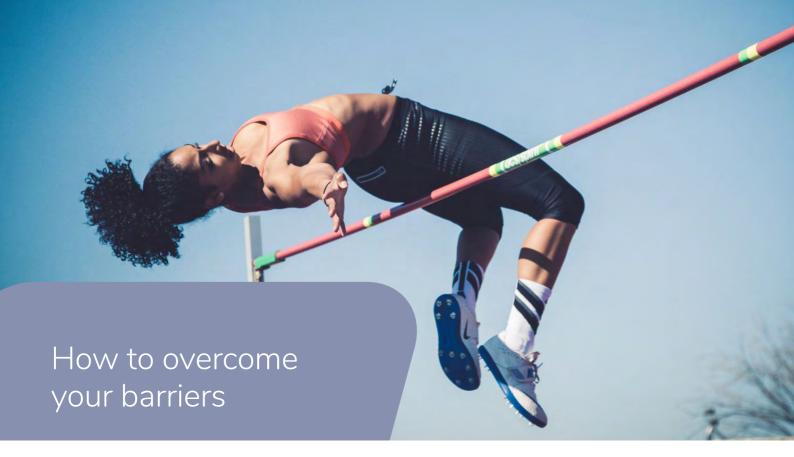
- Explain how you will measure the impact of employee volunteering on your organisation's aims and objectives. Can you deliver some kind of impact assessment at the 'end' of your partnership?
- ✓ Discuss promotion and PR does your business partner want to be publicly recognised for their support? Can you offer enough publicity?

5. You want a longer-term relationship, but business partners are offering a one-off activity

Your partner(s) may not understand how crucial the conversion is from one-off placements to long-term volunteering.

How to address this:

- Outline how your voluntary placements could develop into longer-term relationships so that your business partner can feed this back to their teams. They may be fearful of committing too soon or they may not even know that such opportunities exist, so be clear on how they can progress to a more regular role with you.
- ✓ Demonstrate that you are aware of some of the barriers business partners face, from time out of the office to business buy-in. Clearly define both parties' expectations − e.g. would regular volunteering come out of business hours, or would an individual be expected to volunteer in their own time?



Your checklist in brief:

- Scope out the cost of proposed volunteering activities before committing to a programme with your potential business partner.
- Break down costs so a potential partner can understand where they could support you.
- ✓ If a volunteering initiative is not going to be financially viable, suggest a more cost-effective alternative to your business partner.
- Clearly state your objectives around employee volunteering upfront.
- Acknowledge how you will help a business partner meet their aims from an EVS and ask how they think they can help you achieve yours.
- Suggest an interim review of objectives and achievements during your partnership.
- Consider the skills you really need and how these can translate into voluntary placements.
- 'Package' up volunteering placements of all shapes and sizes, each with clearly defined time commitments, skills and benefits.
- Outline how your voluntary placements could develop into longer-term relationships so that your corporate partner can feed this back to their teams.

- Acknowledge some of the barriers corporate partners face in terms of corporate volunteering.
- Explain how you will measure the impact of this volunteering on your organisation's aims and objectives.
- ✓ Discuss promotion and PR for both parties.

"The relationship between business and charity needs to be absolutely balanced and equal.

Businesses should never, ever see charities as suppliers of employee engagement activities, and charities should not see themselves as providers of activities."

> - Jan Levy Managing Director, Three Hands



Karen Ovenden. Director at Hireserve

"Businesses want opportunities to stretch and challenge their teams, from team-building exercises to developing specific skills through volunteering.

Partnering with a voluntary organisation enables business leaders to encourage their team out from behind their desks and gather new practical, professional and people skills.

It's difficult to quantify benefits, but from our experience, it has opened up a really collaborative approach. I see everyone 'doing their bit'; giving their time and skills as well as their efforts to raise funds.

Employee volunteering helps build the culture of a company to be caring and passionate as well as dedicated and supportive to those less fortunate than ourselves.

I think it is also valuable for a team to work together outside the realms of the company and work on projects which are nothing to do with our day-to-day jobs. It's great to get people working together for the common good and having some fun at the same time too. An SME can feel proud of its achievements in the business world but, as important, proud of its support in the local community and its charitable organisations.

Every business should find a cause that they want to support – it will improve their team spirit and encourage fun along the way, as well as improve skills and experience.

And, I think every charity should canvas its local community to promote its work, challenges and needs and encourage SMEs to get in touch and start a conversation. Bonds will be made from which everyone involved will benefit - that has to be a good thing.

A business wants:

- Clear guidance from you about how employee volunteering can enhance your work and what you want from a corporate partnership.
- Advice about which volunteering placements you feel would best suit their staff; this might be their first partnership with a voluntary organisation, so they will want your experience.
- Confidence that you understand their time and business pressures, and the need for them to demonstrate the impact of their voluntary activity.
- A diverse range of voluntary placement suggestions so they can choose the best fit for their team.
- You to take the lead on inducting and (if necessary) training/managing employee volunteers when they are with you.
- You to be proactive when there are new initiatives or activities for which you need support. Often a corporate partner may not have the time or experience to approach you with ideas, so go directly to them, with a clear outline of what you need.



Understanding the other side

It is crucial to understand the objectives and pressures of your business partner, particularly as you operate in different worlds. So, it's time to turn our attention to the barriers businesses may come up against.

1. A lack of support from the business

If your corporate partner hasn't got support from their wider business, it could be an uphill struggle trying to push through an EVS.

How you can help:

- Ask how you can support your potential business partner with securing buy-in from their colleagues.
- Offer to come into the business to speak about your cause and explain what impact employee volunteering has on your aims and work.
- ✓ Where possible, provide information that speaks your partner's language. Have you got case studies about employees who developed new skills from volunteering placements, or tangible success metrics from other businesses who have benefited from employee volunteering?
- Discuss how you will promote the business and its support in your local community.
- Provide a monetary value for employees' voluntary time, e.g. the amount you would have to spend if you had to employ staff to carry out the tasks or outsource for the expertise.

Make sure the right people participate in early discussions to ensure decision-makers are involved from the outset.

2. The business is unsure about the time or skills you require

If a business partner does not have a clear brief from you, they may not be able to support you effectively – nor manage expectations in their business.

How you can help:

- Put together an employee volunteering information pack with FAQs.
- Ensure potential corporate partners leave any calls or meetings with a clear understanding of what you need to make employee volunteering viable – and what they can realistically offer in terms of time and skills.
- 'Package' your volunteering placements, from oneoff activities to ongoing support, with clearly listed skills and time commitments.
- Explore whether some of your volunteering placements can be delivered flexibly. For example, do you need all volunteers to be on site, or could some support you remotely?
- Understand how your potential corporate partner differentiates between an EVS and employees who happen to volunteer in their own time.



3. Your potential business partner does not identify with your aims

This again comes back to the buy-in; your corporate partner needs the support of their wider business and for employees to be passionate about and driven to support your cause.

How you can help:

- Explore how you can align your cause with the objectives of your business partner. For example, is there a particular strand of your work that links to your partner's industry? Supporting young people in finding work might be relevant to a recruitment agency, for example.
- Provide as much information as possible about the work you do and how employee volunteering can really make a difference to your cause.
- Share case studies about other business partners who may operate in a similar industry and how they have supported you.

4. Work commitments

With deadlines and clients, it's possible that businesses may struggle to commit to volunteering with you – or that your partnership overall struggles to get lift off.

How you can help:

- Acknowledge from the outset that there may be challenges along the way and ask your business partner how you can support them with these.
- Ask whether there is any information or guidance you can provide to help your business partner secure internal buy-in.
- Offer your partner a range of volunteering options with a number of levels of commitment, skills and time required.

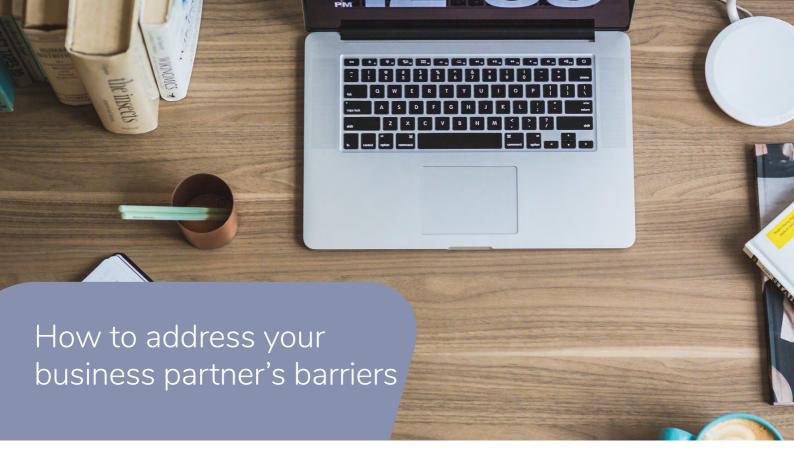
5. Your business partner's EVS does not match their organisation's wider CSR

It may be that there is a wider CSR focus or existing commitments that your business partner has made to other causes.

How you can help:

It's difficult for you to effect any real change here; simply try to get as much information from your business partner upfront before spending too much time on your relationship, in case it does transpire at a later date that there are conflicting aims or other causes that they are better placed to support.





Your checklist in brief:

- Acknowledge from the outset that there may be challenges along the way and ask your business partner how you can support them.
- Ask whether there is any information or guidance you can provide to help your corporate partner secure internal buy-in.
- Offer your business partner a range of volunteering options with a range of the commitment, skills and time required.
- Offer to speak about your cause to employees and explain the impact that employee volunteering has on your aims and work.
- Provide case studies or tangible success metrics from other businesses who have benefited from employee volunteering.
- Discuss how you will promote the business and its support in your local community.
- Put together an employee volunteering information pack with FAQs.
- Ensure potential partners have a clear understanding of what both parties need to make employee volunteering viable.
- 'Package' your volunteering placements, from one-off activities to ongoing support, with clearly listed skills and time commitments.

- Explore whether some of your volunteering placements can be delivered flexibly or off-site.
- Clearly define how a potential business partner differentiates between employee volunteering and employees who happen to volunteer in their own time.
- Explore how you can align your cause with the objectives of your corporate partner.
- Share case studies about other corporate partners who may operate in a similar industry and how they have supported you.

"As an SME it can be difficult to know where to start and which causes to support or even how to initially engage.

We needed to determine what we could offer as a team, how we could build that into the working day and create opportunities that were fun, informative and helped improve our team work too.

It has traditionally been larger organisations which have supported charities so some may not look to SMEs as a source of support - but they really are. The joy with the SME is that they can be reactive and jump into action.

SMEs can proactively spread word amongst their team can offer support quickly and be pretty ingenious with their ideas to fundraise. I would encourage all charities to try and engage with SMEs and build relationships."

- Karen Ovenden Director, Hireserve



How to find a potential business partner

- ✓ Use local partners, such as your Chamber of Commerce, CVS, Volunteer Centre or the Economic Development Officer at your Local Authority to put you in touch with businesses in your local community.
- ✓ Gather advice from other voluntary organisations. What has worked for them? Where have they found business partners? How have they maintained strong relationships?
- ✓ Don't assume that only large organisations have a CSR policy, or the capacity for employee volunteering. Whilst SMEs may have smaller budgets and fewer people, they can be more agile and responsive to ideas than larger organisations who may have layers of approvals or decision making to work through.
- ✓ Be ready! If a business approaches you, you need to have information and guidance ready to go. If you haven't got one already, prepare an information pack for potential business partners, with FAQs, an events calendar, examples of volunteering placements and how you endorse and recognise corporate supporters.

How to approach a business partner

If you have identified a potential corporate partner, do your research. Have you been able to find a copy of their CSR policy? Do they already support a voluntary organisation?

- Try to identify a mutual point of contact who could introduce you in the first instance.
- ✓ If you are going in 'cold', start with a succinct outline of your aims, what you are looking for, and what you could offer the business. Explain why you have approached them and why you feel you could both be a good fit for one another.
- Keep in mind the barriers businesses may face (pg. 10) and briefly acknowledge these in your initial communication where appropriate.
- Outline clearly how a business partner could progress this if they want to – what are the next steps? Would they give you a call, a visit, etc?
- Ensure you also have an induction plan and volunteer training in place so you can respond quickly and professionally to potential corporate partners.

"We know that when our staff make the most impact with a charity, it has been when the placement has been well thought through

Both sides must listen to each other, for example, ever though our staff have lots of quality skills to share we do not cover every topic, so we cannot meet every request for help.

We also want to know what positive impact the volunteering is having on our staff; employee volunteering should be about both partners benefiting and learning from each other."

Richard Lee Citizenship Lead Dorset & Wiltshire, Barclays PLC



Your checklist:

- If you have capacity, assign someone in your team to take responsibility for promoting corporate partnerships internally, and championing your business partnership initiatives.
- ✓ Identify a particularly supportive business partner to act as your EVS champion and produce a case study to share internally, identifying areas where the business has made an impact and how you have been able to achieve things that previously may not have been possible without a corporate partner.
- Ensure nobody in your team will feel threatened by the skills your employee volunteers bring; they are complementing and supporting the work your people do, <u>not</u> replacing it.
- ✓ Help your team see the potential: Demonstrate how a one-off decorating session could convert into a long-term volunteering relationship and ongoing corporate support. However, manage expectations too - this may not always be the case!
- Secure buy-in from the trustees down. You might need the support of your governing board if you have to say 'no' to an offer from a business.
- ✓ Likewise seek the support of your existing staff and volunteers team. We all know a lot more people than we think we do, and we all have networks of partners, colleagues and acquaintances who could help.

- Ask team members for their ideas in supporting and engaging volunteers. Get people involved, contributing their experience and skills to maintain relationships with employee volunteers; make it part of everyone's agendas.
- Identify what your organisation would deem a success, and put measures in place to track and report on this.
- Manage expectations; welcoming employee volunteers is not going to transform your work overnight, so start cautiously with what results your team can expect.
- Monetise the value of voluntary roles. For example, how much would you have to pay for the advice, support or work given by employee volunteers?

Case study snippet

Sue is a Marketing professional and volunteers at local charity Diverse Abilities. Her role is varied, ranging from advising on best practice to helping putogether plans for exciting fundraising events.

Sue helped with a recent Gala Dinner, which raised over £100,000 through a combination of corporate sponsorship, a silent auction and ticket sales

With a background in the private sector, Sue bring a new perspective and valuable experience to the fundraising team

Read more at thevolunteerpool.com

In closing...

When there is a joint focus on objectives, skills and results, both you and your business partner can really benefit from employee volunteering.

The five key ingredients?

- ✓ Time
- ✓ Openness
- Mutual understanding and respect
- ✓ Capacity
- ✓ Commitment and enthusiasm

So what's next?

If this is your first step into employee volunteering – or your first step to improving your existing offering – then here's what you need to do next:

- ✓ Identify existing corporate partnerships/scope for welcoming employee volunteers at your organisation.
- ✓ What is the internal appetite for working with a business partner and employee volunteers? In other words, set the scene and understand what resources and approaches you have to play with.
- ✓ Build your business case what benefits will your organisation see? Why should your decision-makers agree to this?
- ✓ Got the green light? Great. Get started with a project plan. Who will be responsible for this initiative in your team? What are your objectives? What is the cost? What will the results be? And how will you measure them?
- Identify your business partner.
- Meet or speak with each other. Share aims, timings and next steps. In short, share your project plan!
- ✓ Go away with clear actions and an understanding of time and skill commitments.
- ✓ Have the confidence to say 'no' if it is not a good fit for you. It is better for both parties to invest time and energy in other, perhaps more mutually beneficial, relationships.
- The rest... is up to you.





About Bournemouth and Poole CVS

Bournemouth and Poole CVS supports voluntary organisations across Bournemouth and Poole.

The CVS provides a range of services to local voluntary organisations, including:

- ✓ Funding advice
- ✓ Advice on running your organisation
- ✓ Help with finding volunteers
- ✓ A volunteer centre

Website: www.bournemouthcvs.org.uk Give the CVS a call: 01202 466130

Drop the CVS a note: amy.collins@bournemouthcvs.org.uk





About the Volunteer Pool

The Volunteer Pool is an online volunteering portal, which enables people to search for opportunities to donate their time and skills to local voluntary organisations.

Launched in 2016, the Volunteer Pool website and brand was created by Hireserve, who worked on a pro bono basis to support Bournemouth and Poole CVS with the project.

Learn more: www.thevolunteerpool.com

About Hireserve and Hireserve ATS

Hireserve ATS is a powerful Applicant Tracking System designed for in-house recruitment teams.

Hireserve ATS is used to streamline organisations' recruitment processes, to automate administration and to reduce the time and costs associated with internal hiring.

Over the years Hireserve has developed a strong presence in the third sector, working with organisations such as the MND Association, RNLI, Victim Support and StepChange Debt Charity.

Established in 1997, our reputation has been built on a forward-thinking approach to software development, continually anticipating the needs of in-house recruiters and responding with intuitive, capable and robust talent acquisition technology.

This approach, underpinned by award-winning customer care, is why organisations both in the UK and internationally trust Hireserve ATS to automate, streamline and enhance their recruitment processes.

Hireserve creates recruitment software with a human touch.

Find out more: <u>hireserve.com</u>
Give us a call: 01256 634 142

Drop us a note: hannah@hireserve.com

Further reading & information

The information provided in this guide has been informed and supported by research and best practice from the below organisations:

- ✓ Three Hands
 - Three Hands supports businesses with their leadership and employee engagement, whilst also producing engaging and informative reports on employee volunteering, including much of the research cited in this guide.
- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)
 The CIPD website houses some useful information, including a 'Guide to employer supported volunteering: 10 practical tips for implementation' and 'On the brink of a game-changer? Building sustainable partnerships between companies and voluntary organisations, 2015.'
- ✓ National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)

 The NCVO's 'UK Civil Society Almanac' brings together a lot of useful statistics and trends about volunteering, including employee volunteering.

If you need further brokerage support for employee volunteering, the below organisations may be a good starting point. Their websites also contain valuable advice and case studies to inform your work:

- ✓ Benefacto
- ✓ Pilotliaht
- ✓ <u>Involve Swindon</u>
- ✓ Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) directory
- ✓ Volunteer Centre (VC) directory
- ✓ Chamber directory

This guide has been supported by:













