

# Employer Supported Volunteering



**Our volunteers make it possible for Girlguiding UK to offer new experiences and challenges to over half a million girls and young women. In turn, those volunteers who are in employment could be supported by their employer. This support is known as Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV).**

## What is Employer Supported Volunteering?

Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) is all forms of volunteering that is carried out by employees, supported by their employer. Many companies across the UK assist their employees who volunteer, or provide schemes which encourage them to volunteer. This may be formal, or informally agreed with line managers, and can form part of a larger Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy. This Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) can be given in various forms, including:

- being able to leave work half an hour early one day a week to attend a guiding meeting – either through flexible hours or time off in lieu schemes
- having limited free use of the work photocopier or telephone
- using the printer to print out letters to parents
- extra time off, sometimes paid, during the school holidays for camps, residential or days out
- providing a room for a unit to meet in
- helping to fundraise for an event
- recognition in company magazine or newsletter.

## How does Employer Supported Volunteering benefit companies?

Did you know that 80 per cent of employers who have volunteer-friendly policies feel that ESV benefits their company? Employees who volunteer bring a wide range of skills and experience gained through volunteering to their job. Supporting employees who volunteer can be a cost effective way for employers to develop the transferable and 'soft' skills of their workforce, without paying for training. According to a TimeBank Employer Attitude Survey (Continental Research July 2004), 68% of employers feel that volunteering can add skills to their workforce, and 43% think that employees who undertake voluntary work and learn new skills have a better chance of promotion and earning a higher salary. Moreover, 'training' within guiding has the advantage of taking place in real life situations, with real people, rather than in a classroom.

Volunteering can also boost performance and morale by engaging employees in something they are passionate about. It raises job satisfaction. ESV can also add value to the image of the company, by involving them in the community. By supporting employees who volunteer with Girlguiding UK, employers are also helping to develop the skills, potential and employability of the next generation of female employees in their local community.

### Tips for approaching your employer

- Do some preliminary research. According to the 2005 Citizenship Survey, 24% of employers have some form of ESV scheme in place. Ask your HR department or manager if they already have a policy covering volunteering, and you may get what you want more easily than you expect!
- Be prepared before you meet to discuss your volunteering. Think about what skills you are developing, through guiding, which improves your performance at work. Guiding may be perceived as just a warm and fluffy youth club, but in reality our Leaders now receive a wide variety of training opportunities. You may well be developing a multitude of personal and professional skills such as mentoring, management, organisational skills, motivating others, networking, leading projects and budgeting skills, to name but a few. What other courses and qualifications have you completed with Girlguiding UK?
- Explain that you are a volunteer for Girlguiding UK and tell them what your role involves.
- Explain what Girlguiding UK is and the opportunities it gives to girls and young women – there is a template summary below.
- Take the Girlguiding UK ESV leaflet to show them what benefits having an employee volunteer can have, for example in improving the work and skills of employees and their personal development. (Leaflets are available from the Girlguiding UK online shop in packs of ten, product code 6965).
- Adapt and use one of our letter templates to specify what you are asking for, and the advantages to the company.
- Explain the benefits to your employer of a better image and local community links. For example, ESV: offers a chance for employees to develop personal and transferable skills without paying for training; can enhance the reputation of the company; can improve staff morale and retention; attract potential recruits.
- For more detailed examples and statistics relating to ESV, have a read of 'The Business Case for ESV' on the Volunteering England website: [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk).
- Ask them what they would be prepared to do to help you – you may need to be prepared to discuss concrete issues such as budget or the number of hours off you are asking for.
- Try to get the support of top managers – are there any who are already involved in similar volunteering or who have daughters or other family members who are involved in guiding?
- Does volunteering with girls and young women link in with any of your organisational priorities, for example supporting young people in the local community?
- Have a look at examples of ESV programmes in other similar organisations and what they offer.

For more information on ESV, take a look at the Volunteering England website, [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk).

### What does Girlguiding UK do?

Girlguiding UK offers a long term, sustainable and personal form of volunteering, as part of the UK's largest youth membership organisation. Our volunteers have fun and grow their own skills, while enabling girls and young women to develop their potential. Our tens of thousands of volunteers help to grow the potential, self-confidence and skills of almost half a million girls and young women throughout the UK. They provide the space and opportunity for them to find their own voices, be inspired and speak out about what they believe in. Not only are companies who support their volunteers in guiding helping those individuals, they are also helping our hundreds of thousands of young members, and the local communities in which they live.

